

Senior Seminar: Sociology of Education (Soc 490)

Fall 2011

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Office Hours: MW, 9:30-10:30, F 12:00-1:15 (or by appointment)

I. Course Description

Education is a modern social institution. That simple sentence contains several key themes with which we will be concerned over the course of the semester. First of all, to say that education is a modern institution is to say that the creation of an expansive social system comprising specialized organizations, groups, and statuses – all dedicated to a formalized and rationalized process called “education” – is a by-product of complex, urban, industrial, bureaucratic – in a word, modern – societies. Secondly, to say that education is a modern institution is to say that those organizations, etc., were created to solve specific problems characteristic of modern societies. What were those problems? Why was education separated out and institutionalized? Why were schools created? What purposes was education created to accomplish? Does it or does it not accomplish them? This course will examine these, and other issues, focusing on the historical interplay between and among education and other social structures and institutions (family, economy, politics, religion) and the key sociological processes (social differentiation, stratification), with which education is inextricably intertwined.

II. B. Common Student Learning Outcomes & Course-Specific Student Learning Outcomes (CSSLOs) for University Studies' Capstone (CAP) and Writing-Intensive (WI) Courses

In the SOC 490 Senior Seminar:

- **CAP1-1.** Students will develop in-depth knowledge about one topic in sociology.
- **CAP1-2.** Students will identify relevant literature and write a literature review
- **CAP1-3.** Students will develop and carry out an independent research project using sociological theory and methods.
- **CAP1-4.** Students will collect and analyze data and present the findings.
- **CAP1-5.** Students will use the sociological imagination to interpret the data.
- **WI 1.** Students will learn to conduct literature reviews from sociological databases and other sources.
- **WI 2** Students will develop the ability to formulate an argument using sociological theory, concepts, and data.

- **WI 3** Students will demonstrate the ability appropriately and consistently cite all supporting concepts and evidence from published literature both in print and online. Students will learn the standard citation and notation platforms for sociological research.
- **WI 4** Students will develop the ability to write a concise description and analysis of a selected sociological research topic. Students will learn to write up and present data and findings in a manner appropriate for the topic.
- **WI 5** Students will learn to evaluate the conclusions of research using sociological theory and empirical evidence.

III. Texts, Course Requirements and Grading

A. There are three required texts for the course:

Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life, by Annette Lareau

Left Back: A Century of School Reform, by Diane Ravitch

The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them, by E.D. Hirsch

(There may also be additional readings assigned.)

B. It will be possible to earn 100 points over the course of the semester:

40 points: Two essay examinations covering assigned readings and in-class material.

35 points: a 10-12 page research proposal (10 points of this will be determined by a draft – see below)

10 points: attendance and participation. A successful seminar depends upon the active intellectual involvement of both students and professor. I both encourage and expect that active intellectual involvement in the seminar. This expectation requires consistent and regular attendance and completion of assigned readings and work.

15 points: An in-class presentation of your research proposals. As this course also counts toward your university-required oral presentation credit hours, each of you will give a class presentation summarizing the key elements of your research proposal.

1. The **research proposal** is a variation on a regular term paper, and will provide you with the opportunity to pull together the theoretical, conceptual, and

methodological skills and knowledge you have acquired over the course of your undergraduate studies as a sociology major. More specifically, the proposal will require you to:

- Identify an education-related issue and explain its importance both societally and as a topic of sociological research;
- Explain the theoretical framework you are using to define the issue sociologically
 - For example, a structural-functionalist or conflict theory framework (or some specific variation on these frameworks)
- Do a thorough review of the sociological research literature relevant to the issue you're proposing to study
 - You must write a summary of the published research relevant to the issue you have chosen
 - The sources for the literature review will include (a minimum of) eight (8) articles published in serious sociological (or relevant social scientific) journals
 - Such journals include, for example: *American Journal of Sociology*; *American Sociological Review*; *Social Forces*; *Sociological Quarterly*; *Sociology of Education*; *Social Problems*
 - **Do NOT use Wikipedia or random web sites from a cursory Google or Yahoo or Firefox search of the internet**
 - **DO use Randall Library's JSTOR database (or other databases that give you access to, again, serious scholarly research articles)**
- Then, drawing upon the existing published research findings, you will design a sociological research project you propose to complete
 - The project should be grounded in, and clearly show the connections between and among theory, empirical findings, and methodology

2. The draft of the proposal, worth 10 (of the 35) points: a 5-6 pp. description of your research project will be due **in class on October 28th**.

This draft must include the following

- The educational issue(s) you will address, and why it is important, both socially and sociologically;
- The theoretical framework informing the research project you propose;
- The methodological approach that will guide the research project you propose
- And, a bibliography of the published research that will guide your own work. The bibliography, and the final references list (on the final research proposal) must include complete citations in APA or MLA format.

3. Late Papers and Missed Tests: The general rule, here, is do not do either of these things. If you must turn in a paper or assignment late, you will be expected to *notify me in advance, and/or be able to provide some proof of your trouble* (obviously, in the case of an emergency, advance notification may well be impossible). If you are not able to meet these conditions *you will not be allowed to make up the work.*

C. Grading: Your grades for the course will be determined by the number of points you have earned, divided by the total possible points. This percentage will convert into letter grades (Note: since the total is 100, your actual number of points will, of course, be your percentage):

A = 95-100%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D = 60-69%
A- = 90-94	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	F = 59% or less
	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	

THERE WILL BE NO POSSIBILITY FOR EXTRA CREDIT WORK! YOUR COURSE GRADES WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR PERFORMANCE IN THE REQUIRED COURSE WORK ONLY!

D. Cheating, Plagiarism: All work – tests, papers – must be the product of your own efforts. **Plagiarism** is defined as

"any attempt by a student to represent the work of another as his or her own. This includes copying the answers of another student on an examination or copying or substantially restating the work of another person or persons in any oral or written work without citing the appropriate source, and collaborating with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution."

Pay close attention to this definition, because anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an "F" for the entire course and will be reported to the Dean of Students.

III. Course Outline

Date	Topics
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Aug. 26 Sept. 2	Part I. General Theoretical Background
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	Overview of the Course General Theoretical & Historical Background Modernity & Public Education: The Historical Context Culture, Social Structure, & Social Institutions Education, Social Differentiation, & Social Stratification The Purposes of Education Functionalism's View of Education "Allocation" & Status Attainment
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Readings (NOTE: assigned readings should be read before the class meetings that follow them on the course outline):

- Rice Chapters 7, 8, & 10 (F & C Theories of Education; Social Capital)
- Hirsch, Chapters 1 and 2
- Lareau, Chapters 1 through 5

Sept. 9

Conflict Theory's View of Education Reproduction & Legitimation
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Part II: Key Issues and Concepts

Socialization, Stratification, Human, Cultural & Social Capital

Socialization and Education Stratification in Educational Experience and Outcomes Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Capital, Cultural Reproduction James Coleman: Human and Social Capital Film: "Merchants of Cool"
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Readings:

- Hirsch, Chapters 3 and 4

- Lareau, Chapters 6-end
- Ravitch, Introduction, and Chapters 1 through 4

Sept. 16-23

Stratification by Class, Race, & Gender

Basil Bernstein: Class, Codes, and Control

The Importance of Context: Historical, Cultural, Societal

Public Education in the Context of Modernity

The Cultural Divide: Moderns and Anti-Moderns

The Progressive Era

Rationalization & "Scientific" Management"

Social Efficiency" & the "Differentiated Curriculum"

Redefining Democracy and Education

The "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" (1918)

Readings:

- Hirsch, Chapter 5
- Ravitch, Chapters 5-8

Sept. 30-Oct. 7

The Differentiated Curriculum vs. The Academic Curriculum

The Rise of IQ Testing

The Battle Over Curriculum & the Purposes of Public Education

A New Role for Schooling: Creating a New Social Order

A Brief Flirtation with the Soviet Union

The Rise of the "Activity Movement"

Changing Curricular Content

Literature

History

The Critics

Post WWII & The Life Adjustment Curriculum

The Beginning of the Contemporary "Reading Wars"

Readings:

- Hirsch, Chapters 6 and 7
 - Ravitch, Chapters 9 and 10
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Oct. 14-21

The Current Waves of Reform: The Last Two Decades
The Cultural Divide Revisited
Review for Mid-Term

Readings:

- A Nation at Risk, <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html> (first page only)
- &

Oct. 28

MID-TERM EXAM

N.B.: Proposal Drafts Due Oct. 28th

Readings:

- Finn, "[Teacher Reform . . .](#)"
- Lehman, <http://www.pbs.org/weta/twoschools/thechallenge/history/>, "Reading Wars"
- Hoxby, "[What Has Changed](#)," & Peterson "[Little Gain](#)"
- U.S. Dep't of Education, "Executive Summary of 'No Child Left Behind'," <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html>

Recommended, but not required, articles on the "reading wars":

http://www.nrrf.org/article_anderson6-18-00.htm

http://www.sntp.net/education/The_Reading_Wars.htm

Nov. 4-11

Critics & Crisis

The Excellence Commission & *A Nation at Risk* (1983)

The Central Concerns

The Carnegie Forum & *A Nation Prepared* (1986)

Professionalization of Teaching

Career Ladders

National Board Certification

Professional Development Schools

Curricular Reform & The Reading Wars

The States Respond: The Accountability Movement

The ABC's of North Carolina

The Current Situation
The Federal Government Weighs In
Last Day of Class Content: Sum & Review

Nov. 18

Research Proposal Presentations

NO CLASS NOV. 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK
Happy Thanksgiving!

Dec. 2

Research Proposal Presentations
FINAL EXAM

N.B. FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPERS DUE Dec. 7th by 1:00 p.m.