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Room 226 Campion
552-4189
Office Hours:
Mon: 1:30-5:30PM
Thurs: 1:30-4:30PM

Education 349.01 (SC 568.01): Sociology of Education
(Fall Semester of 2007: Thurs 4:30-7:00PM)

I: The Course

The big question for this course is what is schooling for in modern society? Conventional sociological studies have concluded that schooling affects socialization, discovery of new knowledge, and economic opportunity. These arguments seem so simple and rational. Then, why are some people powerless and not well off. There still seems to be great inequality among people with education. Are some of them unlucky? What has education done for them?

Contrary to these conventional arguments about schooling, inequality is fostered by the lack of access to cultural resources and proper institutional ties. Further, one's success in education is influenced by access to these resources and networks. How does schooling perform these reproductive functions? While this course presents a variety of sociological perspectives of schooling, it focuses on the idea that schooling in modern society relates to cultural functions. These are some of our central questions for the course. Throughout the term, we will debate these questions and try to seek some useful explanations for the nature of cultural and value functions of the school and schooling.

The general format of the course will be based on lectures followed by discussions. The class will be divided into several groups (depending on the size of the class) and each will lead substantive discussions on the basis of reading assignments. Students are encouraged to follow assignments for each session and contribute to class discussion. Each student will be asked to lead at least two (or more) discussion sessions focusing on the assigned readings.

II. Requirements for the Course

There will be a mid-semester examination on October 18 (due on October 25) and a final examination that will be given at the end of the term, December 6 (due on December 13). Both examinations are take-home assignments. Your grade will be based on 40% from the mid-semester work and 40% from the final examination. Your class participation is important and that will contribute to your final grade up to 20%. The general format of these examinations will be discussed at the first meeting of the semester.

Doctoral level students who are interested in research issues in the sociology education may negotiate to write a paper for the course instead of taking two take-home examinations.

III. Textbooks

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and Contradictions of Economic Life. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

Note: This is a course pack reproduced by the BC Press and will be available at the bookstore.

Paul Willis, Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Peter Cookson, Jr. and Caroline H. Persell, Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

David Brooks, Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There. New York: Simon & Schuster 2000.

Thomas Rohlen, Japan's High Schools. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983.

Murray Milner, Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Joseph A. Soares, The Power of Privilege: Yale and America's Elite Colleges. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2007.

Note: A copy of these textbooks is also reserved at the ERC Library of Campion Hall.

Please note that the items listed below with (*) are available at the reserve room of the O'Neill Library. You may retrieve these items electronically. More information about this will be discussed in class.

IV. Topics for the Course

1. Introductory remarks (September 6)

Requirements for the course, textbooks, and other logistics related to the course.

Group assignments will be presented.

An introduction to the course with a summary of major propositions in the sociology of education.

2. Review of major perspectives in the sociology of education (September 6-13)
Classical theories, Functionalism, Human Capital Theory, Neo-Marxism, Cultural Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory and other competing perspectives on schooling and pathways to success in modern society (two weeks).

Readings:

*Max Weber, "The Rationalization of Education and Training," from H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essay in Sociology (1946), 240-244.

*Emile Durkheim, "The First Element of Morality: The Spirit of Discipline," from Moral Education: A study in the Theory and Application of Sociology of Education. The Free Press 1961,1973.

*David Goslin, The Functions of the School in Modern Society, The School in Contemporary Society, Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1965, 1-18.

S. Bowles and H. Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America, 3-44, 53-124, 149-288. This is available at the bookstore as a BC Course Pack.

*T.W. Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital." American Economic Review 51 (March 1961): 1-17.

*Randall Collins, "Functional and Conflict Theories of Education Stratification," American Sociological Review 36 (December 1971): 1002-1019.

*Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in Richard Brown (ed.), Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change, Tavistock Publication, 1973, 71-111.

* James S. Coleman and Thomas Hoffer, "Schools, Families, and Communities," from Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities, New York: Basic Books, 1987, 221-243.

*Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital." From Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, (ed.), J.G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986, 241-257. This is an optional item, but you are encouraged to read.

3. The Formal and "Hidden System" in School: Rules, Curriculum, Texts and Language (September 20)

What really happens in school? How do school norms influence self-perceptions of students?

How does the curriculum function in contemporary schools?

How do textbooks reflect an ideology that represents the interests of dominant social groups?

Do linguistic forms, symbols, and other expressive means affect inequality in education?

Readings:

*Philip Jackson, "The Student's World" in M.L. Silberman (ed.) The Psychology of Open Teaching and Learning, (1972) 1-82.

*Michael W. Apple, "The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict," from Ideology and Curriculum.. New York: Rutledge (1990), 82-104.

*Jean Anyon, "Ideology and US history textbooks," Harvard Educational Review, 49, No.3 (August 1979): 361-81.

4. Culture of Poverty and Entrapment: A Sociological Analysis of Schooling (September 27–October 4)

Why are some children trapped in the culture of poverty?

There is a sense of equality of innocence among children, but there seems to be deep inequality of schooling. What are some structural reasons for such inequality?

How does the culture of poverty reproduce itself over generations? How does poverty relate to education?

Readings:

Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, New York: Harper Perennial 1991, 1-39, 83-132, 175-233, and 206-233.

5. Stratification within school (October 4 – October 12)

How do schools generate caste-like status groups among students? Who fits in and who stands out in school? How is power distributed in school? How do consumerism and capitalism influence an informal status system school? Discuss a cultural form of inequality in school?

Readings (for two weeks):

Murray Milner Jr., Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption, new York: Rutledge, 2004.

Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2.

Part II and Part III.

Part IV and Appendix 1.

MID-SEMESTER PAPER (due on October 19)

6. Stratification within school (October 19)

How does the organization of classroom generate a stratification system?
 What is "classroom tracking" in school and how does that work?
 How does one observe stratification between schools?

Readings:

*Maureen T. Hallinan, "Tracking: From Theory to Practice," Sociology of Education 67:2 (April 1994), 79-84.

*Jennie Oakes, "The Distribution of Knowledge," from Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, 61-92.

*Samuel R. Lucas and Adam Gamoran, "Tracking and the Achievement Gap." In J.E. Chubb and T. Loveless (Ed.s), Bridging the Achievement Gap. Washington DC: Brooking Institution, 2002, 171-198.

7. Schooling and the reproduction of social class (October 25 – November 1)

Contrary to the view that schooling as morally consensual and socially integrative, how does schooling pose class conflict and the oppression of others? Does social class make any differences in schooling? How does the culture of social class explain the behavior of youths with respect to the school authority?
 How does schooling shape different life styles and lead to different cultural consequences?

Readings (for two weeks):

Paul Willis, Learning to Labor, the entire book except chapters 7 and 8.

David Brooks, Bobos in Paradise, Introduction, 13 – 102.

8. Schooling and reproduction of the elite (November 8)

How does schooling prepare students for power and privilege by tracking students according to status origins? What does “prep crucible” mean? How does that affect students’ life pathways after schooling?

Readings:

Peter W. Cookson, Jr. and Caroline H. Persell, Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools. New York: Basic Books, 1985. Read the entire book.

David Brooks, Bobos in Paradise, 103-139, 140-189, 255-276.

9. Meritocracy in transformation (November 15)

While the old meritocratic machinery is changing, do prestigious institutions substitute the role of reproduction of privileged groups? What happens to class origins, ability, and test performances? Do character and leadership matter for elite schooling?

Readings:

Joseph A. Soares, The Power of Privilege: Yale and America's Elite Colleges, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007, the entire book, but the emphasis is on chapters 4,5, and 6.

10. Schooling and stratification in the comparative context (November 29 – December 6)

What does inequality in education mean in Japan? How does history define this? Why are high schools so important to Japanese society? Does high school function as the moral community in Japan? How does the culture of examination systems in Japan shape social norms and lives of children? How do modern societies use examination systems to bring about educational reforms?

Readings (for two weeks):

Thomas P. Rohlen, Japan's High Schools. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, Introduction, 11-141, 145-169, 170-209, 241-270 and Conclusion.

*W.J. Popham, " Report Cards and Sanctions," from America's Failing Schools. New York: Routledge-Falmer, 2004, 37-45.

*Peter Sacks, "Standardized Minds: Thinking Styles and the Testing Game," from Standardized Minds: The High Price of America's Testing Culture and What We can Do to Change It Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1999, 201-220.

U.S. Department of Education. Office the Secretary, Office of the Public Affairs. No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide. Washington DC. 2003. This is an optional item.

11. Summary (December 6)

Why does schooling matter in modern society? How can society solve persistent inequality problems? What are the lessons from these readings?

12. Final Examination paper (due on December 12)

Questions for “Life on the Mississippi: East St. Louis, Illinois”

4. How does racial segregation lead to an increased level of poverty? Explain.
5. How would you explain the thesis that an aggregation of individual poverty leads to a limited access to public resources?
6. Does the extent of industrial expansion cause racial segregation? What is your hypothesis?
7. How does the quality of schooling lead to social entrapment? Elaborate this.
8. Does the extent of social entrapment reproduce itself?

Questions for “ Public Education in New York”

7. What does a fair competition mean? Does it mean equal chances for all for outcomes?
8. How does racial segregation promote a degree of distortion in the idea of fair competition?
9. How does education bring about a “landscape of hopelessness” ?

4. Do large and wealthy corporations have a social obligation to support poor schools? Use the argument for liberty and social justice to bring out your point.