

**THE AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENT  
CSP 660 [CRN #30112]  
Fall Semester 2004**

Dr. Sandra M. Estanek  
Canisius College  
Email: [estaneks@canisius.edu](mailto:estaneks@canisius.edu)

### **Course Overview:**

As student affairs professionals, what makes us educators and not simply providers of services to students is our understanding and application of how students develop during their college years. It is our task as student affairs professionals to provide intentional programs, policies, and environments that foster student development and learning. To do this we must be grounded in both qualitative and quantitative research on students and their experience. Student development theories provide us with a frame of reference for our observations of and interactions with the students with whom we work. Good professional practice is grounded in theory.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course will introduce participants to the **major theoretical perspectives** that ground the student affairs profession. Each family of theories focuses on a particular dimension of human development and/or on a specific population. All theories are constructed and have perspectives and limitations. By reviewing a sample of these theories, students in this course will develop a deeper understanding of the college experience.

The assignments in this course are designed to help students to understand the **connection between theory and practice**, and to apply this understanding in their work with undergraduates.

This course also will provide **data involving trends in the attitudes and behaviors of current college students**, including students at Canisius College.

### **Required Texts:**

Estanek, S.M. (Ed.) (2002). *Understanding student affairs at Catholic colleges and universities: A comprehensive resource*. Chicago: Sheed & Ward.

**Note:** Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

Evans, N.J., Forney, D.S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (2003). *Millennials go to college*. Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers & LifeCourse Associates.

### **Other Readings:**

Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel* 25(4), 297-308.

Estanek, S.M. (2004). *Definitions of spirituality: A discourse analysis*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Love, P.G. (2001). Spirituality and student development: Theoretical connections. *The implications of student spirituality for student affairs practice*. New Directions for Student Services, no. 95. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Love, P., & Talbot, D. (1999). Defining spiritual development: A missing consideration for student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 37(1), 361-375.

### **Class Attendance:**

Class attendance and participation are essential to the success of this graduate course; therefore, both are required. Unexcused absence from class may have a negative impact on your grade. Coming unprepared to class and failing to participate is unfair to your colleagues and may also have a negative impact. On the other hand, positive class participation and attendance may have a positive impact on your grade in borderline cases.

It is not the expectation of internship and assistantship supervisors that you miss class for on-call duties or other activities. Please turn off cell phones and pagers while you are in class. If an emergency does occur and you do miss class, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss make-up activities.

### **Grading and Assignments:**

Course assignments are varied in format (reflection/research papers, in-class test, take-home test, group project) to provide for a variety of learning styles.

Assignments are due on the dates listed in the course schedule. Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have contacted me in advance, and I have agreed to accept the assignment. Depending on the reason, lateness

**Note:** Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

may have an impact on the grade you receive for the assignment even if I have accepted it.

Assignments will be graded on the following scale:

- 4 Points=Excellent=A
- 3 Points=Good=A- or B+
- 2 Points=Satisfactory=B or B-
- 1 Point=Below Satisfactory=C+ or C
- 0 Points=Unacceptable=Below C

Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are important to clear professional communication. No paper will receive an A if it has more than three (3) errors.

Grading in the course will be based upon the following distribution:

- Breaking Away* reflection paper: 5%
- Reflective journal/critical book report/research paper: 35%
- Mid-term exam: 20%
- CIRP project (group): 20%
- Final take-home exam: 20%

### **Assignments:**

*Breaking Away* analysis (5%): On September 7 we will view the 1979 film, *Breaking Away*. You will be asked to write a 5 page reflection/analysis of the student development themes of the film. This paper will serve as a writing diagnostic as well as an initial opportunity to reflect upon student behavior from a theoretical point-of-view.

Reflective journal/critical book report/research paper (35%): You will have three options for the major individual writing project for this course. During the last week of September, I will meet with each student to discuss your choice for this assignment. Regardless of the option you choose, your paper should be approximately 20 pages in length.

The first choice is a reflective journal. This may be an attractive option for those of you who have assistantships that entail a great deal of student contact. In this journal you will be asked to reflect upon the experiences you are having in light of the theories that you are learning. If you choose the reflective journal, you will write two papers of approximately 10 pages each.

You may use real situations but do not identify the individual by last name. If the situation is sensitive, use a pseudonym. Only I will read the journals.

**Note:** Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

These reflective journals are not diaries. The papers should be word processed and written in formal style with appropriate references to the material from class (with APA citation as appropriate). While the final paper is not a diary, it may be helpful for you to keep a diary of your experiences throughout the semester that you can then use as “data” for your two reflective journals.

The second and third options are appropriate for students who do not have assistantships or whose assistantships do not include significant student contact.

The second option is a critical book report. For this option you will read a classic student development book (from a list that I will provide) and write an in-depth critical analysis. We will be reading *about* student development theories in class using a textbook. This is an opportunity to read an important primary source of your choice.

The third option is similar. It may be that you become interested in a particular student development topic rather than one primary source. This option allows you to research that topic and write a paper on it.

Mid-term exam (20%): The mid-term exam will be a one-hour, in-class exam. The date is listed in the course schedule. The exam will focus on the psychosocial, cognitive-structural, and construction of social identities theories of student development. The exam will be essay and short answer.

CIRP project (20%): This is a group project and you will receive a group grade. We will spend class time working with data on entering college freshmen from the Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. Each group will analyze the data report from one year (demographic, attitudinal, behavioral) and prepare a 20 minute power point class presentation with hand-outs on their cohort. We will use national data and data for Canisius College students.

Final exam (20%): The final exam will be a take-home exam. You will receive an assignment during the last class session that will ask you to integrate the theory you have learned in this course and apply it to a practical student affairs situation. The final will be due at the time of our scheduled final exam. We will use the exam time to discuss the project. The discussion is part of the exam.

### **Academic Honesty:**

The Canisius College graduate catalog states:

“Plagiarism is offering the work of someone else as one’s own. This may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches or writings of other students. Honesty requires that any work or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use

**Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.**

must be acknowledged. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas or materials obtained from another source is guilty of plagiarism.”

The catalog provides for several sanctions depending on the seriousness of the offense. Penalties may include a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and/or a penalty appropriate to the offense as determined by the instructor.

All work must be your own and must be properly cited as appropriate. Any form of plagiarism in this course will be treated as a serious matter.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The Office of Disability Support Services (888-3748) is charged with the responsibility of arranging for appropriate support for students with documented disabilities. If anyone in this course has a condition that falls into this category, contact the Office of Disability Support Services and myself within the next week so that an appropriate course of action may be determined.

### **Class Schedule**

*The professor reserves the right to adjust this class schedule as warranted by class needs and dynamics.*

#### **Tuesday, August 31: Introduction**

Course overview and expectations  
Constructed theory exercises and discussion  
Jesuit video

#### **Tuesday, September 7: Using Theory in Practice, Part I**

Reading due: Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 1  
Film: *Breaking Away* (Enjoy!)

#### **Tuesday, September 14: Using Theory in Practice, Part II**

**Assignment due: *Breaking Away* reflection paper**  
Reading due: Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 2, 15; Estanek, Ch. 2

#### **Tuesday, September 21: Psychosocial Theories of Development**

Reading due: Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 3, 4, 7

#### **Tuesday, September 28: Cognitive-Structural Theories of Development**

Reading due: Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 8, 9  
*Students meet with Dr. Estanek this week to choose paper project option*

#### **Tuesday, October 5: Construction of Social Identities**

Reading due: Evans, Forney, & Guido Di-Brito, Ch. 5, 6

**Note:** Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

**Tuesday, October 12: Fall break, no class**

**Tuesday, October 19: Mid-term exam (in class)**

**Tuesday, October 26: Moral and Spiritual Development, Part I**

**Assignment due: Reflective Journals, Part I**

***Students choosing critical book report or research paper meet with Dr. Estanek this week to share outlines and progress to-date.***

Reading due: Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 10, 11; Estanek, Ch. 5

**Tuesday, November 2: Moral and Spiritual Development, Part II [Election Day]**

Reading due: Estanek hand-out (all); Love chapter (all); Love & Talbot article (all)

**Tuesday, November 9: Typology Theories**

Reading due: Evans, Forney, Guido-DiBrito, Ch. 12, 13, 14

**Tuesday, November 16: Generations Theory**

Reading due: Howe & Strauss (all)

**Tuesday, November 23: Involvement Theory**

Reading due: Astin article (all)

Explanation of CIRP project; groups determined; CIRP data distributed; working sessions begin

**Tuesday, November 30: CIRP Project**

CIRP groups meet for working sessions

**Tuesday, December 7: CIRP Project**

**Assignment due: Reflective Journal, Part II due; critical book reports/research papers due**

**Assignment due: CIRP Presentations and Discussion**

Course evaluation

Distribute final exam

**Tuesday, December 14 (anticipated): Final Exam (Take-Home)**

Class discussion of final exam.

**Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.**