

Sociology 426: Sociology of Education

Instructor Details:

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Hamilton 200

Office Hours: M&W 10-11 AM and by appointment

Course Details:

Fall 2019

MWF 11:15-12:05

Genome G010

SOCI 426-001

Course Goals:

Through this course you will learn how to analyze the American education system in a sociological way. You will examine topics such as the role of family background, school choice, standardized testing, college admissions, and college financial aid. The course will primarily seek to answer the following question: does the American education system decrease, increase, or maintain the existing inequality in the US?

I imagine each of you will enter the class with different opinions and perspectives on this question—perspectives I hope you are willing to share with your classmates—but through this course you will learn how sociologists engage in systematic research to answer and debate this question. As a class, we will also discuss how we might seek to solve some of the problems we address while keeping in mind real-world constraints. Whether you are a sociology major, a student considering a career in the education field, or a student interested broadly in issues of inequality, I hope you will find this course interesting, thought provoking, and relevant—to your past, present, and future.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- 1) Analyze the education system's role in reproducing and mitigating inequality
- 2) Apply sociological theory and research to solving education problems
- 3) Evaluate the state of research and/or create policy recommendations for a selected topic within sociology of education

How We Will Learn:

My goal for this course is primarily to help you learn to think and critically analyze research about education in a way that is deeply rooted in the real world. To that end, there are no traditional exams in this class. You will have daily quizzes (see below) to give me a sense of whether you are understanding the readings, but otherwise no assignments will ask you to regurgitate information. Instead, you will be expected to discuss and write about the course topics using the course materials, your classmates, and other resources.

I assume that you all come to this class from different backgrounds. Some of you may be new to college while others may be almost done. Most of you are likely working jobs and have other obligations outside of this classroom. I understand and respect your different backgrounds. This class is designed largely around group work and group learning. You all will have different strengths that you bring to the class, as well as skills you may not have developed as much as you would like yet. I hope you will use your different perspectives to make this class better—challenge course material that conflicts with experiences you have had, explain concepts your groupmates are not as familiar with, and ultimately work together through your diverse perspectives to understand and evaluate the sociological perspective on education.

Communicating with Me and Your Classmates:

- Office hours:
 - I will hold official office hours twice a week (see above).
 - I prefer that you email before coming so that I can make sure I am prepared to discuss whatever you would like, but you also feel free to stop by any time during those hours.
 - I am on campus a lot! Let me know if you would like to meet at a different time outside of normal office hours and I will be very happy to do that.
 - Feel free to talk to me about course concerns as well as other topics on your mind. For instance, several of my college professors were great mentors to me in helping me think through my experiences in college as well as what I might want to do afterwards. I am more than happy to have those types of conversations with you or work to connect you with people who might know more about your interests than I do! You are not just a student, you are a person and I hope to live up to my goal of always treating you as such.
- The best way to communicate with me is talking to me before or after class or sending me an email. I will try to always respond within 24 hours, though I may be slower to respond on weekends and during breaks.
- In return, I also expect that you will check your email regularly in case there are any updates for the class.
 - *You will be held accountable for information disseminated over emails so please check yours daily!*
- I also hope you form good relationships with your fellow classmates. While I will break you into groups after the first few days of class, I hope you will come to feel closer to all of your fellow classmates.
 - Getting to know your peers will facilitate your learning as well as help you if you ever need to miss class.
- At a minimum, I expect you to all respect each other in class discussions, contributions to group work, and all other areas of class.

Assignments and Ways You Will Be Assessed:

Daily Quizzes (15%): These quizzes will be taken on Sakai by 8 AM the morning of class. The quizzes should primarily be understood as reading quizzes. If you do the readings for that class, you should find the questions moderately easy. Most will ask you to explain the main argument or methods from the reading. You will also sometimes be asked review questions about topics covered the class before. You will be asked to sign an honor pledge before each quiz verifying that the quiz response is your own without any help from classmates or the readings themselves, though you may use any notes you personally take on the readings while you complete the quiz. In-class activities may occasionally count as quiz grades. I will drop your two lowest quiz grades.

NOTE: Because these quizzes are taken outside of class on your own time AND I am dropping your two lowest quiz grades, there are no makeup quizzes except for in extreme extenuating circumstances.

Research Paper Project (total of 45%):

- Topic Paper (5%)
- Outline and Bibliography (5%)
- Peer Edit and Recommendations for Group Members (5%)
- Final Draft (30%)

For this project, you will examine in-depth a topic/question related to sociology of education. Your project can be more theoretical or more applied and will likely fall into one of four categories: an argumentative literature review, a research proposal, a research study, or a policy recommendation paper. All four will require you to synthesize the current state of research on a topic of your choosing, though they will also allow you to pursue the topic in a direction that is most interesting and meaningful for you. If you would like to propose a different kind of paper than these four, I am open to the idea—come talk to me early if that is the case. The final paper must be 12-15 pages.

Class Discussion Leader (Group) (15%):

Each group will be expected to lead most of a class discussion one day. You will be expected to come up with discussion questions in advance and will also be responsible for leading the discussion during class that day. You will have an optional opportunity to create and lead a short activity to be completed before the discussion to enhance your classmates' learning as well. The days available to lead class discussion are indicated with an asterisk (*) below.

Final Assessment (Group) (15%):

This will be an open everything assessment—you will be able to use notes, readings, the internet, and even your classmates as resources while you work on this (mostly) in-class assessment during the final exam period. You will have group and individual components of the assessment, which will ask you to critically reflect on the important themes of the course. I will go over more details later in the term. Please check ASAP to verify no final exam conflicts.

Participation (10%): This will be jointly determined by you and me. As the student, you will fill out your own evaluation form of your participation three times during the semester: once at the beginning, once halfway through, and once at the end. You will evaluate your self-perceived level of participation in the course, including attendance/tardiness, level of preparation for each class meeting, level of participation in partner/group discussions, level of participation in full class discussions, and level of participation in other ways (i.e. office hours, going to the UNC Writing Center, study or working groups, peer editing with a partner, etc.). You will evaluate yourself at the end of the semester, including proposing a participation grade. Using your information provided as well as my own observations, I will either agree with your proposed grade or modify it, providing feedback to you before final grades are submitted.

Grading Scale:

		B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	Below 60

Required Books and Resources:

- Armstrong, Elizabeth, and Laura Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [available for free online through UNC library]
- Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, 2nd edition. Berkeley: University of California Press. [available for free online through UNC library]
- Other readings are available on Sakai or via links on the syllabus.
- You will be required to bring your laptop to class every day, though there will be times during class when I will require you to put your computer away.
- You will also be expected to bring a pen/pencil and paper to class to participate in class activities.

Honor Code:

As you know, UNC has an honor code regarding plagiarism and academic integrity. While many assignments or projects for this course will be done in groups, some assignments will be individual. I promise to always make it clear in assignment guidelines what types of collaboration or help from peers are acceptable and what are not. In return, you will be held to your promise as a Carolina student to always follow UNC's guidelines and policies. If you have any questions, always ask permission or clarification beforehand!

Accommodations:

While there are no traditional exams in this course, some of you may still qualify for accommodations officially through UNC. Please be sure those are on file with the appropriate offices on campus who will reach out to me to facilitate your accommodations. Some of you may need accommodations that do not fit under typical UNC policies. If you have any concerns at any time about your ability to succeed in this class, please talk to me as soon as these concerns arise so that we can try to take care of them together!

Schedule:

Note: all dates, readings, and other requirements subject to change based on instructor's discretion. Announcements will be made in class and/or via email if any changes occur.

Wednesday August 21

First Day of Class!

THEME 1: INTRODUCTION

Friday August 23

What Should Education Do?

- Fully read syllabus
- Mann, Horace. 1848. "Twelfth Annual Report to the Secretary of the Massachusetts States Board of Education." <https://genius.com/Horace-mann-twelfth-annual-report-to-the-secretary-of-the-massachusetts-state-board-of-education-1848-annotated>

DUE: About Me (google form)

Monday August 26

What Does Education Do?

- Downey, Douglas B. and Dennis J. Condron. 2016. "Fifty Years since the Coleman Report: Rethinking the Relationship between Schools and Inequality." *Sociology of Education* 89(3). Read 207-213 and 216-218; SKIM 213-216.
- And You Will Be Assigned One More:
 - Schneider, Barbara. 2016. "Schneider Comment on Downey and Condron." *Sociology of Education* 89(3): 223-224.
 - Carter, Prudence L. 2016. "Carter Comment on Downey and Condron." *Sociology of Education* 89(3): 225-226.
 - Torche, Florencia. 2016. "Torche Comment on Downey and Condron." *Sociology of Education* 89(3): 229-230.
 - Gamoran, Adam. 2016. "Gamoran Comment on Downey and Condron." *Sociology of Education* 89(3): 231-233.
 - [All are on Sakai]

THEME 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Wednesday August 28

Before Formal Education

- Hart, Betty and Todd R. Risley. 2003. "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3." *American Educator*. [Sakai]

DUE: Participation Goals

Friday August 30

Preschool

- Dodge, Kenneth A., Yu Bai, Helen F. Ladd, and Clara G. Muschkin. 2017. "Impact of North Carolina's Early Childhood Programs and Policies on Educational Outcomes in Elementary Schools." *Child Development* 88(3): 996-1014. [Sakai]
 - Read 996-1002 and 1010-1013; SKIM 1003-1010
- Higher Education Works. 2019. "NC Pre-K: 33,000 Kids Eligible, but Can't Get In." *Higher Education Works*. <https://www.higheredworks.org/2019/01/nc-pre-k-report/>

Monday September 2

No Class! Labor Day

Wednesday September 4

Kindergarten

- Gracey, Harry. 1975. "Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Boot Camp." [Sakai]

Friday September 6

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods

- Unequal Childhoods Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-32)

Monday September 9

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*

- Unequal Childhoods Part 1
 - Read Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 33-81)
 - SKIM Chapter 5 (pp. 82-104)

Wednesday September 11

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*

- Unequal Childhoods Part 2
 - Read Chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 105-160)

Friday September 13

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*

- Unequal Childhoods Part 3
 - Read Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 161-197)

Monday September 16

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*

- Unequal Childhoods Part 3 Continued
 - Chapters 10 and 11 (pp. 198-232)

Wednesday September 18

Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued—Wrap Up Discussion

- Unequal Childhoods Chapters 12 and 15 (pp. 233-258 and 333-341)

Friday September 20

Beginning of Tracking

- Neff, Joseph, Ann Doss Helms, and David Raynor. 2017. “Why Have Thousands of Smart, Low-Income NC Students Been Excluded from Advanced Classes?” *The News & Observer*. <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article149942987.html>

DUE: Topic Paper

THEME 3: SECONDARY EDUCATION

Monday September 23

Tracking Continued

- Chapter 19. 2011. In *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader*, 2nd edition. Edited by Alan R. Sadovnik. New York: Taylor and Francis. Read pages 347-358. [Sakai]
 - Hallinan, Maureen T. “Tracking: From Theory to Practice” and “Further Thoughts on Tracking.”
 - Oakes, Jeannie. “More than Misplaced Technology: A Normative and Political Response to Hallinan on Tracking” and “One More Thought.”
 - Note: Read the chapter in the order it is in the book chapter.

Wednesday September 25

Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: History

- Ravitch, Diane. 2010. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books. [Sakai]

- Chapters 2 and 6.
- Oliver, John. 2015. "Standardized Testing." *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6lyURyVz7k>

Friday September 27

Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: Consequences

- Domina, Thurston, Andrew M. Penner, and Emily K. Penner. 2016. "Membership Has Its Privileges': Status Incentives and Categorical Inequality in Education." *Sociological Science* 3. Read pp. 264-73 and 285-87. SKIM pp. 273-285. [Sakai]
- Strauss, Valerie. 2015. "How and Why Convicted Atlanta Teachers Cheated on Standardized Tests." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/01/how-and-why-convicted-atlanta-teachers-cheated-on-standardized-tests/?utm_term=.60e460f04f10 [read until the numbered part toward the end]
- *Optional*: Aviv, Rachel. 2014. "Wrong Answer." *The New Yorker*. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/07/21/wrong-answer> [Also about the Atlanta cheating scandal]

Monday September 30

Race and Culture: Academic Debate

- Fordham, Signithia and John U. Ogbu, 1986. "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White.'" Read pp.176-178 and 185-203. SKIM pp. 178-185 [Sakai]
- Tyson, Karolyn, William Darity, and Domini R. Castellino. 2005. "It's Not 'a Black Thing': Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 70(4): 582-605. [Sakai]

[Note: these two authors come to different conclusions. Pay attention to their different evidence and arguments, especially as a good example of academic debates for your papers.]

Wednesday October 2

School Discipline*

- Morris, Edward W. and Brea L. Perry. 2017. "Girls Behaving Badly? Race, Gender, and Subjective Evaluation in the Discipline of African American Girls." *Sociology of Education* 90(2): 127-148. [Sakai]
 - Read 127-130 & 143-145
 - SKIM 130-143

DUE: Feedback for Instructor (google form)

Friday October 4

School Choice: Elite Private Schools*

- Khan, Shamus Rahman. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Sakai]
 - Introduction (pp. 1-17)
 - Chapter 2 (47-76; SKIM 41-47)

DUE: List of at least 7 Academic Sources (submitted as part of day's quiz—full citation required for each)

Monday October 7

History of Segregation, Desegregation, and Resegregation

- Clotfelter, Charles T. 2005. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [online access available through UNC library]
 - Chapter 1: read 13-33; SKIM pp. 33-43
 - Chapter 3: read 81-91
 - Chapter 4: read 100-105; 108-116; 122-123

Wednesday October 9

Outline/paper workshop day!

Friday October 11

School Choice: Modern Resegregation Movement?

- Strauss, Valerie. 2017. "Problems with Charter Schools that You Won't Hear Betsy DeVos Talk About." *The Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/06/22/problems-with-charter-schools-that-you-wont-hear-betsy-devos-talk-about/?utm_term=.4e6330259cfd&wpisrc=nl_answer&wpmm=1
- McLaren, Mandy. 2017. "New Charter Schools Debate: Are They Widening Racial Divides in Public Education?" *Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/new-charter-schools-debate-are-they-widening-racial-divides-in-public-education/2017/05/16/2f324676-0d78-11e7-9d5a-a83e627dc120_story.html?tid=sm_fb&utm_term=.4ad688e4b7ca

DUE: Paper Outline and Bibliography

Monday October 14

School Choice: Charter Schools and Vouchers, Principle and Practice

- Denice, Patrick, and Betheny Gross. 2016. "Choice, Preferences, and Constraints: Evidence from Public School Applications in Denver." *Sociology of Education* 89(4): 300-320. [Sakai]
 - Read 300-308 and 315-317; SKIM 308-315
- Oliver, John. 2016. "Charter Schools." *Last Week Tonight*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_htSPGAY7I
- Turner, Cory, Eric Weddle, and Peter Balonon-Rosen. 2017. "The Promise and Peril of School Vouchers." *NPR*. <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/05/12/520111511/the-promise-and-peril-of-school-vouchers>

DUE: Mid-Term Participation Evaluation

THEME 4: TRANSITIONING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Wednesday October 16

Who Attends College?: Unequal Childhoods Follow Up*

- Unequal Childhoods:
 - Chapter 13 (pp. 263-311)
 - Afterward (pp. 342-343)

Friday October 18
No Class! Fall Break.

Monday October 21

College Admissions: Who Gets Preference?

- Stevens, Mitchell L. 2009. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [accessible online through UNC library]
 - Chapter 1: read pages 10-16, 19-22
 - Chapter 2: read pages 45-51
 - Chapter 6: read pages 191-198, 202-213, 222-225
 - Chapter 8: read pages 246-8

Wednesday October 23

College Admissions: SAT Debate

- Readings from edited volume: Soares, Joseph A. 2012. *SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional Admissions*. New York: Teachers College Press. [Sakai]
 - Soares, Joseph A. "Introduction": pp. 1-3
 - Atkinson, Richard C. and Saul Geiser. "Reflections on a Century of College Admissions Tests.": pp. 23-36 and 40-43, SKIM 36-40
 - Rosner, Jay. "The SAT: Quantifying the Unfairness Behind the Bubbles.": pp. 104-117
 - Schaeffer, Robert. "Test Scores Do Not Equal Merit: Deemphasizing Standardized Tests in College Admissions.": pp. 153-161

Friday October 25

College Admissions: How Students Decide*

- Mullen, Ann L. 2010. *Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press. [Sakai]
 - Chapters 3 and 4.

THEME 5: ATTENDING HIGHER EDUCATION

Monday October 28

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Paying for the Party, Introduction and Chapter 1

Wednesday October 30

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party*

- Paying for the Party, Chapters 2 and 3

Friday November 1

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party*

- Chapters 4 and 5

Monday November 4

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party*

- Chapters 6 and 7

Wednesday November 6

Inequality with College: Paying for the Party

- Social Networks Activity Instructions

DUE: Rough Draft

Friday November 8

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Chapters 8 and 9

Monday November 11

Inequality across College: Community College Experience

- Nielsen, Kelly. 2015. ““Fake It ‘til You Make It’: Why Community College Students’ Aspirations ‘Hold Steady.’” *Sociology of Education* 88(4): 265-283. [Sakai]

Wednesday November 13

Inequality across Colleges: Comparing College Experiences*

- Fries-Britt, Sharon and Bridget Turner. 2002. “Uneven Stories: Successful Black Collegians at a Black and a White Campus.” *The Review of Higher Education* 25(3): 315-330. [Sakai]

Friday November 15

Inequality across Colleges: History of Accessibility and Financial Aid

- Mettler, Suzanne. 2014. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. New York: Basic Books. [online access through library]
 - Introduction and Chapter 2

Monday November 18

Inequality across Colleges: Graduation and Debt Differences

- Mettler, Suzanne. 2014. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. New York: Basic Books. [online access through library]
 - Pages 19-40 (Chapter 1)

DUE: Peer Edits Completed

Wednesday November 20

Inequality across Colleges: For Profit Colleges

- McMillan Cottom, Tressie. 2017. *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*. New York: The New Press. [Sakai]
 - Introduction: pp. 1-18
 - Chapter 1: 27-39
 - *Optional*: Chapter 3: 69-87
- Oliver, John. 2014. “Student Debt.” *Last Week Tonight*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8pjd1QEA0c>

THEME 6: BEYOND HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday November 22

Transitions Out of College: Gender, Work, and Student Debt

- Arum, Richard, and Josipa Roksa. 2014. *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read pages 66-75. SKIM pages 53-66. [Sakai]
- Douglas-Gabriel, Danielle. 2017. "The \$833 Billion Alabtross around the Necks of Women with College Degrees." *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/05/24/the-833-billion-albatross-around-the-necks-of-women-with-college-degrees>

Monday November 25

Who Goes to Graduate School?

- Mullen, Ann L., Kimberly A. Goyette, and Joseph A. Soares. 2003. "Who Goes to Graduate School?: Social and Academic Correlates of Educational Continuation after College." *Sociology of Education*. Read pages 143-145 and 159-161. SKIM pages 145-159 (look at Table 3 on 158). [Sakai]
- Clayton, Victoria. 2016. "The Problem with the GRE." *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-problem-with-the-gre/471633>

THEME 7: CONCLUSION

Wednesday November 27

No Class! Thanksgiving Break.

Friday November 29

No Class! Thanksgiving Break.

Monday December 2

Limitations of Education

- Johnson, Allan G. 2012. "Why Is There Poverty?" Excerpt from *The Forest and The Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*. Allan G. Johnson Blog.
<http://www.agjohnson.us/essays/poverty/>

DUE: Final Paper

Wednesday December 4

Last Day of Class!

Where Do We Go from Here?

- Review all readings from Monday January 14 (be prepared to speak much more critically about them than we originally did)

DUE: Final Participation Evaluation

Tuesday December 12

Final Exam at 12 PM

