

Sociology 113 – The Sociology of Education

Spring 2025

Instructor: Peter Hurtubise, PhD

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Class Time: MWF 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Class Location: Anthro/Art Practice Building 160

Office Hours: Fridays 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

This course focuses on the role of formal education in the United States. The course revolves around three core objectives:

- 1) **The Theory of Education:** The course will introduce key thinkers in the sociology of education, such as Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Freire. The beginning of the course will answer these main questions: What are the main theories in the sociology of education? How do they differ or relate to one another? What do these theories suggest about the nature of power in society? How does education reassert, strengthen, or challenge already established social hierarchies? How can education explore, assess, and reconceptualize social structures?
- 2) **The Practice of Education:** The course will also explore education as a social process. The course will investigate the following questions: How is knowledge produced? What distinguishes education from other social processes? How does education interact with economic, political, and cultural structures? When and why are individuals deemed worthy of education? How do societies assess the *quality* of education? How do societies assign value to alternative forms of education? How does this value inevitably shape core concepts such as social reproduction, knowledge, and identity? How does education define and respond to societal challenges? Which metrics are used to assess these objectives? How is knowledge generated and exchanged for social, economic, or political capital?
- 3) **The Sociology of Education Today:** The course will explore modern sociological themes as they relate to education, such as the school-to-prison pipeline, school surveillance, cyberbullying, standardized testing, educational tech, and accessibility. Educational policies such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top will be examined. The course will explore the sociological implications of these policies – comparing them to the greater context of proposed reforms to education and assessing their ramifications in relation to local communities. The course will also explore additional strategies for improving education (including health and nutrition for youth, preschool education, improved teacher training, and support for social workers and student counselors).

Grading Policy

Book Project	15%
• (Please select one book from a module of choice. You will answer a series of questions connected to that material. Please submit the answers to those questions by the end of its corresponding module. The only exception is the second module, which will have a due date of March 5 th . More details can be found later in this document.)	
Midterm (March 10th)	35%
Final	50%

Course Policies

- 1) **Strategize for Success:** This course consists of many readings. Read as much as you can before the lecture, so that you can contribute to the discussion. Success in this course will require staying organized and taking notes.
- 2) **Uphold Academic Honesty:** Use appropriate references when completing exams and assignments. Create work that is original, so that others can learn from your unique contribution and important perspective.
- 3) **Keep me Updated:** If something unexpected happens in life, please keep me updated so that we can plan accordingly. This course is not meant to stress you out, rather to help you understand an exciting topic.

Required Book

Arum, R., Beattie, I., and Ford, K. (2015) *The Structure of Schooling Readings in the Sociology of Education 3rd Edition* Sage Publishing.

(Please read one of the following books, depending on your interest area. The course schedule will outline which book corresponds with which module. This is a chance for you to learn more about a specific subdiscipline in the field of the Sociology of Education. A book project for your selected book will assess your knowledge of the key themes and arguments for this reading.)

Bazon, E. (2013) *Sticks and Stones* Random House Publishing Group.

Freire, P. (1997) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Continuum.

Ravitch, D. (2013) *Reign of Error* Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

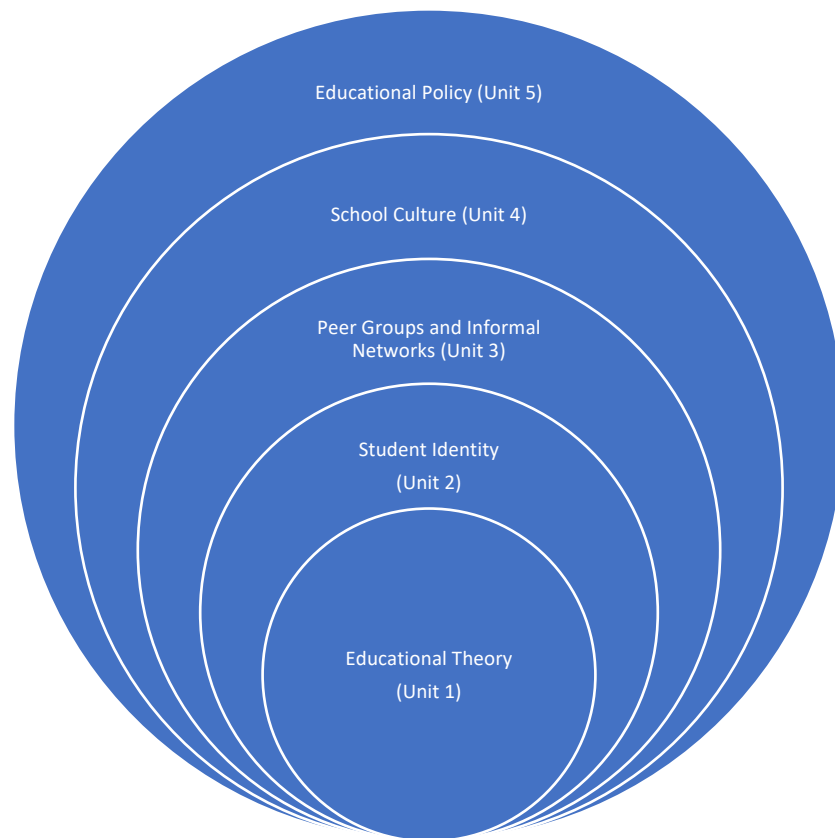
Steiner-Adair, C. (2013) *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family in the Digital Age* Harper.

Tough, P. (2012) *How Children Succeed* HMH Books.

Mental Health and Wellness: All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning. These issues include, but are not limited to, strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. Such mental health concerns can diminish both academic performance and the capacity to participate in daily activities. In the event that you need mental health support, or are concerned about a friend, UC Berkeley offers many services, such as free short-term counseling at University Health Services. An excellent campus website having links to many resources is: <http://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/> Another campus website addressing mental health services in specific reference to this time of the coronavirus pandemic is: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/student-mental-health>
Remember that seeking help is a good and courageous thing to do — both for yourself and for those who care about you.

Course Schedule

This course considers education as a social practice – thereby requiring an exploration of the different social strata guiding the learning process. The course explores the Sociology of Education within different layers of social interaction.



Unit 1: Educational Theory



*During this unit, students will explore sociological theories of education. This unit will address the following questions: What is education? How does education become a manifestation of power in modern society? How does pedagogy translate into social, economic, and political capital? Which social structures perpetuate inequality within our educational system? Why? What is social and cultural mobility? What factors shape it within the US? How is status attained within society, and what role does education have for advancing such social constructions? How do we rationalize the use of education? What is the major aim of education? How do social structures monitor whether we reach those aims? Who has the power to assert the purpose of education? Why do we vest them with this power? **Required reading includes ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ for those choosing this as their selected module.***

January 22nd

- Introduction

January 24th

- Max Weber, “The ‘Rationalization’ of Education and Training.” 14-16.

January 27th

- Pitirim Sorokin, “Social and Cultural Mobility.” 17-20.

January 29th

- Ralph Turner, “Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System.” 21-32.

January 31st

- Archibal O. Haller and Alejandro Portes, “Status Attainment Processes.” 33-41.

February 3rd

- Gary Becker, “Human Capital.” 42-43.

February 5th

- Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau, “Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments.” 44-59.

February 7th

- James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer, “Schools Families and Communities.” 60-68.

February 10th

- Émile Durkheim, “The First Element of Morality: The Spirit of Discipline.” 69-76.

February 12th

- Willard Waller, “The School and the Community.” 77-83.

February 14th

- Randall Collins, “Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification.” 84-100.

February 17th

- Presidents’ Day Holiday

February 19th

- Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, and Peter Meyer, “The Long Shadow of Work.” 101-115.

Unit 2: Student Identity and Education



*During this unit, students will explore how student identity translates into educational experience. This unit will address the following questions: How do students conceptualize of themselves within and between educational contexts? Do schools shape their identities? Why or why not? How do barriers and opportunities establish themselves within schools? Why do certain groups of students experience inequality within and between schools? How does this translate into inequality within the greater society? Which forms of inequality have become invisible in schools? What is the reason for their invisibility? How do we create education which respects diversity and community? What can teachers do to strengthen self-respect and community engagement? **Required reading for this section is ‘Sticks and Stones’ for those choosing this as their selected module.***

February 21st

- Sean Reardon, “The Widening Income Achievement Gap.” 288-294.

February 24th

- Paul Willis, “Learning to Labor.” 318-335.

February 26th

- Annette Lareau, “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black and White Families.” 336-355.

February 28th

- Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants.” 454-461.

March 3rd

- Barrie Thorne, “Boys and Girls Together ... But Mostly Apart.” 462-469.

March 5th

- C.J. Pascoe, “Notes on Sociology of Bullying: Young Men’s Homophobia as Gender Socialization.” 509-519.
- Please turn in your Book Project, if this is your selected module.

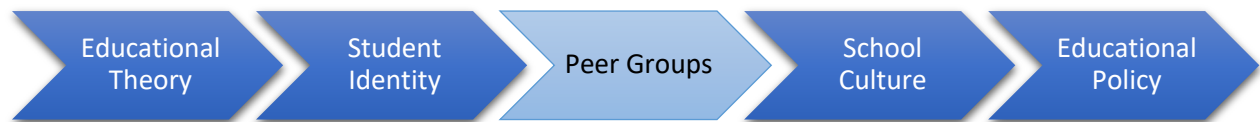
March 7th

- S. Craig Watkins, “Digital Divide: Navigating the Digital Age.” 405-418.

March 10th

- Midterm

Unit 3: Peer Groups and Informal Networks



*During this unit, the course will explore how peer groups form within schools and how student culture develops. This unit will address the following questions: What is the culture of informal networks in schools? How does it differ from other informal networks? How do informal groups in schools form? How does social media affect peer group formation and young adult development? What are the advantages of disadvantages of technology in adolescent communication? Does peer group formation differ in college? Why or why not? **Required additional Reading for this section includes ‘The Big Disconnect’ for those choosing this as their selected module.***

March 12th

- James Coleman, “The Adolescent Culture.” 523-535.

March 14th

- Mimi Ito et al., “Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Findings from Digital Youth Project.” 536-566.

March 17th

- Daniel McFarland, “Resistance as a Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters.” 567-581.

March 19th

- Laura Hamilton and Elizabeth Armstrong, “The (Mis)education of Monica and Karen.” 598-603.

March 21st

- Mary Grigsby, “College Life Through the Eyes of Students.” 604-619.

March 24th – March 28th

- Spring Recess

Unit 4: School Culture



*This unit will explore how school culture develops and (in turn) affects student development. This unit will address the following questions: What is school culture? Why is it important? How can school culture inadvertently perpetuate notions of status and privilege? How does school culture translate into teacher experience? What effect does school culture have on students? Why? What are the positive and negative aspects of school culture? What can be done to improve school culture? Who sets the objectives for our conception of positive school culture? Why do we entrust them with this responsibility? How can communities improve school culture? **Required reading for this section includes ‘How Children Succeed’ for those choosing this as their selected module.***

March 31st

- Shamus Kahn, “Privilege.” 120-135.

April 2nd

- James Coleman et al., “Equality of Educational Opportunity: The Coleman Report.” 136-152.

April 4th

- Christopher Jenks and Marsha Brown, “The Effect of High Schools on Their students.” 153-180.

April 7th

- Gary Orfield et al., “E Pluribus ... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students.” 181-222.

April 9th

- Doris Entwisle, et al., “The Nature of Schooling.” 223-233.

April 11th

- Jennie Oakes, “The Distribution of Knowledge.” 259-267.

Unit 5 Educational Policy



*This unit will cover how local and state governance guides educational policy. The unit will explore the following questions: What is educational policy? Why is it important? How does economic capital shift priorities set in education? How does this lead to greater inequality within the US? How does the US identify its goals for education? How does it assess whether or not it reaches those goals? Do you agree with these metrics of measurement? Why? How does educational policy affect community colleges? How are greater political issues reflected within the school environment? Who has the right to mediate these issues? What role does the school community have in voicing its opinion to the state? How would it voice that belief? What changes do you see are needed in the US educational system from a policy perspective? What can you do in your future to help enact these changes? **Required reading for this unit includes ‘Reign of Error’ for those choosing this as their selected module.***

April 14th

- James Rosenbaum and Amy Binder, “Do Employers Really Need More Educated Youth?” 624-633.

April 16th

- John Meyer, “The Effects of Education as an Institution.” 634-649.

April 18th

- Stephen Brint and Jerome Karabel, “Community Colleges and the American Social Order.” 650-659.

April 21st

- Richard Arum, “Judging School Discipline: A Crisis of Moral Authority.” 660-685.

April 23rd

- Mitchell Stevens, “Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites.” 686-693.

April 25th

- Roberto Gonzales, “Learning to be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood.” 709-727.

April 28th

- Alejandro Portes, “English Only Triumphs, But the Costs Are High.” 728-732.

April 30th

- Jennifer Jennings, “School Choice or Schools’ Choice?: Managing in an Era of Accountability.” 733-755.

May 2nd

- Josipa Roksa and Ricard Arum, “The State of Undergraduate Learning.” 756-762.
- Pamela Barnhouse Walters and Annette Lareau, “Education Research that Matters: Influence, Scientific Rigor, and Policy Making.” 763-781.

May 13th (7:00 PM – 10:00 PM)

- Final Exam