Columbia Journey Seminar – Spring 2016 Syllabus

The Columbia Journey Seminar (CJS) is the cornerstone of the Scholars Program. Anchored in the principles of community, exploration, and engagement, this year-long seminar is modeled on core classes and meets weekly for one hour. It brings First-Year Scholars together with Graduate Student Mentors (GSM's) completing their PhDs in different fields as well as faculty, administrators, and representatives from the community.

The theme of the Columbia Journey Seminar is inspired by the name of alma mater, “Columbia University in the City of New York.” Scholars will explore the concepts of identity and belonging both in the city and on campus through field trips and seminar discussions. Utilizing a stimulus and discussion model, Scholars should consider the ways in which each encounter – a lecture, film, neighborhood visit, interview with Columbia faculty, or tour of university spaces – shapes and is shaped by their experience as Columbia students.

Schedule/Readings

—Week of February 8-12th
CJS #1 – Screening of May '68 Documentary Columbia Revolt
During this session students will view a documentary on the 1968 student protests and explore Columbia University’s role in shaping the broader academy and the social movements of the 1960s.

Link to Film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUcYLuGiL_s

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
• Serena Golden, “Harlem vs. Columbia University: An Interview with Stefan Bradley”
• Some notes on the film Columbia Revolt (1968)

—Week of February 15-19th
CJS #2 – College & Society: 1968 and the Struggle over Columbia’s Role in the World
During this session we will introduce ourselves and discuss the documentary we watched last week, Columbia Revolt.

Many issues are raised in Columbia Revolt, including the importance of activism at Columbia and within universities more generally during the 1960s. The student protests proved that universities do not exist in a bubble, and are susceptible to the political, social, and economic realities that surround
them. In this session of the CJS, we will talk about how the protests at Columbia reflected diverging ideas about what Columbia’s role in society was – and should be. Many of these differing positions are visible in the alumni accounts of 1968 that we read. And as last year's Disorientation Guide shows, these divergent ideas continue to exist today.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
  https://www.college.columbia.edu/cct/may_jun08/cover_story
• Look through last year's “Disorientation Guide” created by campus activist groups about current issues at Columbia:

—Week of February 22-26th
CJS #3 – Inclusion/Exclusion
What does it take to 'belong' at Columbia? In this class we consider the idea that a letter of admittance is not always enough: the barriers to inclusion at a college may extend beyond whether one "gets in" or not.

Paul Tough opens his article, "Who Gets to Graduate?," with a deeply disturbing statistic: About a quarter of college freshmen born into the bottom half of the income distribution will manage to collect a bachelor’s degree by age 24, while almost 90 percent of freshmen born into families in the top income quartile will go on to finish their degree. According to a study of this phenomenon at UT-Austin, there are no statistically significant differences in intelligence between poorer and wealthier students which would explain the disparity. Instead, researchers found that the impediments to success of poorer students could be attributed to the students own beliefs about their suitability for college: first, students in transition often experienced profound doubts about whether they really belonged — or could ever belong — in their new institution; and second, students tended to believe that ability was innate, and thus took early failures as a sign that they lacked 'what it took'. In this class we'll discuss the implications of these problems and proposals for how to remedy them, as well as relating them to your own experiences of the 'Columbia identity' and institutional belonging.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
  http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html?_r=0
—Week of February 29-March 4th
CJS #5 – Teachers & Mentors: Office Hours and Beyond
In this session, we will explore the culture of teaching at Columbia and the importance of building a wide range of mentoring relationships.

In the weeks leading up to this class, you should reach out to a professor at Columbia and interview them (for about 15 minutes) about their research and academic history. This is a great opportunity to interact with someone who you've enjoyed as a teacher, or would like to work with in the future in a way that is more personal than getting help with an assignment or an exam. You'll also gain some perspective on Columbia as institution from their position 'on the other side of of the classroom', so to speak.

Preparatory Reading Assignment:
https://www.guernicamag.com/features/the-teaching-class/

—Week of March 21-25th
CJS #4 – RBML Visit

—Weeks of March 28th, April 4th, and April 11th
CJS #6-8 – Capstone Presentations
During our final three classes, each one of your will present your Capstone Project. I've talked about this assignment in class, and as promised, I've attached a sheet outlining the Capstone Project. (Which can also be found in the back of your CJS Course Packet). Hopefully I'll soon have some examples from last year to share with you.