

SOCL/EDUC-303
THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION
FALL 2019

Meeting Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30AM-12:45PM
Meeting Place: Austin Arts Center, Rm. 231
Instructor: Professor Daniel Douglas
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 11am-1pm/2pm-5pm, or by appointment.
Office Location: Seabury Hall, N033
Email: daniel.douglas@trincoll.edu
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 themes 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. Understand, explain, and compare perspectives from high-level texts related to sociological theories of education.
3. Apply sociological theory analyze of current issues of educational policy and educational practice.
4. Critique and think creatively about the role of education in contemporary society.

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.

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 (300-400 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 readings, 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.

Some 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 week 2 forward, with the exception of the students' choice topics. I will make the first week's readings available on Moodle. Recall that (unless arrangements are made in advance) 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
TOTAL	100 points

COURSE TOPICS OUTLINE

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

- A. “In Class” refers to what we will do during class sessions that week.
- B. “Read This” refers to what you need to read during that week to be prepared for the following week.
- C. “Homework” 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 2nd. Greetings.

Note that we will only meet on Wednesday September 9th due to Labor Day

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:

Wednesday: Review of the Syllabus. Introductory discourse on the Sociology of Education. “1-minute” writing: What do you remember about Sociology?

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”

Homework:

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

2. Week of September 9th. 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:

Monday: Discussion of C. Wright Mills and the Coleman Report.

Wednesday: Discussion 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.”

Homework:

Reaction Paper ****Required****

3. Week of September 16th. 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 19th century European; John Dewey, an early 20th century American philosopher; and Harry Gracey, an American sociologist writing in the 1970s?

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Durkheim, Dewey, and Gracey.

Wednesday: [Education Data Sources Part I](#)

Read This:

Jean Anyon. (1980). "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work"

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

Pierre Bourdieu. (1985). "Forms of Capital."

Homework:

Reaction Paper ****Required****

4. Week of September 23rd. 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 Passerson mean when they use the phrase "Symbolic Violence?"

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Anyon, Bowles & Gintis; 5-minute writing: Your hidden curriculum experiences.

Wednesday: Close reading – Pierre Bourdieu

Read This:

Stanley Aronowitz (1981). Preface to *Learning to Labor*.

Paul Willis (1977). Introduction to *Learning to Labor*.

Mats Trondman and Anna Lund. (2018). "Light, mind and spirit: Paul Willis' *Learning to Labor* on and beyond its 40th Anniversary."

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

Homework:

Reaction Paper

Research Interest Statement ****Required****

5. Week of September 30th. 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:

Monday: Discussion of Paul Willis, John Ogbu.

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

Read This:

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

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

Write This:

Reaction Paper

6. Week of October 7th. Individuals and Institutions

Though they are sometimes an afterthought in sociological discussions of schooling, teachers and administrators 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. In a similarly important work – that utilizes the perspective of ethnomethodology – Aaron Cicourel and John Kitsuse look at the role of counselors and administrators in shaping students' educational futures in high school.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Waller, Cicourel and Kitsuse.

Wednesday: Research Interest Groupings

Read This:

Lisa Delpit (1988). "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children"

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 14th. Race, Gender, and Schooling.

Note that we will only meet on Wednesday October 16th due to Trinity Days

So far, we've been talking more about how schools work, and less about the students in them. As a transition between teachers (from last week), we look at Lisa Delpit's classic essay "The Silenced Dialogue," which examines the use of a pedagogical technique constructivism from the perspective of non-white teachers and students. Bronwyn Davies looks at how gender is constructed by lesson content in the classroom. Nancy Lopez looks at how race and gender condition college students' experiences of schooling.

In Class:

Wednesday: Discussion of Delpit, Davies, and Lopez.

Read This:

Annette Lareau (1987). "Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital."

Betty Hart and Todd Risley (2003). "The Early Catastrophe."

Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle and Laura Olsen (2001). "Schools, Achievement, and Inequality: A Seasonal Perspective."

Homework:

Reaction Paper.

8. Week of October 21st. 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:

Monday: Review Lecture; 1-minute writing: What three key concepts do you remember from the course so far?

Wednesday: Video - [Education Data Sources II](#) ; Group Discussion of Data Projects

Read This:

No Assigned Readings. Watch NCES tutorials on your chosen data file (see link below)

[Educations Data Sources III](#)

Homework:

Data Project Memo. ****Required****

9. Week of October 28th. 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:

Monday: Discussion of Lareau, Hart & Risley, and Alexander et al.; Group work: Applying theories of Social Class and the Early Learning Gap

Wednesday: Review of Data Project Memos, Presentation on Writing the Final Paper

Read This:

Jonathan Kozol (1991): from *Savage Inequalities*.

Jonathan Kozol (2006): from *The Shame of the Nation*

John Wallace et al. (2008). "Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in School Discipline among US High School Students: 1991-2005."

Homework:

Reaction Paper

10. Week of November 4th. 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 a discussion of school discipline, which shapes many students’ experiences.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Kozol, Wallace, and USDOE School Climate Survey

Wednesday: [Three Miles](#) podcast

Read This:

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

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

Diane Ravitch (2011). “The Myth of Charter Schools”

Homework:

Reaction Paper

11. Week of November 11th. 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? Christopher and Sarah Lubienski ask a 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:

Monday: Discussion of Lubienski & Lubienski, Labaree, and Ravitch

Wednesday: [Fail State](#)

Read This:

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

Randall Collins (2002). “The Dirty Little Secret of Credential Inflation.”

Robert Lerman (2014). “Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in the United States”

Homework:

Reaction Paper

12. Week of November 18th. Educational Expansion and Social Stratification.

Fischer and Hout provide empirical data on the expansion of educational attainment in the United States, and suggest how this leads a change in the nature of social stratification. Randall Collins, coming from the tradition of Max Weber, discusses how

and why credentials come to be offered to a growing proportion of the population, and suggests some more subtle long-term consequences.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Fischer & Hout, Randall Collins, Robert Lerman
In-Class Discussion: The Million Dollar Earnings Gap?

Wednesday: Group Work on Final Presentations

Read This:

TBD Based on Students' Choice Topic

Homework:

Reaction Paper

13. Week of November 25th. Student's Choice Topic.

Note that we will only meet on November 25th due to Thanksgiving recess

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:

Inequality in Higher Education

Testing and Assessment

Teacher Evaluation

School Curriculum

In Class:

TBD

Read This:

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

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

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

Homework:

Reaction Paper. **You may respond to only one of the readings.**

14. December 2nd. 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:

Monday: Discussion of Collins, Illich, and Friere; Course Wrap-Up

Read This:

No Reading

Homework:

Work on your data analysis projects

15. December 4th and 9th - Student Presentations