

Ranking Systems in Higher Education: How They Work and Why They Matter (EDHI 677)

**College of Education, University of Maryland
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Benjamin 3233**

Faculty

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Course Overview and Purpose

Each year college administrators and faculty hold their breath as institution, college, and department rankings are released. Did they move up or down? What will this mean for their programs and the resources they can attract for them? At the same time, many students begin their higher education experience with little to no knowledge of how college programs are ranked by such magazines as *Newsweek* and *USNWR*. Rather students care about their college's location within 100 miles of their home, the cost, and career placement upon graduation. Students also log-in to websites that rank party schools, their professors, and fraternities and sororities. Somehow, ranking systems seem to be endemic to the higher education experience today. Yet what is being ranked, rated, or categorized varies greatly, and has differing levels of consequence for various stakeholders of higher education: the student, the parent, the faculty member, the college president or provost, the alum, the donor, the higher education researcher, the community member nearby, and the state legislator.

If you had the chance to create your own ranking system of higher education institutions, what criteria would you hold up as most important? How would you collect your data? Ranking systems, not unlike reward systems, are important symbolic representations of what we think are important and value about higher education. Would you rate the diversity of the student body or faculty? Would community engagement or teaching be a criterion? What about the degree to which the institution contributes to social mobility or is a good steward of the environment? Given the pressure to decrease costs, maybe you would reward institutions that seem to do the most with the least resources. You could take a historical approach to see how many political leaders, Nobel Laureates, Fortune 500 CEOs, or social activists graduated from the institution in the last 20 years. Maybe, you would assess the social capital students leave with or the "pull." In this imagined universe, institutions begin to work toward your criteria and your ranking system has power in shaping their priorities. Which institutions will win and which will lose in your new ranking system for higher education? This class considers each of these issues alongside the history, criteria, field, measurement issues, and consequences of domestic and world ranking systems.

Objectives

The learning outcomes intended for this course are that by the end of the seminar students:

- Understand the history of ranking systems in higher education and their evolution
- Have working knowledge of the major ranking systems used today and how they identify fields, determine criteria, collect data, and assign ranks, as well as the impact they have on institutional and individual behavior
- Are able to effectively critique major ranking systems on the basis of (a) the criteria used to identify quality (b) the methods used to collect data on these criteria and (c) the impact on behavior—the consequences of the criteria for how institutions behave
- Are able to design their own ranking system, use their system to rank 10 institutions, defend the criteria, methods, and consequences of their ranking system using research on higher education, and make a persuasive argument for why it would be preferable to other major ranking systems

Required Texts

Ranking Systems Course-pack: Articles listed on the syllabus are available on the Canvas site for this class. There will also be handouts provided in class.

Meeting Times

This course will meet for nine sessions over five days. In addition, students will complete ten “lab hours” by working on team projects, classroom assignments, and independent work assigned in class. The course meeting times are as follows:

January 3, Thursday

Session 1: 9am-1pm

Session 2: 2-6pm

January 4, Friday

Session 3: 9am-1pm

Session 4: 2-6pm

January 10, Thursday

Session 5: 9am-1pm

Session 6: 2-6pm

January 11, Friday

Session 7: 9am-1pm

Session 8: 2-6pm

January 17, Thursday

Session 9: 6-9pm

Course Assignments and Expectations

This course represents a relatively short but intense learning experience. Over three weeks we will meet together and work intensely in our nine class sessions. You will also be expected to do ten additional hours in classroom assignments and in class projects, viewing relevant websites and ranking reports. Each student is expected to prepare very thoroughly and carefully for each class session. As such the grade for this course will be distributed between three key areas—classroom assignments and attendance, reflective essays, and final team projects.

Classroom Assignments and In-Class Engagement (20%)

- For each of the class sessions except the last one, there is a classroom assignment due that requires students to think critically about readings and in some cases, video assignments, in response to a set of questions. These questions are provided in each class session description. Classroom assignments should be 1.5 pages, Times New Roman, single-spaced, and will be graded pass/fail.
- Student contributions to class discussion should reveal a substantial familiarity with assigned readings, a capacity to analyze the issues and problems under discussion, and an ability to listen, incorporate, synthesize and constructively criticize the comments and work of classmates. Class members are encouraged to bring questions, issues, critiques, and insights from the readings and from professional experiences to every class. Because this course relies so heavily on classroom participation and interactive dialogue, it is essential for you to **attend all classes**. In the case of an absence caused by sickness, it is your responsibility to inform Dr. O’Meara of your absence via email and to connect with classmates to cover work covered during the absence. Attendance will influence participation grades. We will need to reconsider your enrollment in this class if you miss more than one class session. Missed classes should not be for work reasons. Please do not read email or work on other class assignments or projects during the class. Students should be ready and prepared to start class at the beginning of each session. Repeated lateness will hurt the course grade.

Reflective Essays (40%)

Each student will be required to submit **three** of the following five reflective essays (**Essay 2 and two others**). These essays should be completed in 4 pages, 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font. They must be submitted at the beginning of class on the day assigned in hard copy.

Reflective Essay One: Building on the articles for Sessions 1 and 2, discuss the history of the ranking systems and whom they were created to serve. Consider carefully their earlier purposes and then compare those to the way the system operates today. In doing so, integrate at least two theories or concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. Finally, imagine how the evolution of rankings might be different if they were created by a different set of organizations, or for different stakeholders and different reasons. **Due January 3rd**

Reflective Essay Two: Building on articles from Sessions 1-4, critique the USNWR Ranking system. Concisely summarize the criteria and weights used by the ranking system. Use evidence from the readings to discuss several strengths and weaknesses. Make recommendations for how this ranking system could be improved. **Due January 4th**

Reflective Essay Three: Building on readings from Sessions 1-6, discuss the specific behaviors of institutions that are in active “striving mode.” Be careful to distinguish between striving behaviors (what you do to move up) versus consequences. What are the benefits for students, administrators and faculty of being in an institution in active striving mode? What are the likely negative aspects? **Due January 10th**

Reflective Essay Four: Building on readings from Sessions 1-6, consider the consequences that have been found from striving behavior. Given this is a new area of research, document what the readings suggest is known about consequences for institutional mission, for student engagement, equity and access, faculty work-life, but also acknowledge what is unknown or areas where further research is needed. **Due January 11th**

Reflective Essay Five: Building on readings from Sessions 1-8, consider carefully the different stakeholders of ranking systems. What are they getting and not getting from the existing ranking systems out there today? Discuss some of the alternative attempts to measure quality outside ranking systems and the strengths and weaknesses of other approaches. What purposes and criteria are currently being ignored and how might they be measured in a future system? In answering these questions please integrate at least two key concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. **Due January 17th**

Grading Criteria for Essays	Points
Writing clarity, presentation, editing and grammar	1
Organization and focus—well organized response to the question(s) asked	1
Critical analysis—major points are clear, made effectively, and are persuasive	1
Content analysis—major points are supported by details from the readings-facts, research findings, etc.	1
	4 Points

*extra credit goes for making these innovative, creative and bringing different sources into them than what is in the course pack

- 4 points= A
- 3 points= B+
- 2 points= B
- 1 point= Fail

Final Team Project—Creating a Ranking System (40%)

Students’ final project will be to create an original ranking system, using criteria they have selected. Students must:

1. Clearly identify criteria and methods of their system.
2. Use class readings and importantly—higher education research-- to substantiate the importance of criteria chosen and/or ignored, the methods used to measure quality, the likely stakeholders and behavior.
3. Provide a ranking of 10 institutions using their ranking system and publicly available data.
4. Differentiate characteristics of the system from those of other ranking systems.
5. Explain the implications of these differences.
6. Argue persuasively as to why their system is superior. Which stakeholders will it serve and how? What kinds of likely institutional, faculty, or student behavior is it likely to catalyze?
7. Discuss the limitations of their system.
8. Use APA, be double spaced, normal margins, 12-point font, Times New Roman.
9. Be a minimum of 20 pages plus references and appendix.
10. Include a one-paragraph description of the role of each team member in the project, signed off by the entire team.

Final projects will be comprised of two parts: (1) 20 page paper, and (2) a 20 minute class presentation of the ranking system. Students will receive feedback on a proposal for the project in class on Friday, **January 4th**. The feedback here will focus on the key ideas, sources of data and field proposed. The presentation will occur on **January 17th** and will allow Dr. O’Meara

and students to provide feedback that can be integrated into the final paper. Here the focus of feedback is ways the ranking system is presented, and whether the criteria and methods is justified by higher education research. The paper is due **January 24th** in hard copy by 1pm to 3112C Benjamin.

Grading Criteria for Final Projects	Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization, structure, and clarity of writing and presentation. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of higher education research to justify criteria, methods and field. 	1.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of critical analysis and reasoning for chosen criteria; consideration of field. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of comparison and contrast with extant ranking systems. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of class feedback to improve the final product. 	.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity, innovation, and significance. 	1
TOTAL possible points	6

A/A+ = 6 points

B+/A =5 points

B=4 points

C/C+= 3 points

D/F=1-2 points

Policy on Incomplete Grades

I will restrict the grade of Incomplete to documented emergencies at the end of the semester only. Such emergencies are not based on work commitments; rather students should not take the course if work or other course responsibilities make it clear at the beginning of the semester that they will not be able to complete assignments by the end of course deadlines. A grade of incomplete requires the instructor's prior approval.

Policy on Students with Documented Disabilities

Please let the instructor know at the beginning of the class if you have a documented disability so that accommodations can be made to support your learning.

Course Evaluation

As a member of our academic community, you as a student have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit your course evaluations each term through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. Please watch for the dates the system will open for evaluation of the semester and make a note of the link at which you can access the submission system: <https://www.courseevalum.umd.edu/>. I greatly appreciate your completing the course evaluations when the email invitation is sent to you.

Class Sessions

Session One - January 3: In this session we consider the history of striving in the last half century and what is meant by striving for prestige. What were some of the key social, political and economic forces that influenced the emergence of rankings? We will also compare and contrast how competition operates in higher education versus other fields. I will also introduce key concepts and theories in organizational analysis and how they might be helpful throughout the class.

Classroom Assignment #1:

Have you ever been a part of a striving institution as described in the table at the end of the O'Meara piece? What forces compelled your institution to strive for greater prestige? Use the table to identify three concrete ways in which your institution was striving. If you have not been part of a striving institution, identify one institution where you attended or worked and use the readings to consider 3 reasons why you believe this institution was not striving. For example, was the orientation of the institution more toward local reputation building?

- Webster, D. S. (1992). Reputational rankings of colleges, universities, and individual disciplines and fields of study, from their beginnings to the present. *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research: Vol. VIII*, 234-304.
- O'Meara, K. (2007). Striving for what? Exploring the pursuit of prestige. J.C. Smart (ed.). *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Vol. XXII, 121-179.
- Birnbaum, R. (1983). *Maintaining Diversity in Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (Chapters 1 & 2).
- Cutright, M. (2003). Untitled. [Review of the book *In Pursuit of Prestige*]. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74(2), 238-240.
- Winston, G. C. (2000). *The Positional Arms Race in Higher Education* (Discussion Paper No. 54). Williamstown, MA: Williams Project on the Economics of Higher Education.
- Aldersley, S. F. (1995). "Upward drift" is alive and well: Research/doctoral model still attractive to institutions. *Change*, 27(5), 50-56.

Session Two - January 3: In this session we analyze one of the most dominant and influential of ranking systems: USNWR. We will use a rubric created for this class to analyze the most popular prestige oriented ranking systems and the criteria that are used to measure performance. We will carefully consider what is ranked, rated, and categorized and why in USNWR and other dominant ranking systems.

Guest Speakers:

Dr. Mona Levine, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and **Pamela Phillips**, Associate Director for Reporting and Special Projects. Dr. Levine and Ms. Phillips are responsible for collecting and reporting University of Maryland data to ranking systems. They will discuss their experiences as institutional researchers working with data collection for USNWR and other ranking systems.

Classroom Assignment #2: Every student will be assigned a different ranking system to analyze using Table B. Be especially careful to include detail on the field, criteria, and measurement in your ranking system so you can explain it to the class. Please bring 15 copies of your ranking system table to class.

- O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities*. Working Paper: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.
- Pike, G. R. (2004). Measuring quality: A comparison of U.S. News rankings and NSSE benchmarks. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(2), 193-208.
- Kuh, G. D. & Pascarella, E. T. (2004). What does institutional selectivity tell us about educational quality? *Change*, 36(5), 52-58.
- Ehrenberg, R. G. (2003). Reaching for the brass ring: The U.S. News and World Report rankings and competition. *The Review of Higher Education*, 26(2), 145-162.
- Meredith, M. (2004). Why do universities compete in the ratings game? An empirical analysis of the effects of the U.S. News and World Report college rankings. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(5), 443-461.

Session Three - January 4: In this class we extend our conversation of dominant ranking systems to the world stage. What are the dominant international ranking systems for world universities and within other national systems of higher education? What are the criteria they are using to assess performance?

Guest Speaker:

Dr. Ellen Hazelkorn, *Director of Research and Enterprise, and Dean of the Graduate School, Dublin Institute of Technology*. Dr. Hazelkorn is author of *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence* (2011). She also leads the Higher Education Policy Research Unit (HEPRU), and is a Consultant to the OECD Programme on Institutional Management of Higher Education (IMHE). Dr. Hazelkorn is currently leading an international research project on the Impact and Influence of League Tables and Ranking Systems on Higher Education Decision-Making and Academic Behaviour in association with IMHE and IAU [<http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/rankings>]. She is also working with the Institute for Higher Education Policy on a New Agenda for College and University Ranking.

Classroom Assignment #3: Use the readings to consider three ways the world rankings are influencing colleges and universities worldwide. Do the world rankings encourage “strategic imitation,” international distinction, or some of both?

- Hazelkorn, E. (2009). Rankings and the battle for world-class excellence: Institutional strategies and policy choices. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 21(1), 55-76.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Dynamics of national and global competition in higher education. *Higher Education*, 52, 1-39.
- Birnbaum, R. (2006). *No world class university left behind*. Paper presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Anaheim, CA.
- Morphew, C. C. & Huisman, J. (2002). Using institutional theory to reframe research on academic drift. *Higher Education in Europe*, 27(4), 491-506.
- Rauhvargers, A. (2011). *European University Association Report on Rankings 2011: Global university rankings and their impact*, Belgium: European University Association. READ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ONLY (Pages 10-17)
- Altbach, P. G. (2004). The costs and benefits of world class universities. *Academe*, 90(1), 20-23.

Session Four - January 4: We will continue with our critique of dominant ranking systems with a particular focus on criteria used to measure performance and their strengths and weaknesses. We will also consider the “fields” and contexts specific to different ranking systems.

Guest Speakers:

Allison Bell serves in the University of Maryland's Office of Undergraduate Admissions as the Senior Associate Director for Marketing and Communication. While a job in marketing wasn't necessarily in her plans, trying to understand people was always her goal. With a bachelor's degree in anthropology, a master's in counseling psychology for higher education, and over twelve years professional experience in undergraduate admissions, Ms. Bell brings to her role a keen understanding of what messages students, parents and counselors are most interested in hearing.

Matthew Meekins is currently Director of Operations for Online Programs in the School of International Service at American University. He recently played a central role in implementing a brand new online MA degree in International relations. In the past, he has held posts in admissions in multiple universities and has been responsible for student recruiting both domestically and internationally, graduate and undergraduate. He is also a 2010 MA graduate of the Higher Education Program at the University of Maryland.

Classroom Assignment #4: Please view the videos below and integrate them with your readings to provide what you think is the best argument for eliminating rankings and the best argument for keeping them as they exist today.

Malcolm Gladwell on CNN: Why rankings are “absurd”:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2011/05/01/gps.gladwell.college.cnn>

PBS debate over value of USNWR rankings:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec07/rankings_08-20.html

Short CNN video on student perceptions of rankings:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/living/2011/07/28/perry.college.rankings.cnn>

Dichev, I. (2001). News or noise? Estimating the noise in the U.S. News university rankings. *Research in Higher Education*, 42, 237-266.

Volkwein, J. F. & Sweitzer, K. V. (2006). The influences on prestige and reputation at research universities and liberal arts colleges. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(2), 129-148.

Monks, J. & Ehrenberg, R. G. (1999). U.S. News & World Report rankings: Why they do matter. *Change*, 31(6), 43-51.

Webster, T. J. (2001). A principal component analysis of the *U.S. News & World Report* tier rankings of colleges and universities. *Economics of Education Review* 20, 235-244.

Hossler, D. (2000). The problem with college rankings. *About Campus*, 20-24.

Session Five - January 10: Having considered the dominant rankings systems in the US and abroad we will consider the behavior of institutions trying to move up within them. What do campuses do when they are striving? What kinds of behaviors do they exhibit? Here we begin to consider the consequences of striving, with particular focus on admissions, access, equity and educational quality, and spending.

Guest Speaker:

Donna L. Wiseman, Ph.D., assumed the duties of Dean of the College of Education at the University of Maryland in May 2008. She served as interim dean of the college during the 2007-08 academic year. Prior to that, she held the position of Associate Dean for Academic Programs responsible for student services and advising, international activities, outreach, teacher education and accreditation. Wiseman is also a professor in

the Teaching, Learning, Policy and Leadership Department.

Classroom Assignment #5: View the following clips. Use these discussions and your review of readings to answer the following question: What is the best thing rankings and the desire to move up in them have forced institutions to do? What is the worst thing?

Fox story on Claremont McKenna manipulating data for rankings (2012):

<http://video.foxnews.com/v/1425937852001/college-admits-to-inflating-sat-scores-for-rankings/>

- Sumner, J. (2005). Sins of admission. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(25), B34.
- Bowman, N. A. & Bastedo, M. N. (2009). Getting on the front page: Organizational reputation, status signals, and the impact of US News and World report rankings on student decisions. *Research in Higher Education*, 50, p. 415-436.
- Lovett, C. M. (2005). The perils of pursuing prestige. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(20),
- Morphew, C. C. & Baker, B. D. (2004). The cost of prestige: Do new research one universities incur increased administrative costs? *Review of Higher Education*, 27(3), 365-384.
- Hazelkorn, E. (2011). Rankings: Student Choice and Recruitment. P. 121-152. *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sponsler, B. A. (2009). *The Role and Relevance of Rankings in Higher Education Policymaking*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Session Six - January 10: We will continue our conversation about the impact of striving by turning to the influence of ranking systems and striving within the prestige hierarchy on faculty work-life and organizational culture. We will also look at cases of striving institutions in liberal arts colleges and research universities for how striving impacts the culture of a place.

Guest Speaker:

Robert Morse, Director of Data Research, U.S. News & World Report. Mr. Morse is responsible for the methodology and execution of the U.S. News rankings. He is also editor of the blog, "Morse Code."

Classroom Assignment #6: Use the readings today to consider how striving influences and is influenced by faculty. Identify three ways striving influences daily faculty work-life and careers.

Also please visit Robert Morse's blog on the USNWR ranking system:

<http://www.usnews.com/blogs/college-rankings-blog>

- Dubrow, G., Moseley, B, & Dustin, D. (2006). Life at mission creep U. *Academe*, 92(3), 24-28.
- Impact of college rankings on institutional decision-making: Four country case studies* (2009). Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- O'Meara, K. & Bloomgarden, A. (2010) Prestige at what Cost: Examining the consequences of striving for faculty work-life, reward systems, and satisfaction. *Journal of the Professoriate*, 4(1). 40-74.
- Gonzales, L. D. (2012). Responding to mission creep: faculty members as cosmopolitan agents. *Higher Education* 64(3), 337-353.

Ward, K. & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2005). *Faculty Life at Comprehensives: Between a Rock and A Hard Place*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA.

Hazelkorn, E. (2011). Impact and Influence of Rankings—The View from Inside Higher Education. p. 82-120. *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Session 7 - January 11: There are many stakeholders of ranking systems, including but not limited to students, parents, alumni, legislators, donors, administrators, higher education researchers, and state legislators. In this session we consider whether stakeholders are getting what they want from ranking systems. We will consider cases where some stakeholders have decided not to “play” in the rankings game. We will also discuss the role of membership groups as one parallel system to rankings such as AAU, the Ivy League, The Big Ten and Annapolis group.

Guest Speaker:

Rachel Fishman, Policy Analyst for the Education Policy Program, The New America Foundation. Rachel was involved in the production of the 2012 *Washington Monthly* college rankings. She is interested in problems around social mobility through higher education and was involved in the introduction of a new measure to *Washington Monthly*'s system this year, the cost-adjusted graduation rate, which she blogged about on *Higher Ed Watch*:

http://higheredwatch.newamerica.net/blogposts/2012/americas_best_bang_for_the_buck_colleges-70787

Classroom Assignment #7: Using readings from today and previous sessions, consider three ways the University of Maryland influences and is influenced by rankings and membership groups? Also consider which UM stakeholders care about which rankings and membership groups and which don't.

Fisher, B. (2009). Athletics success and institutional rankings. In J. D. Toma & D. A. Kramer II (Eds.), *New Directions for Higher Education*, 148, 45-53.

Callan, P. M., Doyle, W., Finney, J. E. (2001). Evaluating higher education performance: Measuring up 2000. *Change*, 33(2), 10-19.

Kirp, D. L. & Holman, J. (2004). This little student went to market. In D. L. Kirp, D. Solomon, P. Roberts, E. P. Berman, J. T. Holman, & J. VanAntwerpen (Eds.), *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education* (pp. 11-32). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Carey (2012). Who will hold colleges accountable? *NY Times*, A27.

Session 8 - January 11: During this class we consider several dominant alternative projects underway to assess quality in higher education and critique the strengths and weaknesses of each, as well as consider the challenges of measuring performance in higher education. We will also briefly consider three recent challenges to higher education as usual and how they are interacting with the dominant prestige system of higher education: Kahn Academy, MOOC's and Freedom Academy at the University of Georgia.

Guest Speaker:

Dr. George Mehaffy, Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. AASCU is a Washington-based higher education association of nearly 420 public colleges, universities and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development. Dr. Mehaffy has done a lot of thinking about the negative consequences of striving in AASCU institutions as well as the opportunity of these institutions to become something more distinctive: stewards of place, or institutions that mark their quality by the degree to which they provide unique service to a specific region and location.

Classroom Assignment #7: What do you think are the most compelling new ranking systems or assessments out there and why? Be very specific in your observations. Alternatively, what purposes and missions of higher education have no spotlight or a limited one because of the difficulty of measurement?

See TIME Magazine's coverage of its recently co-sponsored TIME Summit on Higher Education: <http://nation.time.com/reinventing-college/>

NPR interview with editor of Washington Monthly on their rankings vs. USNWR: <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/05/160607416/thinking-harvard-ranking-system-says-think-again>

- Mathews, J. (2005). Caveat lector: Unexamined assumptions about quality in higher education. In R. H. Hersch & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining By Degrees: Higher Education at Risk* (pp. 47-59). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Steedle, J. Kugelmass, H. & Nemeth, A. What do they measure? Comparing three learning outcomes assessments. *Change*, 42(4), 33-37.
- Ostriker, J. P., Holland, P. W., Kuh, C. V., & Voytuk, J. A. (Eds.) (2010). *A Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Azevedo, A. (2012). Khan academy founder proposes a new type of college. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/khan-academy-founder-proposes-a-new-type-of-college/41160?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en
- Fain, P. (2012). Establishment opens door for MOOCs. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/11/14/gates-foundation-and-ace-go-big-mooc-related-grants>
- Sander, L. (2012). In a secret classroom in Georgia, immigrants learn to hope. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/article/In-a-Secret-Classroom-in/136181/?cid=wb&utm_source=wb&utm_medium=en
- Session 9 - January 17:** Future Projections: What should be ranked, how and why? Final project presentations will begin during this class session. Each group will have 20 minutes for their presentation of a new ranking system. Students in the class will raise questions and provide feedback which should be integrated into the final paper submitted January 24, 2012.

Table A: Ranking Systems for Higher Education (not an exhaustive list)**Domestic Focus**

Publisher	Focus	Website
U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)	Reputational Surveys, Selectivity, Graduation and Retention Rates, Faculty Resources, Financial Resources, Alumni Giving, Graduation Rate Progress	http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges
The Princeton Review	Best 373 Colleges	http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx
Washington Monthly	Social Mobility, Research, and Service	http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/rankings_2010/national_university_rank.php
Forbes “America’s Best Colleges”	Student Satisfaction, Postgraduate Success, Student Debt, Four-Year Graduation Rate, Competitive Awards	http://www.forbes.com/2010/08/11/best-colleges-universities-rating-ranking-opinions-best-colleges-10_land.html
Payscale College Salary Report	Salary data from Payscale users	http://www.payscale.com/best-colleges
State University	A mix of non-reputational, government reported data	http://www.stateuniversities.com/
College Prowler Rankings	A variety including campus dining, housing, strictness, social life, safety, parking, and weather	http://collegeprowler.com/rankings/
The Chronicle of Higher Education’s “Great Colleges to Work For”	Workplace issues including governance, compensation, benefits, career development, an satisfaction	http://chroniclegreatcolleges.com/
“Rugg’s Recommendations on Colleges”	Academic departments and programs	http://www.ruggsrecommendations.com/
Bloomberg BusinessWeek “Best B-Schools”	Focus on business schools – academic quality, student satisfaction, job placement	http://www.businessweek.com/business-schools/
The Center for Measuring University Performance	Total research dollars, funding, endowments, annual giving, faculty awards, student competitiveness	http://mup.asu.edu/
The Faculty Scholarly	Citations, publications, research funding	http://chronicle.com/stats/productivity/

Productivity Index		
Kiplinger's 100 Best Values	Academic quality (selectivity), cost, and financial aid for public institutions	http://www.kiplinger.com/tools/colleges/
Princeton Review/USA Today Top 100 Best Value Colleges	"High-quality academics at a reasonable price"	http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/best-value-colleges.htm
My Chances College Rankings	Aggregated from student admissions decisions	http://college.mychances.net/college-rankings.php
The Global Language Monitor's College Rankings (TrendTopper MediaBuzz Rankings)	Based upon number of keyword appearances on the Internet	http://www.languagemonitor.com/college-rankings/
What Will They Learn? (American Council of Trustees and Alumni)	Core requirements: composition, literature, foreign language, U.S. history, economics, math, science	http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com/

Source: O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities*. Working Paper: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

International Focus

Publisher	Focus on	Website
"Academic Ranking of World Universities" (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) – often referred to as "the Shanghai rankings"	Nobel and Field winners, citation indices, publications in <i>Nature</i> and <i>Science</i> , per capita performance	http://www.arwu.org/
Times Higher Education (UK) (as of 2010 publishing separate from QS)	Teaching, citations, research (volume, income, and reputation), international mix, and industry income	http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/index.html
QS World University Rankings (UK) (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited)	Academic reputation (peer review), employer reputation, student-to-faculty ratio, citations per faculty, and international students and faculty.	http://www.topuniversities.com/
G-Factor International University Ranking (USA)	Using Google search engine, ranks links to a particular institution from the websites of others	http://universitymetrics.com/g-factor

Webometrics World University Rankings on the Web (Spain)	Web publication: visibility (external links), size, rich files, Google Scholar	http://www.webometrics.info/
Maclean's (Canada)	Student award winners, student-to-faculty ratio, faculty grants and awards, resources, student support, library, and reputation (peer review)	http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/rankings/
"International Professional Classification of Higher Education Institutions" - Ecole des Mines de Paris (France)	Alma maters of Fortune 500 CEOs	http://www.mines-paristech.fr/Actualites/PR/
Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan	Scientific papers citations: research productivity, research impact, and research excellence	http://ranking.heeact.edu.tw/en-us/2009/Page/Methodology
RatER (Rating of Educational Resources) (Russia)	Educational activity, research activity, faculty professional competence, financial maintenance, international activity, web volume	http://www.globaluniversitiesranking.org/
CHE Excellence Ranking (Center for Higher Education Development) (Germany)	European graduate study (by discipline/department)	http://www.excellenceranking.org/eusid/EUSID
4 International Colleges & Universities Web Ranking (Australia)	Web metrics: Google, Yahoo!, and Alexa	http://www.4icu.org/
High Impact Universities (Australia)	Research Performance Index: quality and consistency of publication	http://www.highimpactuniversities.com/
Scimago Institutions Rankings (Ibero-American Rankings) (Spain)	Research: scientific output, international collaboration, average scientific quality, publication rate	http://www.scimagoir.com/

O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities. Working Paper*: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

Table B: Framework for Analysis of Ranking Systems

History	Why was this ranking system created? By whom?
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Stakeholders	For whom? Who is it intended to serve?
The field	Who is included and excluded? What are the boundaries? (e.g. national or international, 2 or 4 year institutions?)
Criteria	What counts in this ranking system and why?
Measurement	How are the criteria evaluated? What are the methods for collecting data? What is the process?
Consequences	To what end? What behavior and outcomes do the rankings encourage?
Criteria and alternatives	What is distinctive and useful for this ranking? How could it be more effective at accomplishing its stated goals?

O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities. Working Paper*: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

Table C: Weaknesses of Dominant Ranking Systems

Critiques of Dominant Ranking Systems	Explanation
Mistaken Identity or False Advertising	Research reputation is taken as a proxy for academic program quality
Survival of the craftiest	They encourage fabrication of data, questionable strategic decisions to play to the criteria and not all institutions have the same resources to compile the data.
That's what she said...	They rely heavily on reputational surveys that are highly network driven.
The fix is in	Highly input focused –you can predict the institutional ranking easily by knowing the input measures such as student selectivity, age of institution, endowment, alumni giving. There is very little movement in rankings and most movement is not based on quality change as much as shifts in how criteria are measured from year to year.
The glow in dim light	Rater bias and halo effect—raters not knowing information to rate appropriately and time lag of knowledge
They encourage “strategic imitation.”	The rankings encourage institutions to mimic the behaviors of higher ranked institutions; they do not reward distinctive missions, cultures and identities.

O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities. Working Paper*: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

Additional Recommended Readings

Altbach, P. G. (2011). Rankings season is here. *International Higher Education*, 62, 2-13.
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- Richards, A. & Coddington, R. (2010, August 29). 30 ways to rate a college. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved November 29, 2010 from <http://chronicle.com/article/30-Ways-to-Rate-a-College/124160/>
- Tierney, W. G. (2009). Globalization, international rankings, and the American model: A reassessment. *Higher Education Forum*, 6, 1-18.

Schedule at a Glance

Date/Session	Due
1/3 (Session 1)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Webster; O'Meara; Birnbaum; Cutwright; Winston; Aldersley
<i>Essay:</i>	Reflective Essay One: History
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	Forces compelling striving
1/3 (Session 2)	
<i>Readings:</i>	O'Meara & Meekins; Meredith; Kuh & Pascarella; Pike; Ehrenberg
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	Analyze ranking system from syllabus using Table B
1/4 (Session 3)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Altbach; Hazelkorn; Marginson; Birnbaum; Morphey & Huisman; Rauvargers
<i>Essay:</i>	Reflective Essay Two: USNWR critique
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	Global influence of world rankings
1/4 (Session 4)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Monks & Ehrenberg; Dichev; Webster; Volkwein & Sweitzer; Hossler Best arguments for and against rankings; Also one paragraph team project
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	proposal due
1/10 (Session 5)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Bowman & Bastedo; Hazelkorn; Morphey & Baker; Sumner; Lovett; Sponsler
<i>Essay:</i>	Reflective Essay Three: Striving Behaviors
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	Best and worst things rankings have caused institutions to do
1/10 (Session 6)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Dubrow, et al.; O'Meara & Bloomgarden; Ward & Wolf-Wendel; Gonzales; Hazelkorn; Morse (blog)
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	Striving influences and faculty; also visit Robert Morse blog
1/11 (Session 7)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Fisher; Callan, et al.; Kirp & Holman, Carey
<i>Essay:</i>	Reflective Essay Four: Consequences of striving behavior
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	UM Stakeholders
1/11 (Session 8)	
<i>Readings:</i>	Steedle, et al.; Mathews; Ostriker, et al.; Azevedo; Fain; Sander
<i>Class Assign.:</i>	New ranking systems/assessments
1/17 (Session 9)	
<i>Essay:</i>	Reflective Essay 5: Stakeholders
<i>Final Project:</i>	Team Project Presentation
1/24	FINAL TEAM PROJECT PAPER DUE