C&I 508: Sociology of Education

Stephanie Wasta

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Course Purpose and Overview
This course examines the various roles played by schools in society. We will explore various theoretical frameworks that have informed the sociology of education and discern their impact on formal education. We will examine questions related to the organizational features of schools, school relationships to other societal institutions, and the role schools play in socializing our youth. We will consider the role of the school in social inequality and explore some current trends and their anticipated impact on student opportunities. While the course will primarily focus on U.S. issues, it will be grounded in a comparative perspective in order to show our connections with other nations.

Class activities will vary from lectures to open discussions to small group dialogues to student presentations. Students will be active participants in the course. You are encouraged and expected to ask questions, raise issues, and otherwise contribute to an informed and substantive classroom discussion. Assigned readings are to be read prior to class sessions and will be the primary focus of each class.

As I teach, I try to be aware of the special needs of individuals as well as the needs of the group. If you require some accommodation, I encourage you to discuss that with me. Please make use of e-mail or call me to discuss assignments or the content of the course. I would be happy to meet with you before or after our class sessions, if that would fit your schedule better.

Required Texts


A faculty pack of readings is available at Denny’s Copy Shop (Higgins & South Ave.)

Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria
Written assignments are double-spaced, printed on a letter-quality printer, and due during class on the days indicated below. Late assignments are accepted with one letter.
grade deducted for each late day. Use Chicago, APA, or MLA documentation where appropriate in your written work. I determine grades by a careful judgment of each assignment against a set of criteria, as indicated for that assignment. In the papers, you should demonstrate that you understand the major issues at stake in the particular area. Your paper should be significantly more than simply a summary of the reading. The papers should be critical and analytical, searching for points of contention or agreement among the different authors. You are expected to note key points and discuss the broader implications. All papers are also evaluated according to the quality of writing. Excellent work earns a point value between 92-100%; good work, 84-91%; fair work, 76-83%; and any work judged to be less than fair in quality is returned for student revision. If a student desires to revise a paper, this must be completed in a short period of time to be determined by both the student and the professor. For any revised work, the grades will be averaged.

Written/Oral Requirements for the course include:

1. **Theory Reflection Paper**: For this assignment, you will choose one sociological theory as presented in the readings to discuss. Possible choices include: functionalism, conflict theory, interpretive theories, or critical theory. Using deMarrais and LeCompte as your starting point, complete the following:
   - describe the main viewpoint of this theory;
   - explore the contribution this theory has made to the knowledge base about how schools work;
   - support your ideas with reference to the readings in class and others that are appropriate;
   - describe your reaction to this theory. How does it support or counter your understanding of education? What value does this theory have for you?

Limit your paper to 2-3 double-spaced, typed pages. Evaluation will be based on clarity in writing, thought and support given to your remarks, and inclusion of the items listed above. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade and is due Sept. 19.

2. **Schooling Issues Reflection Paper**: For this assignment, you will reflect on a few significant points in selected article(s) or chapters of books. Summarize the main points presented and then include your reaction to the author’s comments. Balance the paper between summary and reaction. Some questions to consider are the following:
   - How have I re-evaluated some of my perceptions about the topic at hand?
   - What discoveries have I made about the topic under discussion? What new insights have I gained?
   - How does the information I've read apply to me (especially in my teaching, work, etc.)?
   - How is this a significant issue for education today?
   - What questions do I still have about this topic? What more would I like to know?
   - What quotes were powerful in this work and what meaning do they hold for me?

Criteria for evaluation will be based upon:
   - ability to clearly summarize key points of the article(s),
   - ability to make personal connections or reflections pertaining to the topic under discussion,
• depth of discussion,
• clarity in writing.

Limit your paper to 2-3 type written pages. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade and is due Oct. 3.

3. **Midterm/MEA essays:** This will be a take-home exam asking you to answer essay questions pertaining to the readings and class discussions. You will receive the questions three weeks in advance of the due date. Part of the midterm will ask you to reflect on the MEA/MFT conference held in Missoula Oct. 17-18. You are to attend at least one keynote session of your choosing and will be asked to use information from that session in this exam. The midterm will count 20% of your final grade. Due Oct. 31.

4. **Book Review:** For this assignment you will select an appropriate book to related to the field of sociology of education to critique and review. A list of books will provided early in the semester, but students may choose other books not included on the list. In the review, you will do the following:
   • summarize the main points of the book;
   • note the strengths and weaknesses of the work;
   • discuss implications of the points made by the author (s);
   • provide your own reaction to the content of the book; and
   • use course readings to support your remarks.

Limit the paper to 4-6 double-spaced typed pages. Evaluation will be based on clarity in writing, organization of ideas, thought given to remarks, and inclusion of the items listed above. The book review will count 20% of your final grade.

5. **Book Talk:** You will provide a brief synopsis of the book you reviewed and engage class members in a short discussion. You may choose to present the work in a poster session format, powerpoint format, or with handouts. Some visual representation of key points is strongly encouraged. Limit your talk to 15 minutes. Depending on class numbers, book talks may be presented in small groups.

Evaluation will be based on effective summation of the main points of your book, clarity in presentation, and your ability to stimulate and engage the audience. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade.

6. **Final Project:** You will complete a take-home final exam that will ask you to make connections to the readings and discussions throughout the semester. In addition, you may complete an in-class portion of the final to be determined by class members and the professor. The final project will count 20% of the final grade.

7. **Participation:** You will be asked to prepare for class session as well as to contribute in class activities and discussions. Class participation will be evaluated on the following:
   • faithful attendance and appropriate contributions to class discussions;
   • appropriate participation in small group activities;
   • completion of readings and assignments prior to class meetings.
I will ask you for your own self-assessment of participation at the end of the course. I will incorporate your input when determining your participation grade. Participation is worth 10% of the final grade.

**Assessment Summary**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory reflection</td>
<td>20pts.</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>A=(92-100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School issues reflection</td>
<td>20pts.</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>B=(84-91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>40pts.</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>C=(76-83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>40pts.</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>D=(68-75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talk</td>
<td>20pts.</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>40pts.</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20pts.</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>200pts.</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
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**Tentative Sequence of Topics and Reading Assignments:**

**Sept. 5**  Introduction to the Course

**Sept. 12**  Sociology of Education: Key Theories and Overview of field of study

**Readings**

*Brint chp. 1*

*Fac Pack

**Assignment**- Explore this website-http://www.asanet.org/soe/.

**Sept. 19**  Schooling: Differences between industrial and developing countries. Demographics in U. S. Education

**Readings**

*Brint chp. 2-3*

*Fac Pack

**Assignment**- Theory Reflection due

**Sept. 26**  Schooling and Social Structure

**Readings**

*Apple, chp. 1-4*

**Oct. 3**  Schooling and Social Structure

**Readings**

*Apple, chp. 5-7*
Assignment- Schooling Issues Reflection due

Oct. 10  Parents and Schools
Readings
*Fac Pack


Oct. 17  MEA/MFT conference no class
Assignment- Reflection on one key note session from the conference to be included in the midterm paper.

Oct. 24  School as Organization: Sociology of Teaching
Readings
*Brint, chp. 8

*Fac Pack


Oct. 31  Schools and Socialization
Transmission of knowledge
Readings
*Brint chp. 4-5

Assignment- Midterm due.

Nov. 7  Schools and Social Selection: Social Class
Readings
*Brint chp. 6-7

*Fac Pack

Nov. 14  Schools and Social Selection: Gender
Readings
*Thorne, first half of the book

*Fac Pack

Book presentations

**Nov. 21** Schools and Social Selection: Gender
Readings
*Thorne, second half of the book

Assignment- Book Review due.

Book presentations

**Nov. 28** Thanksgiving Holiday- No Class

**Dec. 5** Schools and Social Selection: Race and Ethnicity
Readings
*Fac Pack


Book presentations

**Dec. 12** Reform Movements: What can we expect for the future?
Readings
*Brint, chp. 9

other articles TBA

Book presentations

**Dec. 19** Wrap-up of the course
Final Project 5:30-7:30 PM