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.

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.

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
**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:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>60-66</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Required Books and Resources:

- 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

DUE: About Me (google form)

*Monday August 26*
What Does Education Do?
- And You Will Be Assigned One More:
  - [All are on Sakai]

**THEME 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

*Wednesday August 28*
Before Formal Education

**DUE: Participation Goals**

*Friday August 30*
Preschool
  - Read 996-1002 and 1010-1013; SKIM 1003-1010

*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
  o Read Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 33-81)
  o SKIM Chapter 5 (pp. 82-104)

Wednesday September 11
Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*
• Unequal Childhoods Part 2
  o Read Chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 105-160)

Friday September 13
Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*
• Unequal Childhoods Part 3
  o Read Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 161-197)

Monday September 16
Elementary School: Unequal Childhoods Continued*
• Unequal Childhoods Part 3 Continued
  o 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

DUE: Topic Paper

THEME 3: SECONDARY EDUCATION

Monday September 23
Tracking Continued
  o Hallinan, Maureen T. “Tracking: From Theory to Practice” and “Further Thoughts on Tracking.”
  o Note: Read the chapter in the order it is in the book chapter.

Wednesday September 25
Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: History
Friday September 27
Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: Consequences

- Optional: Aviv, Rachel. 2014. “Wrong Answer.” *The New Yorker*. [Also about the Atlanta cheating scandal]

Monday September 30
Race and Culture: Academic Debate

[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*

  - Read 127-130 & 143-145
  - SKIM 130-143

**DUE: Feedback for Instructor** (google form)

Friday October 4
School Choice: Elite Private Schools*

  - 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
  - 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?
  [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](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
  - Read 300-308 and 315-317; SKIM 308-315
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_htSPGAY7I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_htSPGAY7I)

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?
  - 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
  - Soares, Joseph A. “Introduction”: pp. 1-3

Friday October 25
College Admissions: How Students Decide*
  - 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

Wednesday November 13
Inequality across Colleges: Comparing College Experiences*

Friday November 15
Inequality across Colleges: History of Accessibility and Financial Aid
  o Introduction and Chapter 2

Monday November 18
Inequality across Colleges: Graduation and Debt Differences
  o Pages 19-40 (Chapter 1)

DUE: Peer Edits Completed

Wednesday November 20
Inequality across Colleges: For Profit Colleges
  o Introduction: pp. 1-18
  o Chapter 1: 27-39
  o Optional: Chapter 3: 69-87
• Oliver, John. 2014. “Student Debt.” Last Week Tonight. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8pjdlQEA0c
THEME 6: BEYOND HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday November 22
Transitions Out of College: Gender, Work, and Student Debt

Monday November 25
Who Goes to Graduate School?

THEME 7: CONCLUSION

Wednesday November 27
No Class! Thanksgiving Break.

Friday November 29
No Class! Thanksgiving Break.

Monday December 2
Limitations of Education

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