

Sociology of Education

Fall 2014

Professor: Dr. Kristin Gordon
Email: kristin.gordon@hts.gatech.edu

Office: Room G17, Old CE Building
Office Hours: M/W 12:05 – 2:00 &
by appointment

“Never in the history of human civilization has a society attempted to educate all of its children. Under this new law, we will strive to provide every boy and girl in America with a high-quality education— regardless of his or her income, ability or background.”
January 2002, No Child Left Behind

“Few civil rights are as central to the cause of human freedom as equal educational opportunity. Freedom is ... the ability to think on your own and to pursue your own path as far as your gifts can take you— and only education can give you that freedom...”
—U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Course Description

There are few institutions that shape the nature of social life as profoundly as systems of formal education. While not all education takes place within a formal school setting, what occurs within, to, and as a result of the formal system of schooling plays a remarkable role in shaping social outcomes and attitudes. This course will begin by examining several theoretical approaches utilized by sociologists to understand education. We will turn next to explore some of the individual- and school-level factors that produce variation in student and teacher outcomes. Issues of gender, race, ethnicity, social class and other forms of diversity are inseparable from the experience of education, thus special emphasis will be placed on these issues throughout this course. We will conclude by considering strategies used by educators to effectively teach diverse student populations. In addition to discussing the empirical and theoretical literature in each of these areas, we will also experience multiculturalism and diversity by engaging in structured observation and analysis of local events and activities. This field experience will promote self-reflection, improve observation and analysis skills, as well as enhance your understanding of diversity and education.

Learning Outcomes

This course achieves the Area E Approved Learning Outcome which states, “Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.” In this class, students will learn how social, political, and economic forces influence social behavior through an exploration of the individual, school, and community-level factors that produce variation in student and teacher outcomes. We will situate these factors within their wider social, economic and political context, analyzing how issues of gender, race, ethnicity, social class and other forms of cultural diversity impact education, and by considering strategies used by educators to effectively teach diverse student

populations. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome through completion of two exams, a written media report, class engagement and a field experience project.

Required Readings

Richard Arum, Irene Beattie, and Karly Ford. *The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of American Education*. (2nd edition) Pine Forge Press, 2011.

Readings – The required readings not in this text are available on T-Square. Articles marked with (ABF) are from Arum, Beattie and Ford, The Structure of Schooling. It is your responsibility to complete all the required readings before class and be prepared to contribute to class discussion. Please note that some days the reading assignment is heavier than other days. Make sure you read ahead in the syllabus and plan adequate time to complete the readings before class. An asterisk (*) by an article means it is recommended but not required.

Course Requirements

Class Participation & Attendance Policy – Key to making this a successful course is your participation in all aspects of the class. This means that you need to complete the required reading prior to class and be ready to actively engage in class discussion with your classmates. In order to facilitate productive conversation both in class and at your site visits, please make sure you read the Ground Rules for Class Discussion. Both the quantity and quality of your participation is evaluated by the instructor. If you do not participate in class discussions, you will not earn any of the 5 available points. Only exceptional participation will be rewarded with the full 5 points.

Attendance is also crucial. I will frequently present material not covered in the readings during class. You are responsible for all of the readings listed on the syllabus, regardless of whether we discuss them in class, and the new material I introduce during our class sessions. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to get the lecture notes from a classmate. I will not review the lecture material with you privately. Coming to class on time is also part of attendance. There is no penalty for your first absence. However, beginning with your second absence, you will lose .5 points off your attendance grade. It is your responsibility to sign the class attendance sheet each day when it is circulated. Your failure to sign this sheet will result in a counted absence. (10 points of the final grade - 5 for participation and 5 for attendance)

Field Experience Project - An integral part of this course is your active participation in several field experiences. This pedagogical approach, called short-term experiential learning, allows you to learn firsthand about the issues we discuss in class, while at the same time observing and engaging with the community. This course fuses two central ideas: how diversity impacts educational experiences and outcomes as well as an examination of education as a social institution. In this project, you will combine these ideas, by attending three community events that focus on education in and around topics of diversity and analyze them as they relate to our engagement with educational institutions. Thus, the goal for your site visits is to engage with settings that will allow you to make detailed observations on the structure and experience of learning among communities that do NOT resemble your own experience and background. A list of some possible events will be distributed to the class. However,

you may be aware of, or learn about, additional events that you feel are appropriate for this project. Please share these events with the instructor for pre-approval as quickly as possible. This will allow plenty of time so other members of the class may also have the opportunity to attend. No experiential learning project would be complete without an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences and connect them with the theoretical and empirical work studied in class. To accomplish this goal, you will write a journal entry following each site visit. This journal entry will help you record your observations, experiences, and interpretations of the event. In addition, you will submit a final reflection paper which summarizes your learning from the field experiences and draws them together with course content. More detailed information on the structure of the journal entries, reflection paper, possible events, and due dates will be distributed in class. (Journals 15 points - 5 points per entry, Essay 15 points)

Media Report – Once during the semester you will be responsible for presenting a news article that relates to class material. You must select an article, write a short analysis of the article summarizing the connection between the article and course content, and briefly present the article to the class on your selected due date. The article summary will be posted on T-Square for your classmates to review. (10 points)

Tests – Two exams will be given during the course of the semester to test your comprehension of the material covered in the readings, lectures, and presentations. Exams utilize short answer and essay format. (25 points per exam, 50 points of your final grade)

<u>Grading</u> -	Test 1	25 points
	Test 2	25 points
	Media Report	10 points
	Field Experience Project	30 points
	- Journals (15 points)	
	- Final Reflection Paper (15 points)	
	Participation & Attendance	10 points

The grading system will follow the A to F scale as follows: A: 100-90; B: 89-80; C: 79-70; D: 69-60; F: 59-0.

Policy on Late Assignments - It is crucial that you turn in all assignments on time. Assignments are due prior to the start of class on the due date. Specific deadlines will be distributed well in advance with the instructions for every assignment. Thus, 5% of the total points allotted for the assignment will be deducted for every day the assignment is late, including weekends and holidays. For example, if the assignment is worth 5 points, I will deduct .25 points per day. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments will be submitted using T-Square. If you have questions, concerns, or technical issues with T-Square it is your responsibility to inform me and attempt to resolve the problem prior to the deadline.

Academic Honesty – Every Georgia Institute of Technology student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity. Students are expected to have a thorough understanding of the Georgia Institute of Technology academic honor code. All work submitted by the student—unless specifically noted in writing by the professor—must represent the individual effort of the student. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is your responsibility to ask your professors. If you choose to be dishonest, be aware that I will submit your case for further review. Remember: Your personal integrity is more valuable than your grade on any assignment.

Class Conduct - In order to create an atmosphere of learning, please turn off your cell phone and anything else that may disrupt class. You should not use any electronic equipment during class unless it is necessary to facilitate your learning and approved by the professor. I reserve the right to lower your grade should you disrupt class or become distracted by the use of any approved technology.

Disability Statement – Georgia Tech offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with the ADAPTS – Office of Disability Services Office (www.adapts.gatech.edu).

Disclaimer – The syllabus detailed below is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Ground Rules for Class Discussion¹

During the semester this class will discuss controversial issues and debates in education. We will frequently examine the roles played by culture, race, ethnicity, ability/disability, gender, language, religion, and socioeconomic status in the teaching and learning process. It is necessary that we create an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking and engaging in discussions. Thus, all of us must abide by the following ground rules for class discussion.

- 1) Acknowledge that racism, sexism and classism and other forms of institutionalized oppression exist.
- 2) Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and the like is that we are all systematically misinformed about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups.
- 3) Agree not to blame others or ourselves for the misinformation we have learned, but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
- 4) Agree not to “blame victims” for the condition of their lives.
- 5) Assume that people – both the groups we study and the members of the class – always do the best they can.
- 6) Actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others.
- 7) Share information about our groups with other members of the class, and never demean, devalue, or in any way “put down” people for their own experiences.
- 8) Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
- 9) Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside of the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks.

¹ From Lynn Weber Cannon, “Fostering Positive Race, Class, and Gender Dynamics in the Classroom.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 1990.

Course Outline

PART I: COURSE INTRODUCTION: IS THERE A CRISIS IN EDUCATION?

August 18 & 20 -

Tasks to Complete: Read the syllabus, organize your calendar, review T-Square, think about what topic you would like to present your media report on, and start looking for site-visit opportunities

PART II: THEORIES OF SCHOOLING

Section 1: Human Capital Theory

August 22 -

G. Becker, *Human Capital* (ABF)

R. Collins, *The Myth of Technocracy*, Chapter 1 in *The Credential Society* (on reserve)

Section 2: Status Conflict Theory

August 25 -

R. Collins, *Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification* (ABF)

P. Cookson and C. Persell, *The Chosen Ones*, (ABF)

Section 3: Class Theory/Open Systems Perspective

August 27 & 29 -

S. Bowles and H. Gintis, *Beyond the Educational Frontier: The Great American Dream Freeze*, (ABF)

M. Lamont and A. Lareau, *Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments*, (ABF)

M. Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*, (ABF)*

L. Renzulli. *Organizational Environments and the Emergence of Charter Schools in the United States* (on reserve)

September 1 – School Holiday

September 3 – Review and Discussion Day

PART III: EQUALITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

September 5 -

J. Coleman, *Equality and Achievement in Education* excerpt (on reserve)

PART IV: THE PRIMARY IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Section 1: Elements of Social Background: History and Culture

September 8: Overview of the Primary Importance of Social Background

J. Coleman & T. Hoffer, *Schools, Families and Communities* (ABF)

September 10 & 12: Social Class and Economic Diversity in Education

A. Lareau, *Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families*, (ABF)

September 15 & 17: Race and Ethnic Diversity in Education

A. Lewis, *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the Color Line in Classrooms and Communities* (ABF)

P. McIntosh, *White Privilege and Male Privilege* (on reserve)

September 19 & 22: Gender and Sexual Diversity in Education

D. Epstein, S. O'Flynn & D. Telford, *"Othering" Education: Sexualities, Silences, and Schooling* (on reserve)

C.J. Pascoe, *"Dude, You're a Fag": Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse* (ABF)

September 24 & 26: Religious Diversity in Education

W.J. Blumenfeld & K. Jaekel, *Exploring Levels of Christian Privilege Awareness Among Preservice Teachers* (on reserve)

September 29: Exceptionality and Ability Diversity in Education

T. Hehir, *Eliminating Ableism in Education* (on reserve)

October 1 & 3: Linguistic and Geographic Diversity in Education

L. Hempel et al, *Racial Threat and White Opposition to Bilingual Education in Texas* (on reserve)

A. Portes, *English-Only Triumphs, But the Costs are High*, (ABF)

October 6: Intersectionality and Education

C.A. Grant and E. Zwier, *Intersectionality and Student Outcomes: Sharpening the Struggle Against Racism, Sexism, Classism, Ableism, Heterosexism, Nationalism, and Linguistic, Religious and Geographical Discrimination in Teaching and Learning*. (on reserve)

October 8 - Review and Discussion Day

October 10 - Midterm

October 13 – School Holiday

Section 2: Explaining the Effects of Social Background: The Structure of Schooling

October 15

- S. Fordham and J. Ogbu, *Black Students' School Success* (ABF)
- J. Ogbu, *Social Stratification and the Socialization of Competence* (on reserve)

October 17 –

- D. Baker and D. Jones, *Opportunity and Performance: A Sociological Explanation for Gender Differences in Mathematics* (on reserve)
- R. Mickelson, *Why Does Jane Read and Write so Well? The Anomaly of Women's Achievement* (on reserve)

October 20 -

- S. Heyneman and W. Loxley, "The Effect of Primary School Quality on Academic Achievement Across Twenty-Nine High- and Low-Income Countries" *American Journal of Sociology* 1983. 88: 1162-1194. (on reserve)

October 22 -

- K. Tyson, D. Castellino, and W. Darity, Jr. *It's Not 'A Black Thing'*, (ABF)
- E. Matthew, *Effort Optimism in the Classroom: Attitudes of Black and White Students on Education, Social Structure, and Causes of Life Opportunities* (on reserve)
- P. Carter, *Straddling Boundaries: Identity, Culture and School* (ABF)

October 24 – Review and Discussion Day

PART V: THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOLS

Section 1: School Quality, School Composition, and School Structure

October 27 -

- J. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity: The Coleman Report* (ABF)

October 29 -

- J. Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation* (on reserve).
- D. Condrón, and V. Roscigno. *Disparities Within: Unequal Spending and Achievement in an Urban School District* (on reserve)

October 31 -

- G. Orfield and C. Lee, *Brown at 50*, (ABF)
- D. Entwisle et al., *The Nature of Schooling*, (ABF)

November 3, 5 & 7 – Exploring the Effects of Schools

- D. Downey, P. von Hippel, and B. Broh. *Are schools the great equalizer?* (on reserve)
- Additional Articles/Essays TBA

Section 2: School Organization and Difference: Tracking, Classroom Structure, Teachers

November 10 & 12

M. Hallinan, *Tracking: From Theory to Practice*, (ABF)

A. Gamoran, *Is Ability Grouping Equitable?*, (ABF)

J. Oakes, *The Distribution of Knowledge*, (ABF)

November 14 & 17

R. Ingersoll, Lisa Merrill & Daniel Stuckey, "Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force" (on reserve)

Additional Reading TBA

Section 3: Culture Clashes

November 19, 21, & 24

A. Guest and B. Schneider, "*Adolescents' Extracurricular Participation in Context: The Mediating Effects of Schools, Communities, and Identity*" (on reserve)

P. Willis, *Elements of Culture* (ABF)

K. Newman, *Testing the Theory: Rampage – The Social Roots of School Shootings*, (ABF)

S. Ferrás & R. Selman, *How Students' Perceptions of the School Climate Influence their Choice to Upstand, Bystand, or Join Perpetrators of Bullying* (on reserve)

November 24 – Journals will no longer be accepted after this date.

November 26 – Review and Discussion Day

November 28 – School Holiday

PART VI: BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS: STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATING A DIVERSE POPULATION

December 1 & 3

P. Heinze, *Let's Talk About Race, Baby: How a White Professor Teaches White Students About White Privilege and Racism* (on reserve)

E. Parsons, *Using Power and Caring to Mediate White Male Privilege, Equality and Equity in an Urban Elementary Classroom: Implications for Teacher Preparation* (on reserve)

December 3 – Final Reflection Essay Deadline

December 5 – Review and Discussion Day

Final Exam Period - December 12, 11:30-2:20