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SOCI 391.80: ST - Sociology of Education

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Sociology of Education

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:50 pm

DHC 023

SOCI 398 x80

Spring 2019

CONTACT

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OFFICE HOURS

DHC 005
Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:00
(or by appointment)

Course Overview

What is the purpose of education in our society? How do schools intersect with broader inequalities as well as with societal meaning systems related to race, class, gender and ability? What is affecting our education system today?

Drawing on both academic texts and mainstream media, this seminar-style honors course examines the relationship between schools and society through exploring questions such as the ones above. We will discuss current issues in education, such as high-stakes testing and school shootings, as well as reflecting on how broader patterns in education have shaped our own educational experiences. We will also consider the questions of *how* social scientific methods can help us to better understand educational issues.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain how educational systems interact with and perpetuate social hierarchies and cultural meaning systems in our society.
- Describe and analyze both current events and major trends that are shaping our education system.
- Reflect upon and analyze your own educational experience in light of the above information.

What I Expect of You:

Attendance

This is a participation/discussion-oriented class, so you must be present. Missing class means missing significant intellectual work that will help you understand the readings and complete the assignments.

Participation

This class is structured to both support your learning and create space for what YOU find most interesting. For this to be effective, you must come to class having done the reading and prepared to contribute ideas and questions. Additionally, I expect you to refrain from electronic distraction (texting, Facebook, etc.). Splitting your attention in this way compromises what you get out of class. It's also disrespectful to me and to your classmates.

Intellectual Engagement

Like many things in life, what you get out of this class is proportionate to what you put into it. The work in this class is not formulaic; it requires curiosity, engagement, and intellectual risk-taking.

What You Can Expect of Me:

I am your *teacher* before I am your evaluator.

This means that my job is to support you in any way I can. ***Please talk to me*** if you have a learning difference that requires accommodation, if you are struggling with the material, or if something in your life is making it difficult for you to succeed in this class.

I will not make you do meaningless work.

The readings, assignments, and structure of this class are designed to support your learning, and I will always explain the purpose of what we're doing.

I will provide you with feedback on your work.

Assignments should serve learning goals, and getting both positive and negative feedback on assignments is part of that process. On all assignments, I will tell you what you did well, and what you could improve. If you ever get a lower grade than you were expecting on an assignment, I encourage you to talk to me about it so you understand what went wrong. (A low grade doesn't mean that I'm mad at you, think you're stupid, or don't like you anymore. It's an evaluation of one assignment, not an evaluation of you as a human being.)

Readings

Where are they?

All readings are either posted on Moodle, or are online (the links are on the syllabus).

What should I do with them?

YOU MUST ANNOTATE THE READINGS!!! Otherwise, all the assignments will be much more difficult. This means either printing them out so that you can highlight, underline, and/or make notes in the margins, or using a tablet or computer to do the digital equivalent.

Amherst College offers guidance on annotating digital texts here:

<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter/resourcesforwriters/reading-and-annotating-in-digital-environments>

You should always bring your annotated readings to class, because you will need them for quizzes as well as for many class activities and discussions.

Assignments & Grading

General Information

- All assignments are required to pass this course.
- Descriptions of all assignments, plus assessment criteria, are included at the end of the syllabus.
- An “A” assignment is exceptional work; not work that merely meets the requirements.
- Late assignments will be lowered 1/3 of a letter grade (about 3%) for each day past the due date. I am flexible about extensions; however, you need to let me know *in advance!*

Assignment	Due Date	Portion of Final Grade
Reading Quizzes	Tuesdays	25%
Current Issues	by Wednesday of your assigned week	15%
Book Assignment	Book Questions – Thursday, Mar. 7 th Lesson Plan – Friday, Mar. 22 nd Book Lesson – various, see schedule	30%
Reflection Paper	Friday, May 3 rd	30%

Academic Integrity

If you use someone else’s work or ideas without citing them, it’s considered plagiarism. This can happen by accident if you aren’t mindful about giving credit where credit is due. It can also happen on purpose if people become overwhelmed, and intentionally cheat.

The most important reason not to cheat is that it compromises your integrity. Your integrity is worth more than any grade.

I take dishonesty very seriously, and will not give you credit for any assignment you have plagiarized, nor will I allow you to make up the assignment. If you are overwhelmed, please come talk to me so that I can help you.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Quizzes (25% of final grade)

Every Tuesday, we will start class with a short (20 minutes, 1-2 questions) quiz on the week's reading. Quizzes are open note, and will be completed in pairs.

Quiz questions will not be designed to trick you, nor will they require that you have a perfect understanding of the readings. The purposes of this assignment are to ensure that you are prepared for class (i.e. have read and annotated/taken notes on the texts), and to provide a check (for you and me) on your understanding.

If you miss a quiz because you are absent, you can make it up by coming to office hours, or by making an appointment with me.

Current Issue Discussion (15% of final grade)

The purpose of this assignment is to make connections between our course and current education-related issues that are of interest to you. It requires you to find and read an article (or other source of information) on a current educational topic, write a short response paper, and then lead a small-group discussion in class.

- 1) Be sure to get your information from a trustworthy source! Many major news sources (e.g. *NPR*, the *New York Times*) have regular columns/reports on education. There are also online magazines such as *Education Week*, and websites such as edutopia.org. Information about local events from local sources (e.g. the *Missoulian*) is also welcome. Just be sure the article is long enough to give you something to engage with (OR draw upon multiple sources of information).
- 2) Write a brief response to your article(s) (roughly 1-2 pages). In your response, you should:
 - a. Briefly but clearly summarize the relevant information. I or your classmates should be able to understand the issue you're discussing without reading the article itself.
 - b. Contextualize your article within the larger issues we're discussing in class, including referencing at least one reading.
 - c. Pose one (or more) discussion questions.
- 3) Post your article and response on Moodle in the current events section. You must post **the night before** your class discussion, or it will be considered late.
- 4) Come to class prepared to lead an informal discussion about your topic with a small group for about 20 minutes.

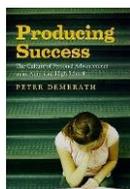
Book Assignment (30% of final grade)

In this assignment, you will work in groups to read a book-length study of an educational topic and then prepare to teach one class session on this book. This includes:

- selecting two chapters from your book to assign as that week's reading
- giving a short presentation in which you highlight significant information about the study
- leading a class discussion and/or activity that supports your classmates in engaging with and better understanding the ideas from the study

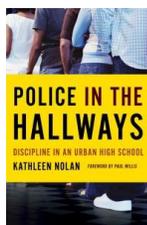
Step 1: Choosing a Book

There are four options for books:



- 1) *Producing Success: The Culture of Personal Advancement in an American High School*, by Peter Demerath

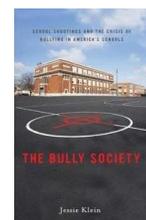
- 2) *Women Without Class: Girls, Race and Identity*, by Julie Belle



- 3) *Police in the Hallways: Discipline in an Urban High School*, Kathleen Nolan

by

- 4) *The Bully Society: School Shootings and the Crisis of Bullying America's Schools*, by Jessie Klein



in

In class, I will describe these books to you in greater detail and you will then sign up for one of them. **You must buy or in some other way obtain a copy of your book.**

Step 2: Reading, Discussing and Selecting Chapters

Class time on **Thursday, Feb. 28th** will be devoted to discussing your book with your group; therefore, you ***must have read your entire book by this day.*** With your group, you will discuss your book and decide which chapters to assign. Your chosen chapter assignments and your group's answers to a set of questions (available on Moodle) are due the following week on **Thursday, Mar. 7th.**

Step 3: Designing Your Lesson

Prior to delivering your lesson, you must write and turn in to me:

- a brief lesson plan, including your goals (I will provide you with a template)
- two quiz questions

You must turn in your lesson plan and quiz questions by **Friday, Mar. 22nd**; this is so that I can give you any needed feedback prior to your lesson.

Step 4: Delivering Your Lesson

Following the quiz on your readings, you will have 50 minutes for your lesson, which should include the following components:

- Commentary from you: You are responsible for contextualizing the book and highlighting the most important ideas. This can happen in a variety of ways, including offering a “preview” the week before your presentation, offering additional information right at the beginning, and/or offering some important concluding statements at the end.
- A discussion/activity: This can be anything you want, and I encourage you to be creative. The only criteria is that you have a specific goal or objective in mind. In other words, you must be able to articulate what you hope your classmates will get out of participating in your activity or answering the questions you pose.

Criteria for Evaluation:

Book Discussion & Chapter Selection (worth 10 of 30 percentage points)

- Questions answered thoroughly and reasonably accurately.
- Chapter selections provided on time, with explanation

Lesson Plan & Quiz Questions (worth 5 of 30 percentage points)

- Complete & on time
- Includes clear goals, objectives or purposes
- Quiz questions are thoughtful & clearly articulated

Book Lesson (worth 15 of 30 percentage points)

- Clear and accurate
- Offers any necessary additional context (e.g. useful information not included in the chapters assigned to the class)
- Engaging
- Effective (meaning it is relevant to the goal you articulated in your lesson plan)
- Relates the themes of the book to broader educational issues, including making an explicit connection to at least one other reading

Reflection Paper (*30% of final grade*)

How do you see the broader themes we've discussed reflected in your own educational experience? In this assignment, you will answer this question by writing a paper (6-8 double-spaced pages) OR by producing another creative product (e.g. comic book, podcast, song, etc.). Your paper (or other creative product) should describe specific aspects of your educational experience, and explain how we can better understand your experience using at least three readings from the course.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Clearly suggests a way of understanding or interpreting your experience in light of broader sociological/educational themes
- Writing (or artistic) quality
 - Clear & well organized, free of major typos, grammatical errors, etc.
 - Includes citations (in whatever style you prefer) and a references section
 - Particularly creative, well-done, etc.
- Description of your experience
 - Detailed & specific; includes concrete examples
- Use of course reading(s)
 - Accurately reflects ideas in readings
 - Connection between experience and ideas is well explained

We will talk further about all these assignments in class!!!

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading DUE	Assignments DUE
Education & Society			
1 Jan. 10 th	Introductions; Studying Education	<i>No reading this week.</i>	
2 Jan. 15 th & 17 th	What is the purpose of schooling in our society?	1) Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. <i>American Educational Research Journal</i> , 34(1), 39 – 81.	
How Schools Create & Maintain Stratification			
3 Jan. 22 nd & 24 th	Inequalities in Funding & Curriculum	<p>1) Turner, C., Khrais, R., Lloyd, T., Olgin, A., Isensee, L., Vevea, B. & Carsen, D. (2016, April 18). Why America's schools have a money problem. Retrieved from the National Public Radio website: https://www.npr.org/2016/04/18/474256366/why-americas-schools-have-a-money-problem Note: READ (rather than or in addition to listening to) this report. The text on the webpage is different than the clip than played on air.</p> <p>2) Clarren, R. (2017, July 24). How America is failing Native American students: Punitive discipline, inadequate curriculum and declining federal funding created an education crisis. <i>The Nation</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.thenation.com/article/left-behind/</p> <p>3) Anyon, J. (1980). "Social class and the hidden curriculum of work." <i>Journal of Education</i>, 162(1): 67-92.</p>	

4 Jan. 29 th & 31 st	Racial Segregation in Schools & Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Glass, I. & Hannah-Jones, N. (2015, July 31). The problem we all live with, part 1. In I. Glass (Producer), <i>This American Life</i>. Chicago, IL: National Public Radio. Retrieved from: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with 2) Rothstein, R. (2014). The making of Ferguson: Public policies at the root of its troubles. <i>Economic Policy Institute</i>. Retrieved from: http://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/ 	
5 Feb. 5 th & 7 th	Schools for the Elite	<p>Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2009). <i>The best of the best: Becoming elite at an American boarding school</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduction, pp. 1-17. 2) Chapter 7: Envisioning an Elite Future, pp. 194-219. 	Current Issues (session 1)
6 Feb. 12 th & 14 th	Getting into and through College	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Khan, S. R. (2010). Getting in: How elite schools play the college game. In A. Howard & R. A. Gaztambide-Fernández (eds) <i>Educating elites: Class privilege and educational advantage</i>. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Education, pp. 97-112. 2) Cardoza, K. (n.d.) The first-generation college experience. Retrieved from: http://breakingground.wamu.org/the-first-gen-college-experience/ 	
How Schools Perpetuate Cultural Ideas			
7 Feb. 19 th & 21 st	Gender & Sexuality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) From: Pascoe, C.J. (2007). <i>Dude you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch. 1: Making masculinity: Adolescence, identity and high school, pp. 1-5, 18-22. 	

		<p>b. Ch. 2: Becoming Mr. Cougar: Institutionalizing heterosexuality and masculinity at River High, pp. 25-51</p> <p>2) Kimmel, M. S. & Mahler, M. (2003). Adolescent masculinity, homophobia, and violence. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>, 46(10), 1439-1458.</p> <p>Suggested: From Pascoe's book, read the appendix (What if a guy hits on you?: Intersections of gender, sexuality and age in fieldwork with adolescents), available on Moodle.</p>	
8 Feb. 26 th & 28 th	Ability	<p>1) Miller, L. & Spigel, A. (2015, January 9). Batman. In I. Glass (Producer), <i>This American Life</i>. Chicago, IL: National Public Radio. Retrieved from: https://www.thisamericanlife.org/544/batman</p> <p>2) Varenne, H. & McDermott, R. (1998). Disability as a cultural fact. In <i>Successful failure: The school America builds</i>. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 131-144. Note: Read ONLY pp 138-139.</p> <p>3) Mehan, H. (2000). Beneath the skin and between the ears: A case study in the politics of representation. In B. Levinson et al. (eds.), <i>Schooling the symbolic animal: Social and cultural dimensions of education</i>. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 259-279.</p>	
9 Mar. 5 th & 7 th	Race	<p>1) From: Lewis, A. E. & Diamond, J. B. (2015). <i>Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>a. Prologue, pp. xiii-xix.</p> <p>b. Introduction, pp. 1-16.</p> <p>c. Ch. 3: The road to detention is paved with good intentions, pp. 45-81.</p>	<p>Current Issues (session 2)</p> <p>Book discussion questions & chapter assignments DUE</p>
Current Educational Issues			

10 Mar. 12 th & 14 th	The Push for School Privatization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hannah-Jones, N. (2017, Feb 21). Have we lost sight of the promise of public schools? <i>The New York Times Magazine</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/magazine/have-we-lost-sight-of-the-promise-of-public-schools.html 2) Ravitch, D. (2013). <i>Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools</i>. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction, pp. xi-xii. b. Ch. 1: Our schools are at risk, pp. 3-9. c. Ch. 2: The context for corporate reform, pp. 10-18. 	
11 Mar. 19 th & 21 st	Corporate Education "Reform"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Karp, S. (2015). A tale of two districts: The long reach and deep pockets of corporate reform. <i>Rethinking Schools</i>, 29(3), 34 – 41. 2) Ravitch, D. (2013). <i>Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools</i>. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch. 3: Who are the corporate reformers?, pp. 19-31. d. Ch. 4: The language of corporate reform, pp. 32-43. 	Lesson Plans & Quiz Questions DUE
<i>Spring Break!</i>			
Book Project Weeks			
12 Apr. 2 nd & 4 th	<i>Producing Success</i>	Demerath, P. (2009). <i>Producing success: The culture of personal advancement in an American high school</i> . Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.	
13 Apr. 9 th & 11 th	<i>Women Without Class</i>	Bettie, J. (2003). <i>Women without class: Girls, race and identity</i> . Oakland, CA: University of California Press.	

14 Apr. 16 th & 18 th	<i>Police in the Hallways</i>	Nolan, K. (2011). <i>Police in the Hallways: Discipline in an Urban High School</i> . Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.	
15 Apr. 23 rd & 25 th	<i>Bully Society</i>	Klein, J. (2012). <i>The bully society: School shootings and the crisis of bullying in America's schools</i> . New York, NY: New York University Press.	
16		<i>Finals week - no class!</i>	Reflective Paper DUE