

Sociology of Education (200-level Elective)

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Instructor Details:

[name, email, office, student office hours times, course semester, course time, course location]

Course Details:

Course Goals:

Through this course you will learn how to analyze the American education system in a sociological way. You will examine topics such as the role of family background, school choice, college admissions, and college financial aid. The course will primarily seek to answer the following question: does the American education system decrease, increase, or maintain the existing inequality in the US?

I imagine each of you will enter the class with different opinions and perspectives on this question—perspectives I hope you are willing to share with your classmates—but through this course you will learn how sociologists engage in systematic research to answer and debate this question. As a class, we will also discuss how we might seek to solve some of the problems we address while keeping in mind real-world constraints. Whether you are a sociology major, a student considering a career in the education field, or a student interested broadly in issues of inequality, I hope you will find this course interesting, thought provoking, and relevant—to your past, present, and future.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Analyze the education system's role in reproducing and mitigating inequality
- Apply sociological theory and research to solving education problems
- Reflect on your own experiences in the education system in a sociological way

How We Will Learn:

My goal for this course is primarily to help you learn to think and critically analyze research about education in a way that is deeply rooted in the real world. To that end, there are no traditional exams in this class. You will have daily quizzes (see below) to give me a sense of whether you are understanding the readings, but otherwise no assignments will ask you to regurgitate information. Instead, you will be expected to discuss and write about the course topics using the course materials, your classmates, and other resources.

I assume that you all come to this class from different backgrounds. Some of you may be new to college while others may be almost done. Most of you are likely working jobs and have other obligations outside of this classroom. I understand and respect your different backgrounds. This class is designed largely around group work and group learning. You all will have different strengths that you bring to the class, as well as skills you may not have developed as much as you would like yet. I hope you will use your different perspectives to make this class better—challenge course material that conflicts with experiences you have had, explain concepts your groupmates are not as familiar with, and ultimately work together through your diverse perspectives to understand and evaluate the sociological perspective on education.

Student Support Statement:

You are a whole person, possibly with many challenges and struggles outside of this classroom. These challenges may include a physical or mental illness, ongoing interpersonal conflict with someone important in your life, incidents of racial bias or sexual harassment/assault, housing insecurity, food insecurity, or any number of others. Sometimes these challenges mean that you will struggle to do your best in the classroom and I can help work out academic accommodations in my class to still help you succeed. Here's a list of a few other resources you may find useful for your needs outside of class:

- SLU Health Center: free exams; some free resources (condoms, antibiotic ointment); services include birth control, acute care, STD and HIV testing, immunizations, etc.
- [Planned Parenthood of Canton](#): comprehensive family planning including abortion services with or without insurance; located at 9 Miner St in Canton
- [Kimberly Flint-Hamilton](#), Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, can help with or connect you to resources regarding bias incidents you experience in or out of the classroom at SLU; email: kflint@stlawu.edu (or I can email to connect you)
- Sarah Barber, Dean of First Year Program, can connect to lots of resources for any problem you may be facing; email: sbarber@stlawu.edu (or I can email to connect)
- SLU Counseling: 315-229-5392 during the day; 315-229-1914 for 24/7 crisis help
- Housing: Residence life can help you change roommates if needed; talk to your CA or email reslife@stlawu.edu
- Food pantry: [Church and Community Program](#) food pantry Wed 12-3 at 30 Court Street
- Thrift stores: [Church and Community](#) on Court St; [St. Mary's Thrift Store](#) on Main St

[I left my examples so that you can see the information I provide my students. You should adapt according to your campus and community resources]

Communicating with Me and Your Classmates:

- Student Office hours:
 - I will hold regular student office hours four times a week (see above).
 - This means I will be in my office waiting to meet with any students interested in talking to me!
 - I will default assume you want to meet in person (masks on!), but if you email me to let me know you want to meet on Zoom, I am happy to do that too! Here's the link: [zoom link]
 - You are welcome to tell me in advance that you are coming or just show up any time in that block.
 - I am on campus a lot! Let me know if you would like to meet at a different time outside of normal office hours and I will be very happy to do that.
 - Feel free to talk to me about course concerns as well as other topics on your mind. For instance, several of my college professors were great mentors to me in helping me think through my experiences in college as well as what I might want to do afterwards. I am more than happy to have those types of conversations with you or work to connect you with people who might know more about your interests than I do! You are not just a student, you are a person first and I hope to live up to my goal of always treating you as such.

- The best way to communicate with me is talking to me before or after class or sending me an email. I will try to always respond within 24 hours, though I may be slower to respond on weekends and during breaks.
- In return, I also expect that you will check your email regularly in case there are any updates for the class.
 - *You will be held accountable for information disseminated over emails so please check yours daily!*
- I also hope you form good relationships with your fellow classmates. While I will break you into groups after the first few days of class, I hope you will come to feel closer to all of your fellow classmates.
 - Getting to know your peers will facilitate your learning as well as help you if you ever need to miss class.
 - *If you miss class it is your responsibility to discuss with your group members what you missed. You will be held accountable for knowing any announcements or other information missed due to absences or tardiness*
- At a minimum, I expect you to all respect each other in class discussions, contributions to group work, and all other areas of class.

Assignments and Ways You Will Be Assessed:

Daily Quizzes (20%): These quizzes will be taken on Sakai **due by 8 AM the morning of class**. The quizzes should primarily be understood as reading quizzes. If you do the readings for that class, you should find the questions moderately easy. Most will ask you to explain the main argument or methods from the reading. You will also sometimes be asked review questions about topics covered in the class before. You will be asked to sign an honor pledge before each quiz verifying that the quiz response is your own without any help from classmates or the readings themselves, though you may use any notes you personally take on the readings while you complete the quiz. In-class activities may occasionally count as quiz grades. I will drop your two lowest quiz grades.

NOTE: Because these quizzes are taken outside of class on your own time AND I am dropping your two lowest quiz grades, there are no makeup quizzes except for in extreme extenuating circumstances.

Reflection Papers (total of 50%):

You will submit 5 reflection papers, due at the end of each unit. In the reflection papers, you must connect your own life experiences in the education system with the course content from the previous unit by answering the prompt(s) provided. Extensions of up to one week are welcome for reflection papers; you do not have to give a reason why you are requesting it.

Extension request link: [link to form]

Final Assessment (Group) (15%):

This will be an open everything assessment—you will be able to use notes, readings, the internet, and even your classmates as resources while you work on this (mostly) in-class assessment during the final exam period. You will have group and individual components of the assessment. Together you must create an argument about what impact the education system has on inequality, using evidence from course materials throughout all units of the semester. Based on

the problems you discuss, you will propose one policy solution. You will get the full prompt and instructions on the last day of class and the final paper is due the day of the final exam.

Participation (15%): This will be jointly determined by you and me. As the student, you will fill out your own evaluation form of your participation three times during the semester: once at the beginning, once halfway through, and once at the end. You will evaluate your self-perceived level of participation in the course—including attendance, level of preparation for each class meeting, level of participation in partner/group discussions, level of participation in full class discussions, and level of participation in other ways (i.e. office hours, going to the WORD studio, study or working groups, peer editing with a partner, etc.). At the end of the semester, you will propose a grade you deserve for participation. Using your information provided and my own observations, I will either accept or modify that proposed grade.

Grading Scale:

[insert your university or personal grading scale here]

Required Books and Resources:

- Armstrong, Elizabeth, and Laura Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [available for free online through SLU library]
- Calarco, Jessica M. 2018. *Negotiating Opportunities: How the Middle Class Secures Advantages in School*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- All other readings are excerpts from scholarly books, journal articles, or newspaper articles. Readings will be available on the course website, links on the syllabus, or e-books through the SLU library.
 - You must bring your a pen/pencil and paper to class to participate in class activities. You may optionally choose to bring your laptop to access the readings, powerpoints, or to take notes during class if you would like.

Academic Integrity:

As you know, SLU has policies regarding plagiarism and academic integrity. While many assignments or projects for this course will be done in groups, some assignments will be individual. I promise to always make it clear in assignment guidelines what types of collaboration or help from peers are acceptable and what are not. In return, you will be held to your promise as a SLU student to always follow SLU's guidelines and policies. If you have any questions, always ask permission or clarification beforehand!

Accommodations:

While there are no traditional exams in this course, some of you may still qualify for accommodations officially through SLU. If you have a learning difference/disability or other health impairment and need accommodations, please be sure to contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (315.229.5537) right away so they can help you get the accommodations you require. If you will need to use any accommodations in this class, please talk with me early so you can have the best possible experience this semester. Some of you may need accommodations that do not fit under typical SLU policies—especially given these uncertain and ever-changing

times. If you have any concerns at any time about your ability to succeed in this class, please talk to me as soon as these concerns arise so that we can try to take care of them together!

Additional Notes:

- The syllabus—including readings, assignment guidelines, and deadlines—is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Changes will be announced as early as possible—all will be announced via class powerpoints and usually via email as well. This is a semester in which all of us will have to be very flexible with changing circumstances.
- Many readings have parts that are highlighted or underlined. Those markings are generally not mine and I don’t necessarily recommend that you use them to guide your reading process. It may have been some random previous student who checked the book out from the library (side note: please do not write in library books).
- All articles from websites that have a paywall (like Washington Post or New York Times) also have the article as a PDF on Sakai.

THEME 1: INTRODUCTION

Day 1

First Day of Class!

- Fully read syllabus

DUE: About Me (google form—ideally before class, no later than end of class)

Day 2

What Should Education Do?

- Mann, Horace. 1848. “Twelfth Annual Report to the Secretary of the Massachusetts States Board of Education.” <https://genius.com/Horace-mann-twelfth-annual-report-to-the-secretary-of-the-massachusetts-state-board-of-education-1848-annotated>

DUE: Participation Goals

Day 3

What Does Education Do?

- Downey, Douglas B. and Dennis J. Condon. 2016. “Fifty Years since the Coleman Report: Rethinking the Relationship between Schools and Inequality.” *Sociology of Education* 89(3). Read 207-213 and 216-218; SKIM 213-216.

THEME 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Day 4

Before Formal Education

- Hart, Betty and Todd R. Risley. 2003. “The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3.” *American Educator*. [Sakai]

DUE: Reflection Paper 1

Day 5

Preschool

- Meloy, Beth, Madelyn Gardner, and Linda Darling-Hammond. 2019. "Untangling the Evidence on Preschool Effectiveness: Insights for Policymakers." *Learning Policy Institute* https://tpcref.org/wp-content/uploads/Untangling_Evidence_Preschool_Effectiveness_BRIEF_2019.pdf.

Day 6

Elementary School: Negotiating Opportunities

- Negotiating Opportunities Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-60)

Day 7

Elementary School: Negotiating Opportunities

- Negotiating Opportunities Chapters 2 & 3 (pp. 61-102)

Day 8

Elementary School: Negotiating Opportunities

- Negotiating Opportunities Chapters 4 & 5 (pp. 103-145)

Day 9

Elementary School: Negotiating Opportunities

- Negotiating Opportunities Chapters 6 & 7 (pp. 146-184)

Day 10

Elementary School: Negotiating Opportunities —Wrap Up Discussion

- Negotiating Opportunities Conclusion (pp. 185-200)

THEME 3: SECONDARY EDUCATION

Day 11

Tracking

- Chapter 19. 2011. In *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader*, 2nd edition. Edited by Alan R. Sadovnik. New York: Taylor and Francis. Read pages 347-358. [Sakai]
 - Hallinan, Maureen T. "Tracking: From Theory to Practice" and "Further Thoughts on Tracking."
 - Oakes, Jeannie. "More than Misplaced Technology: A Normative and Political Response to Hallinan on Tracking" and "One More Thought."
 - Note: Read the chapter in the order it is in the book chapter.

DUE: Reflection Paper 2

Day 12

Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: History

- Ravitch, Diane. 2010. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books. [Sakai]
 - Chapters 2 and 6.
- Oliver, John. 2015. "Standardized Testing." *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6lyURyVz7k>

Day 13

Standardized Testing and Accountability Movement: Consequences

- Domina, Thurston, Andrew M. Penner, and Emily K. Penner. 2016. "Membership Has Its Privileges': Status Incentives and Categorical Inequality in Education." *Sociological Science* 3. Read pp. 264-73 and 285-87. SKIM pp. 273-285. [Sakai]
- Strauss, Valerie. 2015. "How and Why Convicted Atlanta Teachers Cheated on Standardized Tests." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/01/how-and-why-convicted-atlanta-teachers-cheated-on-standardized-tests/?utm_term=.60e460f04f10
[read until the numbered part toward the end]

Day 14

Race and Culture: Academic Debate

- Fordham, Signithia and John U. Ogbu, 1986. "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White.'" Read pp.176-178 and 185-203. SKIM pp. 178-185 [Sakai]
- Tyson, Karolyn, William Darity, and Domini R. Castellino. 2005. "It's Not 'a Black Thing': Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 70(4): 582-605. [Sakai]

Day 15

School Discipline

- Morris, Edward W. and Brea L. Perry. 2017. "Girls Behaving Badly? Race, Gender, and Subjective Evaluation in the Discipline of African American Girls." *Sociology of Education* 90(2): 127-148. [Sakai]
 - Read 127-130 & 143-145
 - SKIM 130-143

DUE: Feedback for Instructor (google form)

Day 16

School Choice: Elite Private Schools

- Khan, Shamus Rahman. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Sakai]
 - Introduction (pp. 1-17)
 - Chapter 2 (47-76; SKIM 41-47)

DUE: Mid-Term Participation Evaluation

Day 17

History of Segregation, Desegregation, and Resegregation

- Clotfelter, Charles T. 2005. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [online access available through library]
 - Chapter 1: read 13-33; SKIM pp. 33-43
 - Chapter 3: read 81-91
 - Chapter 4: read 100-105; 108-116; 122-123

Day 18

School Choice: Modern Resegregation Movement?

- Denice, Patrick, and Betheny Gross. 2016. "Choice, Preferences, and Constraints: Evidence from Public School Applications in Denver." *Sociology of Education* 89(4): 300-320. [Sakai]
 - Read 300-308 and 315-317; SKIM 308-315
- McLaren, Mandy. 2017. "New Charter Schools Debate: Are They Widening Racial Divides in Public Education?" *Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/new-charter-schools-debate-are-they-widening-racial-divides-in-public-education/2017/05/16/2f324676-0d78-11e7-9d5a-a83e627dc120_story.html?tid=sm_fb&utm_term=.4ad688e4b7ca

Day 19

School Choice: Charter Schools and Vouchers, Principle and Practice

- Oliver, John. 2016. "Charter Schools." *Last Week Tonight*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1 htSPGAY7I>
- Turner, Cory, Eric Weddle, and Peter Balonon-Rosen. 2017. "The Promise and Peril of School Vouchers." *NPR*. <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/05/12/520111511/the-promise-and-peril-of-school-vouchers>

THEME 4: TRANSITIONING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Day 20

Who Attends College? How Do They Choose Where?

- Mullen, Ann L. 2010. *Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press. [Sakai]
 - Chapters 3 and 4.

DUE: Reflection Paper 3

Day 21

College Admissions: SAT Debate

- Readings from edited volume: Soares, Joseph A. 2012. *SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional Admissions*. New York: Teachers College Press.
 - Soares, Joseph A. "Introduction": pp. 1-3
 - Atkinson, Richard C. and Saul Geiser. "Reflections on a Century of College Admissions Tests.": pp. 23-36 and 40-43, SKIM 36-40
 - Rosner, Jay. "The SAT: Quantifying the Unfairness Behind the Bubbles.": pp. 104-117
 - Schaeffer, Robert. "Test Scores Do Not Equal Merit: Deemphasizing Standardized Tests in College Admissions.": pp. 153-161

Day 22

College Admissions: Who Gets Preference?

- Stevens, Mitchell L. 2009. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [accessible online through SLU library]
 - Chapter 1: read pages 10-16, 19-22
 - Chapter 2: read pages 45-51
 - Chapter 6: read pages 191-198, 202-213, 222-225
 - Chapter 8: read pages 246-8

Day 23

Financial Aid and Student Loan Debt

- Goldrick-Rab, Sara. 2016. *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - Introduction: 1-9
 - Chapter 2: 39-65

THEME 5: ATTENDING HIGHER EDUCATION

Day 24

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Paying for the Party, Introduction and Chapter 1

Day 25

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Paying for the Party, Chapters 2 and 5

Day 26

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Chapters 6 and 7

Day 27

Inequality with College: Paying for the Party

- Social Networks Activity Instructions
- [note for instructors: this activity is published in *Teaching Sociology*: Gillis, Alanna, and Brionca Taylor. 2019. "Social Networks and Labor Market Inequality: A Role-Playing Activity to Teach Difficult Concepts." *Teaching Sociology* 47(2): 148-156.]

Day 28

Inequality within College: Paying for the Party

- Chapters 8 and 9

Day 29

Inequality within College: Elite Universities

- Jack, Anthony A. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 - Chapter 2

Day 30

Inequality across College: Community College Experience

- Nielsen, Kelly. 2015. "'Fake It 'til You Make It': Why Community College Students' Aspirations 'Hold Steady.'" *Sociology of Education* 88(4): 265-283. [Sakai]

DUE: Reflection Paper 4

Day 31

Inequality across Colleges: Comparing College Experiences

- Fries-Britt, Sharon and Bridget Turner. 2002. "Uneven Stories: Successful Black Collegians at a Black and a White Campus." *The Review of Higher Education* 25(3): 315-330. [Sakai]

Day 32

Inequality across Colleges: For Profit Colleges

- McMillan Cottom, Tressie. 2017. *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*. New York: The New Press.
 - Introduction: pp. 1-18
 - Chapter 1: 27-39
- Oliver, John. 2014. "Student Debt." *Last Week Tonight*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8pjd1QEA0c>

THEME 6: BEYOND HIGHER EDUCATION & CONCLUSION

Day 33

Transitions Out of College: Gender, Work, and Student Debt

- Arum, Richard, and Josipa Roksa. 2014. *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read pages 66-75. SKIM pages 53-66. [Sakai]
- Douglas-Gabriel, Danielle. 2017. "The \$833 Billion Albatross around the Necks of Women with College Degrees." *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/05/24/the-833-billion-albatross-around-the-necks-of-women-with-college-degrees>

DUE: Reflection Paper 5

Day 34

Who Goes to Graduate School?

- Mullen, Ann L., Kimberly A. Goyette, and Joseph A. Soares. 2003. "Who Goes to Graduate School?: Social and Academic Correlates of Educational Continuation after College." *Sociology of Education*. Read pages 143-145 and 159-161. SKIM pages 145-159 (look at Table 3 on 158). [Sakai]
- Clayton, Victoria. 2016. "The Problem with the GRE." *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-problem-with-the-gre/471633>

Day 35

Limitations of Education

- Johnson, Allan G. 2012. "Why Is There Poverty?" Excerpt from *The Forest and The Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*. Allan G. Johnson Blog.
<http://www.agjohnson.us/essays/poverty/>

DUE: Final Participation Evaluation

Day 36

Last Day of Class!

- Review reading from Day 3 to prepare for class wrap up and to start working on final assessment.

Final Exam Day

DUE: Final Assessment