This course will examine the relationship between education and society through the lens of sociology. In the first three weeks of class (Introduction to Sociology: Theories of Society, Methods, and Mechanisms), students will learn basic sociological language and perspectives that will help them to dissect the material throughout the course. Here, they will be first introduced to three review essays of the sociology of education that will help them to understand how scholars have organized historical perspectives related to education and society. They will also be lectured in the various ways sociologists design research in order to better understand the diverse methodologies contained in texts throughout the course. In each of the seven sections following the class introduction, students will be introduced to culturally diverse perspectives that will challenge their understanding of education beyond their own experiences. Each section will contain texts on viewpoints outside the dominant perspective.

Students will learn to examine some of the perennial questions in the sociology of education, such as:

**Solidarity and Socialization:** What is the social function of modern schooling? What social order does schooling bring to society? Is that social order ethnocentric and does it leave out or oppress non-dominant groups? What is the social function of modern schooling in a global society?

Students will learn how functionalist perspectives from Durkheim and Parsons first led theorists to think of education as an institution that could socialize a citizenry according to dominant social values. Students will understand nation-building as a mechanism driving socialization, and then will critically evaluate how the “hidden curriculum” of schooling operates from an ethnocentric perspective. While functionalist perspectives were discredited throughout sociology, globalization has re-invigorated a discussion of socialization and solidarity in recent years. Students will be introduced to the technological method of virtual exchange and will be asked to apply their new understanding of socialization and solidarity in schooling to an era of boundary-less learning.

**Status and Attainment:** Does education encourage social mobility? What role does education play in class stratification? How do we measure status and attainment in regard to educational predictors, or vice-versa? What is missing when we quantify status? How might non-dominant youth resist educational achievement and why? What taken-for-granted role does capitalism play in schooling?

Students will learn the relationship between education and opportunity, how it has been
measured and theorized, and what role power plays in rational choice perspectives that link education to opportunity. In this section, cultural perspectives will begin to appear as to challenge models of social mobility through schooling, and the taken-for-grANTED ness of capitalism will emerge through these cultural perspectives.

Social Reproduction: Does education reproduce existing social inequalities? What culture has currency in the education system, and how does that translate to the rest of society? What are the social costs of social reproduction? Are there personal costs to social reproduction?

Students will learn the complex paradox in the sociology of education, which states that education can both facilitate social mobility and reproduce social inequality. In this section, students will learn the cultural mechanisms that facilitate social reproduction through schooling and will read ethnographic and journalistic accounts of social reproduction. This section will begin to explore the connection between culture and institutions, which will be introduced in the next section.

Institutions and Organizations: What are the dominant institutional and organizational frameworks in education? How do institutional and organizational lenses help us understand structural inequality? Do certain institutional and organizational frameworks preserve power as taken-for-grANTED? Are responses and challenges to inequality in education limited by institutional and organizational frames?

The sociology of education takes a turn towards quantitative studies of social mobility as introduced in the status and attainment section, but scholars like Stevens (2008) argue that institutional and organizational perspectives are necessary to revive a subfield that has somewhat lost itself in a policy-dominated educational audience. The study of institutions and organizations are central to the beginnings of sociology and in this section students will learn how their revival in education literature provides a powerful lens for understanding structural inequality. Students will also learn how institutional and organizational environments can limit how problems in education are conceptualized, as well as how to see beyond taken-for-grANTED organizational frames.

Peers and Status Cultures: How do youth build status cultures in schools? What role does consumerism play in youth status cultures? How might these cultures impact educational outcomes? How do peers influence cultural behavior in college, such as partying? Is this behavior structurally encouraged and maintained?

The structure of schooling goes beyond the brick and mortar classroom and the abstract organizational charts or funding channels. Peers play a large role in creating the structure of schooling through status cultures. These status cultures, as Milner explains, are functional for the reproduction of consumerism in young people. Armstrong’s work will show how peer and status cultures can become structurally embedded within the pathways towards academic and career success in higher education. Students will learn how seemingly benign rites of first-year initiation and socialization through massive alcohol consumption can be linked to the reproduction of inequality.
Reform, Alternatives, and Radical Change: Is education reform enough to fix social problems? How do we conceptualize reform? What alternative models might exist? Is radical change necessary?

With a fair understanding of much of what is challenging in our current societal educational context, students will then learn about educational reform and its limits. Creative perspectives in critical pedagogy will be introduced as alternatives to current reform strategies. Students will be challenged to envision what “better” looks like in education, and how it might be achieved.

21st Century Challenges and Opportunities: Can education respond to 21st century challenges like climate change and rising inequality? Do youth only learn at school? What are technological changes, like web 2.0 and social media, contributing to the educational opportunities of youth? Can we “technofix” education, or will we reproduce inequality with more technology? Can a model like Connected Learning reform the education system? How are challenges like the rising cost of higher education inviting new organizational forms for college?

Lastly, students will be introduced to the rising field of digital media and learning, specifically Connected Learning, as a possible paradigm shift in education that is being facilitated through technological advances. Now that students have a solid conceptualization of the critical questions in the sociology of education, students will be asked to think about technologically and interest driven, peer-supported strategies as potential for education reform.

Because education is a social system that all students have had some type of experience with, students will be encouraged to situate the readings within their own experiences in order to develop a personal philosophy around the class topics. Inquiry is an active process and is both informative and formative, and in this class students will be challenged with a level of inquiry that will allow them to reflect on their past, current, and future educational journey. During our introductory classes we will establish class ground-rules for dialogue that will contribute to a valuable, challenging, but safe classroom experience. The class will be dialogue and writing intensive. As an instructor, I view the two as equally beneficial elements of pedagogy and expect students to do the same for this course. Students will complete five writing assignments (2-3 pages) for five class sections of their choice (from the seven listed above). Each assignment will allow room for their own voices and perspectives, but will require a level of informed scholarly discernment as well. I am prepared to help the class develop this voice and will also assist in accessing campus resources to improve writing. Please do not hesitate to ask me for direction.

A schedule of assignment dates is available on the class website on Canvas. Late work will not be accepted for credit unless I have granted an extension before the due date of the assignment. Writing assignment prompts will be distributed at the beginning of each new section. The class will also include a written midterm and final that will situate sections in conversation with each other. If students are keeping up with their essays, both the midterm and final will not be challenging. The midterm will be a take home essay and the final will be an in-class essay exam.
The final exam is scheduled for 12:30 pm on Tuesday, December 16 per Boston College’s final exam schedule. It is imperative that students show up to class for lectures and participate in dialogue. This is not a course that one can receive a distinguished final grade just by reading and completing the assignments. Some of the texts are challenging, but as a group we will interrogate them using our perennial questions as a guide. Final grades will be computed as follows:

- 5 essays @ 10% each = 50%
- Class Participation @ 10% = 10%
- Midterm @ 20% = 20%
- Final @ 20% = 20%

**Academic Integrity**
Academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this class. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at:

www.bc.edu/integrity

If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with me. If you are caught violating Boston College’s policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance to the rules set forth by Boston College.

**Books to Purchase at the bookstore or via Amazon:**
- Alan R. Sadovnik *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader* (1st or 2nd ed)*
  *referred to as “Reader” throughout the rest of the syllabus*
- Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Laura T. Hamilton *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*
- Annette Lareau *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*
- Rebecca Gilman *Spinning Into Butter: A Play*
- Alfred Lubrano *Limbo: Blue Collar Roots, White Collar Dreams*
- Murray Milner, Jr. *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*
- Anya Kamenetz *DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*

Books to download or access for free
- Anya Kamenetz *The Edupunk’s Guide to a DIY Credential*
  http://edupunksguide.org/get_the_guide
- John Dewey *Democracy and Education*
  http://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm#link2HCH0001

**Guests:**

Each section will also include a visit from a digital or in-person guest working on the practitioner side of the issues we are discussing. These guests will share a bit of their own work and will join our dialogue to help bring to life some of the topics.
SCHEDULE & READINGS

I. Introduction to Sociology: Theories of Society, Methods, and Mechanisms (1.5 weeks)

1. Syllabus and expectations; Thinking like a sociologist part 1

2. Thinking like a sociologist part 2; What is the role or function of schooling?
   Reserve:
   Chapter 2 “How America Expanded Education and Why it Mattered”

   Pp. 294-308 “Labor and Leisure”

   Chapter 2 “The banking concept of education”

   Chapter 4 “Inventing the Middle Class Child”

   Chapters 1 & 2: “Arc-of-Life Learning” and “A Tale of Two Cultures”

3. Introduction to sociological theory through the lens of education
   Reader:
   Introduction & Chapter 1 “Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education” by Alan R. Sadovnik

   Reserve:

II. **Solidarity and Socialization** (1.5 weeks)

1. Durkheim and Parsons: stabilizing society through education
   
   **Reader:**
   
   Chapter 2 “On Education and Society” by Emile Durkheim
   
   **Reserves:**
   
   
   
   Chapter 10 “New to the Promised Land”
   
   

2. The Hidden Curriculum: educating for whose society?

   **Reader:**
   
   Chapter 21 “Collective Identity and the Burden of ‘Acting White’ in Black History, Community, and Education” by John Ogbu
   
   Chapter 22 “Burden of Acting Neither White nor Black: Asian American Identities and Achievement in Urban Schools” by Jamie Lew
   
   **Reserves:**
   


3. Revisiting Socialization: globalization; dealing with difference through virtual exchange

*Digital Guest – Maggie Mitchell Salem and Francesca Carpenter, Qatar Foundation International*

Visit website [http://exchange2point0.org/](http://exchange2point0.org/) and watch videos “See virtual exchange in action”

Reader:

Chapter 15 “Nation versus Nation: The Race to be First in the World” by David P. Baker and Gerald Letendre

Reserve:


III. Status and Attainment (1.5 weeks)

1. Stratification, Status, and Mobility

Reader:

Chapter 3 “Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification” by Randall Collins

Reserve:

2. Quantifying Status and Attainment

Reserve:


3. Conflict, Capital, and Capitalism

*Guest: Jess Banks, Senior Manager of Program Development, BELL: Building Educated Leaders for Life*

Reserve:


IV. **Social Reproduction** (2.5 weeks)

1. Forms of Capital

   Reader:

   Chapter 6 “Forms of Capital” by Pierre Bourdieu
   Chapter 7 “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital” by James S. Coleman

   - Chapter 1 “Concerted Cultivation and the Accomplishment of Natural Growth”
   - Chapter 2 “Social Structure and Daily Life”
   - Appendix B “Theory: Understanding the Work of Pierre Bourdieu”

2. Unequal Childhoods I

   - Part I: The Organization of Daily Life
   - Part II: Language Use

3. Unequal Childhoods II

   - Part III: Families and Institutions
   - Appendix A “Methodology: Enduring Dilemmas in Fieldwork”

4. Limbo: The Birth and Clash of Values

   - Introduction – Chapter 4

5. Limbo: Duality and the Never Ending Struggle

   *Digital Guest: Harriet Williams, Former Director of TRIO/Student Support Services at the University of Vermont; Founder, Dress for Success Burlington*

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

MIDTERM
(Distributed October 17, due Oct 22nd at Noon)

V. Institutions and Organizations (1.5 weeks)

1. Education as an Institution; Organizational Perspectives

Reader:

Chapter 9 “The Effects of Education as an Institution” by John W. Meyer

Reserve:


2. The Complex Organization of Higher Education

*Guest: Representative from Isaacson, Miller (higher education executive search firm) TBD*

Reserve:


3. Diversity and Adversity


Reserve:


VI. Peers and Status Culture (2 weeks)

1. Status Relations and Schooling


   Appendix 1 “The Theory of Status Relations: Elaborations”
   Part I: The Puzzle and the Tools
   Part II: Explaining Teens’ Behavior

2. Status Culture and Consumerism

*Digital Guest: Screenwriter George Northy (G.B.F., MTV’s Faking It)*


   Part III: Why Schools Vary
   Part IV: Teen Status Systems and Consumerism

3. The Party Pathway


   Introduction – Chapter 5

4. Life After the Party


   Chapters 6 - 9
VII. Reform, Alternatives, and Radical Change (1.5 weeks)

1. School & Policy Reform: Are they Effective?

Reading:
Chapter 27 “Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform” by David C. Berliner

Reserves:
Chapter 1 “Life on the Mississippi”

Chapter 9 “Do We Still Need Affirmative Action?”

2. Praxis and Critical Pedagogy

*Digital Guest: Sabrina Kwist, Director of Engagement and Inclusion, Mills College*

Reserves:
Chapter 4 “Teaching is a Human Act”


3. Deschooling Society

Digital Resource:

Through above link, access & read Ivan Illich’s Deschooling Society & lurk through P2PU open book group
VIII. 21st Century Challenges & Opportunities (2.5 weeks)

1. Introduction to Digital Media and Learning

Reserve:

Chapter 1 “Introduction”
Chapter 2 “Understanding Learning in Not-School Environments”

Chapter 1 “Introduction”
Chapter 5 “Gaming”

Chapter 1 “Introduction and Overview: The Future of Learning Institutions in a Digital Age”
Chapter 6: “HASTAC: A Case Study of a Virtual Learning Institution as a Mobilizing Network”

2. Digital Inequality

Zeynep Tufekci on Brogrammer Culture:
medium.com/technology-and-society/2f1fe84c5c9b

Reserve:


3. Introduction to Connected Learning

Reserve:


4. Connected Learning Case Studies

*Digital Guest: Junior researcher from the Connected Learning Research Network (TBD)*

Reserve:


5. Rising Cost of Higher Education


6. DIY U and Alternative Institutions

Edupunk’s Guide to a DIY Credential

http://edupunksguide.org/get_the_guide
Reserve: