TEXT: *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* Arum & Roksa

Note: Linkages to additional materials will be distributed in class

**Why this Text?**

Released January 18th 2011, *Academically Adrift* has, in a very short time, generated intense controversy and interest within government, communities and higher education. Here is the publisher’s description of the book.

In spite of soaring tuition costs, more and more students go to college every year… Almost everyone strives to go, but almost no one asks the fundamental question posed by Academically Adrift: are undergraduates really learning anything once they get there?

For a large proportion of students, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa’s answer to that question is a definitive no. Their extensive research draws on survey responses, transcript data, and, for the first time, the state-of-the-art Collegiate Learning Assessment, a standardized test administered to students in their first semester and then again at the end of their second year. According to their analysis of more than 2,300 undergraduates at twenty-four institutions, 45 percent of these students demonstrate no significant improvement in a range of skills—including critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing—during their first two years of college. As troubling as their findings are, Arum and Roksa argue that for many faculty and administrators they will come as no surprise—instead, they are the expected result of a student body distracted by socializing or working and an institutional culture that puts undergraduate learning close to the bottom of the priority list.

Academically Adrift holds sobering lessons for students, faculty, administrators, policy makers, and parents—all of whom are implicated in promoting or at least ignoring contemporary campus culture. Higher education faces crises on a number of fronts, but Arum and Roksa’s report...
that colleges are failing at their most basic mission will demand the attention of us all.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS:
In this bi-weekly seminar, we will discuss the assigned readings from *Academically Adrift* and connect those readings with other materials from the course. I expect graduate students to come to the seminar having read the assigned material and prepared to participate in the discussion.

In addition to the assignments detailed on the 450 syllabus, there is an additional assignment for those students taking this class for graduate credit.

1. **reading summaries: 15% of total grade**
A 2-3 page summary (note: typed, hard copy) of each seminar’s assigned readings will be due at the beginning of each graduate seminar. The students leading the chapter/material discussion for that week will be responsible for providing each other member of the seminar with a copy of the her/his summary.

Writing summaries will be graded based on the following scale:

- Summaries turned in on time: **0 – 5 pts**
- Summaries not turned in: **-- 3**

There will be 7 graduate readings summaries. In addition, students can earn a **2 point bonus** for the first time they lead the seminar discussion of a weekly assigned reading article. Total possible points: **35 points**

**Note: re. Group Presentation 15% of total grade**
Graduate students will prepare and make a one hour presentation (approx. 40 minute presentation plus structured Q & A discussion with class) to the entire 450/550 class on the important material from *Academically Adrift* along with the critiques we explored in our seminar. Tentatively scheduled for Tuesday May 31st.

**REQUIRED WORK:**
**Graduate Students:**
- exams (2) 50%
- Group presentation 15%
- in-class writing 5%
- class participation 10%
- **reading summaries** 15%
- **total** 100%

Seminar Schedule and Class Readings

**seminar 1 March 30** Introduction to *Academically Adrift*

Reading: seminar 1 (no reading summary)
• From “Society Pages” *Sociological Compass* Mary Austin Smith “What Makes the College Classroom Relevant?”
<http://thesocietypages.org/sociologylens/2011/02/26/8032/>

• *Inside Higher Ed* January 2011 “What degrees should mean” Lederman
<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/01/25/defining_what_a_college_degree_recipient_should_know_and_be_able_to_do>

**Seminar 2 April 14 Setting the Context**

Readings: seminar 2 (2 reading summaries)

• Chapter #1: *College Cultures and Student Learning* pp. 1-32
• Chapter #2: *Origins and Trajectories* pp. 33-58

**Seminar 3 April 28 Problem and Data**

Readings: seminar 3 (2 reading summaries)

• *Methodological Appendix* pp. 145-212
• Chapter #3: *Pathways through Colleges Adrift* pp. 59-90

**Seminar 4 May 12 Recommendations for Change**

Readings: seminar 4 (2 reading summaries)

• Chapter #4: *Channeling Students’ Energies toward Learning* pp. 91-120
• Chapter #5: *A Mandate for Reform* pp. 122-144

**Seminar 5 May 26 Critiques and “Critiques of critiques”**

Readings: seminar 5 (1 reading summary)

• *Chronicle of Higher Education* February 2011 Alexander Astin “Academically Adrift: A closer look at the numbers”
<http://chronicle.com/article/Academically-Adrift-a/126371/>

• *Inside Higher Education* February 27, 2011 Robert Sternberg “Who is Actually Adrift?”
more sources will be indentified in class