

SOCL/EDUC-303  
THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION  
FALL 2018 TRINITY COLLEGE

**Meeting Time:** Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30AM-12:45PM

**Meeting Place:** AAC-231

**Instructor:** Professor Daniel Douglas

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays: 11am-4pm, or by appointment.

**Office Location:** Seabury N033

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**Phone:** (860) 297-2348

**SYLLABUS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE:**

This course intends to examine and make use of the ways sociology has examined education and its institutional form: schooling. The course will have two primary components. The first will be a survey of the various theoretical traditions in sociology as seen through texts which look at education and schooling. A related goal of this aspect of the course will be to see how various sociological theories are applied to social inquiry, to bring theory in as a tool and not a mere collection of “this theorist says this and that theorist says that.”

The second part of the course will examine some of the “hot topics” in the American and international educational systems. Having established a theoretical knowledge base in the first part of the course, we will be able to get into the topics and see how those theories can help us explain and analyze the currents in educational policy and practice.

**COURSE LEARNING GOALS:**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify different traditions in social theory and understand how they are used in relation to the systematic study of education and schooling.
2. Read and understand high-level texts related to sociological theories of education.
3. Apply sociological theory to the analysis of current issues in educational policy and educational practice.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify faculty during the first two weeks of the semester or a minimum of 10 days prior to needing your accommodations. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

If you do not have approved accommodations, but have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or have questions about applying, please contact Lori Clapis, Coordinator of Accessibility Resources at 860-297-4025 or at [Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu](mailto:Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu).

## **HONOR CODE STATEMENT:**

Please refer to the [Trinity College Student Integrity Contract](#), specifically the section on Intellectual Honesty.

## **STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

In the middle of the semester, just as I am asked to evaluate your performance, I will ask you to evaluate mine using an evaluation form designed by other Trinity faculty. At the end of the year, you will be asked to evaluate the course using the standard Trinity College course evaluation.

## **MOODLE:**

We will use Moodle to access course materials and for submitting class assignments. Please log in to Moodle every week to keep alert to any changes to our course syllabus or schedule.

## **ASSIGNMENTS/COURSEWORK:**

We will have two types of assignments in this class. First, we will do weekly discussion assignments. These will be short (400-500 words) reactions to the week's readings. Each reaction paper should give a three sentence overview/summary of the readings. You should then explain what you think the authors do well, and/or explain what (if anything) you feel is missing from the analysis. Finally, make an attempt to connect the readings with either other things we've read, or with your experiences. They are due, via Moodle, two days before class (Saturday) by 8:00 PM. This will give me a day and half to look over the reactions so that we can have a thoughtful discussion based on your understanding the readings.

Second, we will have a final paper which will be a quantitative data analysis project. We will discuss what that entails later on in class – it will be done in groups. I will provide a syllabus addendum with the details, but we will begin talking about available data sources in Week 3 of the class.

Bear in mind these notes on assignments:

- 1- We have eleven weeks of course readings. You are responsible for completing reaction papers for eight of those weeks. That means you get to choose which weeks you'd like to write assignments. But, if you would like to buttress your grades by submitting all ten, you are welcome to do so; I will use the eight highest grades when computing this portion of your grade. Reaction papers are graded on a ten-point scale, and are each worth 6.25 points toward your final grade.
- 2- The first three written assignments are required for everyone. Two of these are reaction papers, one is an ungraded (but still required) reflection for week one. You cannot skip them. Thus you have nine short written assignments (8 reaction papers, plus the reflection) and the data analysis project. Your options begin on week four.

### **COURSE TEXTS:**

There will be a course packet printed with the readings from weeks 2 through the end, with the exception of the students' choice topics. I will make the first week's readings available on Moodle. Recall that no laptops are allowed in class, so you must bring printed copies of the readings with you. They will be selections from books (rather than books in their entirety), and journal articles. Here, I list some of books that are reasonably priced for those who are interested in collecting books for further study.

Aronowitz, Stanley (2008). *Against Schooling: For an Education that Matters*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Dewey, John (1916, 1997). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Free Press.

Willis, Paul (1977, 2017). *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

If you would like bibliographic information for any of the other class readings listed below, or would like recommendations for titles on topics related to this course, please send me an email or visit me in my office.

### **GRADING/EVALUATION:**

*How will I be graded?* Grades will be determined based on the following proportions:

Reaction Papers	50 points
Final Paper	30 points
Class Participation	20 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

The following constitute the rules governing your class participation. Not complying with the following has negative consequences on your grade:

1. On a regular basis, you should engage and participate in class discussion. Your engagement must always be respectful of your peers and your professor. You will be alerted once.

Subsequently, points will be deducted from your class participation grade.

**1 point per violation**

2. Unless otherwise stated, no cellphones or laptops should be used in class. You will be alerted once. Subsequently, points will be deducted from your class participation grade.

**1 point per violation**

3. Our class is neither early nor late. No sleeping is permitted in class. You will be notified once. If it continues, you may be dismissed from class. It will also affect your class participation.

**1 point per violation**

4. The topics discussed in this class are of general interest. Still, there is to be no private conversations or chatting in class. You will be notified once. If behavior continues, it will affect your participation grade. Private chatting and conversations will negatively affect your class participation grade.

**1 point per violation**

5. You are allowed two unexplained absences. Each subsequent absence will result in a significant deduction from your class participation grade.

**5 points per violation**

6. Lateness functions like absence, and is drawn from the same bank as item number 5 above. Three Late Arrivals = 1 Unexplained absence.

**5 points per violation**

7. Leaving early counts in the same way as does arriving late.

**5 points per violation**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

*How are lateness and absence determined?*

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period using a sign-in sheet on my desk. The sign in sheet will be turned over after class begins. Students who arrive after the attendance sheet has been turned over are counted as late. As stated above, habitually arriving late or leaving early will affect your class participation grade. Students are expected to be present promptly at the beginning of each class period, unless prevented by illness or by other compelling cause. Students should wait a reasonable length of time for an instructor (me) in the event that the instructor is delayed.

## COURSE TOPICS OUTLINE

*You may ask yourself, how do I use this outline?*

- A. “In Class” refers to what we will do in class during the sessions that week.
- B. “Read This” refers to what you need to read during that week to be prepared for the following week’s discussions. You should also bring those readings with you to class in the following week so that we can read passages as needed.
- C. “Write This” refers to what you need to write during that week to be submitted by the Saturday Evening of that week in advance of the following week’s discussions.

### **1. Week of September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Greetings.**

Welcome to the sociology of education! The first half of the course consists of units that link some key traditions in sociological theory with the concepts of education and schooling and their relation to society as a whole. The second half focuses on applying sociological thinking to contemporary educational issues.

#### In Class:

Review of the Syllabus. Discourse on the Sociology of Education.

#### Read This:

C. Wright Mills (1959): *The Sociological Imagination*.

Karl Alexander and Stephen L. Morgan (2016): “The Coleman Report at Fifty: Its Legacy and Implications for Future Research on Equality of Opportunity”

#### Write this:

Reflection about your experiences and interests regarding the Sociology of Education. (1-2 pages) **\*\*Required\*\***

### **2. Week of September 10<sup>th</sup>. Personal Observations, Social Implications.**

Before proceeding, we have to do some myth-busting. The conventional wisdom in the US is that investment in schools and education are the best means by which to correct social inequality. But sociology tends to question conventional wisdom, and does so in this case as well. This week, we try to temper the transformative potential of education.

#### In Class:

Lecture on C. Wright Mills and the Coleman Report.

Watch and discuss [Retro Report on Housing Segregation](#).

Discuss your reflection pieces.

#### Read This:

Emile Durkheim (1956): *Education and Sociology*: “Education: Its Nature and its Role.”

John Dewey (1916): *Democracy and Education*: “Education as a Social Function”

Harry Gracey (1975): Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Boot Camp.

#### Write This:

Reaction Paper **\*\*Required\*\***

### **3. Week of September 17<sup>th</sup>. The Functionalist View of Sociology**

Many consider Emile Durkheim to be the founding figure of the Western sociological tradition. Fewer people know that he was keenly interested in education. How does he define the function of education? What are the differences between the perspectives of Durkheim, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century European; John Dewey, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher; and Harry Gracey, an American sociologist writing in the 1970s?

In Class:

Lecture on Durkheim, Dewey, and Gracey.

[Education Data Sources Part I](#)

Read This:

Jean Anyon: From *Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work*

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. (2012). "Schooling in Capitalist America Revisited."

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1979). From *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*

Write This:

Reaction Paper **\*\*Required\*\***

**4. Week of September 24th. Not-so-happy, critical perspectives on schooling.**

We learned about the function of schooling last week, but the story of education may not be quite that linear. How does the critical story about classrooms told by Jean Anyon differ from the defined as the function of education in the first readings? What do Bowles and Gintis add to the discussion of the Coleman Report from Week Two? What do Bourdieu and Passeron mean when they use the phrase "Symbolic Violence?"

In Class:

Lecture on Anyon, Bowles & Gintis, Bourdieu & Passeron.

In class writing activity – Your hidden curriculum experiences.

Read This:

Paul Willis (1977): from *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Two Introductions.

John Ogbu (2004): "Collective Identity and the Burden of 'Acting White' in Black History, Community and Education."

Write This:

Reaction Paper

**5. Week of October 1st. Cultural Studies: Resistance to schooling?**

We've so far heard two functional stories in which societies pass on curricula from older generations to younger. Though the contents of the lessons were different, the notion of transmission appears passive in both accounts. For Paul Willis and John Ogbu, students aren't passive victims of symbolic violence; they actively resist their indoctrination. But reproduction still happens; how do they see reproduction being accomplished by students?

In Class:

Discussion of Paul Willis, John Ogbu.

Watch [Addressing 'problem behavior' in the early years](#)

Read This:

Randall Collins (1971): “Functional and Conflict theories of educational stratification.”

Aaron Cicourel and John Kitsuse (1963, 2012): Selections from *The Educational Decision-Makers*.

Claude Fischer and Michael Hout (2006) “How America Expanded Education and Why it Mattered.”

Write This:

Reaction Paper

**6. Week of October 8<sup>th</sup>. Schooling as Bureaucracy**

Randall Collins comes from the tradition of Max Weber and emphasizes the ways in which schooling becomes more rationalized. Specifically, he discusses how and why credentials come to be offered to a growing proportion of the population. Fischer and Hout provide some empirical data for this, but have a different perspective on educational expansion. Cicourel and Kituse take this rationalization as a given and examine how decisions about students are made in such systems. But does the ‘rational’ perspective add anything new to our understanding of how education and schooling shape society?

In Class:

Lecture on Collins, Cicourel and Kituse, and Fischer and Hout.

Read and Discuss “The Dirty Little Secret of Credential Inflation”

Read This:

Bronwyn Davies (1989). “The discursive production of the Male/Female dualism in School Settings.”

Nancy Lopez (2010) “Race-Gender Experiences and Schooling: Second-generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian youth in New York City.”

Write This:

Reaction Paper

**7. Week of October 15<sup>th</sup>. Race, Gender, and Schooling.**

So far, we’ve been talking more about how schools work, and less about the students in them. Bronwyn Davies looks at how gender is constructed in the classroom. Nancy Lopez looks at how race and gender condition students’ experiences of schooling.

In Class:

Lecture on Davies and Lopez.

Read and Discuss Lisa Delpit on “Multiplication is for White People”

[Education Data Sources II](#)

Read This:

George Farkas and Kurt Beron (2004): “The Detailed Age Trajectory of Oral Vocabulary Knowledge: Differences by Class and Race.”

Betty Hart and Todd Risley (1999): from *The Social World of Children Learning to Talk*.

Emma Garcia and Elaine Weiss (2017): Education inequalities at the school starting gate.

Write This:

Reaction Paper.

**8. Week of October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Review of the Theoretical Portion of the Course.**

Let's come up for air, summarize of what we've done, and preview where we go next! We should also check to make sure you're all coming up with your questions and answers for your data projects.

In Class:

Review Lecture

Discussion of Data Projects

[Educations Data Sources III](#)

Read This:

No Assigned Reading. Watch NCES tutorials on your chosen data file.

Write This:

Data Project Memo.

**9. Week of October 29<sup>th</sup>. Early Childhood and Unequal Home Situations.**

As our first contemporary issue, we will look not at schooling *per se*, but the time leading up to it. Many of the outcomes we attribute to schooling are in fact already being shaped long before children first arrive at school. Hart and Risley discuss one of the most important early childhood phenomena: language acquisition. Farkas and Beron take a different approach to the same phenomena. Garcia and Weiss use yet another data source to assess whether early childhood achievement gaps have narrowed over time. Think back to our readings that focus on class; how would those authors react to the argument in *Unequal Childhoods*?

In Class:

Lecture on Hart & Risley, Farkas & Beron; Garcia & Weiss

Activity TBD

Read This:

Jonathan Kozol (1992): from *Savage Inequalities*.

Christopher and Sarah Lubienski (2006): "Charter, Private and Public Schools and Academic Achievement: New Evidence from NAEP Mathematics Data"

Nancy Heitzeg et al. (2009): "Education or Incarceration: Zero Tolerance Policies and the School to Prison Pipeline"

Write This:

Reaction Paper

**10. Week of November 5<sup>th</sup>. Unequal School Situations.**

After (at latest) five years of age, most children spend about a third of their waking hours in schools for about three quarters of the year – about 25% of their conscious lives. Thus we need to understand how the condition of schools varies according to students' race, ethnic and class backgrounds. Jonathan Kozol's classic work on educational inequality is as relevant today as it was nearly 30 years ago, and is complemented well by an discussion of the school-to-prison pipeline, which shapes many students' experiences. But Christopher and Sarah Lubienski ask the critical question: is it that public schools are doing worse by their students? Or, do they just have a harder job to do?

In Class:



Lecture on Kozol, Heitzig, and Lubienski & Lubienski

Listen and Discuss [Three Miles](#) podcast

Discussion of School Climate Survey Data

Read This:

Edward Fiske and Helen Ladd (2000): from *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale*. American Federation of Teachers (2004). "Charter School Achievement on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress."

David Labaree (2010): "Teach for America and Teacher Ed: Heads they Win Tails We Lose"

Write This:

Reaction Paper

### **11. Week of November 12<sup>th</sup>. The Private Option.**

Privatization of public schools has been proposed as a solution to the problems of poor student achievement and unequal school situations. Another market-based solution has focused on contracting top students from elite colleges to teach in under-served public schools. Do these ideas have the power to resolve what have been intractable problems? And do they not have pitfalls of their own?

In Class:

Lecture on Fiske and Ladd, AFT Report, Labaree

Watch and Discuss [Waiting For Superman](#).

Discuss Ravitch "The Myth of Charter Schools"

Read This:

Willard Waller (1932): From *The Sociology of Teaching*

William Reese (2013): From *Testing Wars in the Public Schools*

Cathy O'Neill (2015): From *Weapons of Math Destruction*

Write This:

Reaction Paper

### **12. Week of November 19<sup>th</sup>. Teachers and Teacher Evaluation.**

Though they are sometimes an afterthought in sociological discussions of schooling, teachers are obviously a critical factor in the process of formal education. Willard Waller's classic, but overlooked, study of teaching seems as relevant today as when it was nearly 90 years ago. We then consider this in context of the present emphasis on measuring teacher quality based on students' test scores, which William Reeses discusses as an idea with a long history.

In Class:

Lecture on Waller, Reese, and O'Neill

Activities TBD

Read This:

TBD Based on Students' Choice Topic

Write This:

Reaction Paper

### 13. Week of November 26<sup>th</sup>. Student's Choice Topic.

For this week, I'm hoping to have students select a topic. I'm open to discussing anything within reason, I have potential readings in mind for the following topics.

In Class:

TBD

Read This:

Patricia Hill Collins (2009) 'Preface' from *Another Kind of Public Education: Race, the Media, and Democratic Possibilities*.

Stanley Aronowitz (2006). From *Against Schooling: For an Education that Matters*.

Ivan Illich (1970). From *Deschooling Society*.

Paolo Freire (1968). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Assignment: Reaction Paper.

Key Questions: TBD

### 14. Week of December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Is there and Alternative? Possibilities Beyond Schooling.

We've come to the end of the road. Although much was (hopefully) learned about school and how can be understood through the lens of sociology, we cannot be content to stop there. This last week focuses on either a fundamental reshaping of school or an outright abolition of the practice. It is often said that in order to make change possible, one needs to first demand the impossible. This week follows in that spirit.

In Class:

Lecture on Aronowitz, Illich, Freire, and Collins

Discussion of radical and non-school alternatives.

Course Wrap-Up

Read This:

No Reading

Write This:

Work on your data analysis projects

### 15. Final Exams Week!