

Sociology of Education

ED349.01 / SC 568.01

Fall 2009

Thursday 4:30-7:00 PM

Room 204, Campion Hall

Instructor:

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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. Yet, there is still great inequality among people. Are some people simply incapable or unlucky?

Contrary to conventional arguments about schooling, inequality is fostered by the lack of access to particular cultural resources and proper institutional ties. Further, one's success in education is influenced by access to these resources and networks and therefore success of the child in schooling is very much an outcome of the type and accessibility of resources in environments. While this course presents a variety of sociological perspectives of schooling, it focuses on the idea that schooling in modern society is related to cultural functions. Throughout the semester, we will debate these questions and try to seek some useful explanations for the nature of cultural and value functions of schools and schooling generally.

II. Course Requirements

The course requirements consist of two take-home examinations, short reviews of two films, and class participations. Please note that student participations with respect to weekly reading assignments are important to this course. The following table provides an outline of each requirement. More details will be provided in class.

| | Summary of requirements | Due date | % of grade |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| Class participation | Participation in general class discussions and in class exercises, including summaries of readings | Ongoing | 20% |
| Mid-term Exam | Take-home exam distributed in class on October 15 | 29-Oct | 30% |
| Film discussion paper | A summary paper on "Mean Girls," class discussion | 12-Nov | 5% |
| Film discussion paper | A summary paper on "Educating Rita," class discussion | 3-Dec | 5% |
| Final Exam | Take-home exam distributed in class on December 3 | 16-Dec | 40% |

Graduate students who are interested in substantive research issues in the sociology of education may negotiate to write a paper for the course instead of taking the two take-home examinations. The topic and the scope of the paper may be negotiated with the instructor within the first four weeks of the course.

III. Textbooks

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

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

Annette Lareau, Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003.

Murray Milner, Jr., Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption. New York: Routledge, 2004 and 2005.

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

IV. Other Materials:

A number of papers and excerpts from books can be found in the reserve room of O'Neill Library. You may also retrieve these items from the library's Online Course Reserves. These reserve items are marked with an (*).

The films, "Mean Girls" and "Educating Rita," are available on reserve in the Media Center in O'Neill Library.

V. Course Topics and Readings

September 10 - Introduction

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

Introductory remarks and course overview

- Requirements for the course, textbooks, and other logistics related to the course.
- Assignments will be discussed.

Introduction to major perspectives in the sociology of education

- 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.

Reading (to be read after the first class meeting):

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

*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.

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

September 17 - Schooling and economic structure

Why are some children trapped in poverty? There is belief that children are equally innocent and therefore deserving of the same opportunities, yet there is deep inequality of schooling. What are some structural reasons for such inequality? How are the conditions of poverty reproduced over generations? How does poverty relate to education?

Reading:

*S. Bowles and H. Gintis, "Broken Promises: School Reform in Retrospect" from Schooling in Capitalist America, Basic Books: New York, 1976. Pages 18-41.

Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, New York: Harper Perennial 1991, 1-39. (*To be distributed in class*)

Optional Readings:

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

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

September 24 - Schooling and cultural and social capital

Recent research on education has explored the relationship between educational success and forms of capital other than wealth. This research has focused on cultural and social capital

Reading:

*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.

*A. Lareau, "Theory: Understanding the Work of Pierre Bourdieu, " from Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003. Pages 275-278 (Appendix B).

* 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.

Optional Reading:

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

Note: This is an important seminal reading and I encourage you to try to read as much as you can. Graduate students should try to read this.

October 1 - The Formal and "Hidden Systems" in Schools: Rules, Curriculum, Texts and Language

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?

Reading:

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

*Basil Bernstein, "Social Class and Linguistic Development: A Theory of Social Learning," in A.H. Halsey et al (eds.), Education, Economy, and Society, Collier-McMillan, London, 1961, 1979, 288-314.

*Philip Jackson, "The Student's World" in M.L. Silberman (ed.) The Psychology of Open Teaching and Learning, (1972) 76-84.

Optional Reading:

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

October 8 - Social class environments and education

Reading:

Annett Lareau, Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life, Pages 1-8, 163, and 164 and chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10.

Optional Reading:

Annette Lareau, "The Power and the Limits of Social Class," from Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003. Pages 9-13 and appendices A and B.

October 15 - Race and Schooling

How does race affect the self-perception of ones' achievement? Does the level of social capital matter in achievement among minority groups?

Reading:

*John Ogbu, "Collective Identity and the Burden of Acting White in Black History, Community and Education, " Urban Review, Vol. 36, No. 1, (2004),1-35.

*Jamie Lew, "Burden of Acting Neither White Nor Black: Asian American Identities and Achievement in Urban Schools" Urban Review: Vol., 38, No. 5. (2005), 335-352.

*Ricardo Salazar-Stanton, Lisa Chavez, and Robert Tai, "The Help-Seeking Orientation of Latino and non-Latino Urban High School Students: A Critical-Sociological Investigation, from Social Psychology of Education, Vol. 5 (2001), 49-82.

October 22 – Mid-semester examination questions distributed in class.

October 22 - The impact of abilities in producing life-long outcomes

What does research tell us about child development and adult quality of life? How do family environments affect the cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of children? Do social investments at different ages produce different outcomes? What impact do the different levels of schooling have on subsequent outcomes for children? What, if anything, from psychological and economic insights, might benefit from a sociological approach?

Reading:

*James Heckman, "Schools, Skills and Synapses," *Economic Inquiry*, 46(3): 289-324, 2008.

- Undergraduate students need only read pages 289 through 315, but would benefit from reading the rest of the paper as well.
- Graduate students need to read all of the paper, including appendices, notes, figures, and tables.

*"All My Children," *New York Times*, July 31, 2005.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/31/education/edlife/kirp31.html?scp=4&sq=high%20stakes%20testing%20reading%20math%20Arizona%20schools&st=cse>

October 29- MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATION PAPERS DUE at beginning of class.

October 29 - Schooling and high stakes testing

American policy makers are increasingly interested in using standard examinations to assess individuals and schools. What are the intentions driving standardized testing? What are the outcomes of such testing? Are there any unintended consequences of such

testing? Are there better ways of testing or should testing be done away with altogether?

What does inequality in education mean in Japan? Why are high schools so important to Japanese society? How does the culture of examination systems in Japan shape social norms and lives of children? How do other modern societies use examination systems to bring about educational reforms?

Readings:

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

* Robert C. Pianta, "Accountability in Early Childhood: No Easy Answers," from School readiness & the Transition to Kindergarten in the Era of Accountability. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 2007. Pages 31-44.

Thomas P. Rohlen, Japan's High Schools. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, Introduction, 11-44, 77-110.

November 5 - Film assignment distributed in class: "Mean Girls."

November 5 – Stratification within schools

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 in schools? Discuss a cultural form of inequality in school?

Reading and film viewing:

Murray Milner Jr., Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption, New York: Rutledge, 2004. Introduction, Parts I, II, and III

Optional reading:

Murray Milner Jr., Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption, New York: Rutledge, 2004. Part IV and App. 1.

November 12 – "Mean Girls" discussion paper due at beginning of class.

November 12 - Schooling and the reproduction of the social elite

Contrary to the view that schooling is morally consensual and socially integrative, how does schooling engender class conflict and the oppression of others? Does social class make any differences in schooling? How does the culture of a 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:

David Brooks, Bobos in Paradise, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

Peter W. Cookson, Jr. and Caroline H. Persell, Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools. New York: Basic Books, 1985. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

November 19 - Film assignment distributed: "Educating Rita."

November 19 - Schooling and reproduction of the social elite, *continued*

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. Chapter 10.

David Brooks, Bobos in Paradise, Chapter 7.

November 26 – Thanksgiving holiday.

December 3 – "Educating Rita" film discussion paper is due at beginning of class.

December 3 - Meritocracy in transformation

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. Chapters 5 and 6.

*James. E. Rosenbaum, "College-for-all: Do students understand what college demands?" *Social Psychology of Education*, Vol 2, pp. 50-85, 1998.

December 10 – Final examination questions distributed in class.

December 10 - Summary

Why does schooling matter in modern society? What are the lessons from the material covered in this class? How can society solve persistent inequality problems?

Readings:

Annette Lareau, "The Power and the Limits of Social Class," from Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003. Chapter 12.

*David C. Berliner, "Our impoverished view of educational reform," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 108, 16, pp. 949-995, 2005.

*December 16 - Final Examination paper due to Professor Youn's office, Room 226
Campion Hall. (Only paper copies will be accepted – no electronic submission.)*