

Sociology of Education
SOC 113, Summer 2015
University of California, Berkeley

Instructor: Jason E. Scott (jason.scott@berkeley.edu)
Reader: Xuan Jin
Meetings: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday 2:10 – 4:00pm
Location: 166 Barrows Hall
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 4pm-5pm (sign up [here](#))
BCourse: Forthcoming

Course Description

This course introduces social scientific research on educational inequality by race, social class, and gender, with a focus on the United States. As a requirement of the American Cultures breadth, this course pays particular attention to issues of race, culture, and ethnicity as they relate to accounts of educational inequality. The course emphasizes heterogeneity within traditional racial categories, e.g. presenting research and theory on how stereotype threat differently affects subgroups of Black Americans (including students who self-identify as “African American”) by immigrant generation.

To explain how race, class, and gender form axes of inequality in education, the course begins by reviewing core social science theories regarding educational inequality during the first week. These theories aim to explain differences in educational outcomes across groups. In subsequent weeks, course readings showcase how researchers apply theory to understand issues in education such as racial achievement gaps and sometimes provide evidence of potential solutions. Readings are available online, although access through the university network is sometimes necessary.

Key social issues in education have persisted in society for generations. While complex and challenging topics, the related questions students should keep in mind as they read each week are straightforward:

- What are key issues in education and what implications do they have for society?
- What circumstances (history, politics, social dynamics) contribute to these issues?
- What are potential solutions and barriers to social change?

Grading for the course is based on student performance in three areas-- engagement, mastery of content, and writing as demonstrated in the following ways:

- consistent daily class attendance and at least one Office Hours visit (10%)
- informed participation in discussion and team presentations (15%)
- high-quality weekly reflection papers (25%)
- examinations: midterm (25%) and final exam (25%)

This is a fast-paced, intensive summer course with over 7 hours of scheduled class time each week. Extensions will not be granted so plan ahead accordingly to meet deadlines. To meet course expectations, it will be helpful to be organized and use writing tools and support services when needed.

Campus Resources

Consider using the [Student Learning Center](#) for writing and reading tips and to get feedback as you develop your course paper.

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, if you have emergency medical information you wish to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class or at my office.

Students who need academic accommodations (for example, a notetaker), should request them from the Disabled Students' Program, 260 César Chávez Center, 642-0518 (voice or TTY). DSP is the campus office responsible for verifying disability-related need for academic accommodations, assessing that need, and for planning accommodations in cooperation with students and instructors as needed and consistent with course requirements.

University Honor Code Guidelines

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code:

“As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The hope and expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

Collaboration and Independence: Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one’s own independent work.

Cheating: A good lifetime strategy is always to act in such a way that no one would ever imagine that you would even consider cheating. Anyone caught cheating on a quiz or exam in this course will receive a failing grade in the course and will also be reported to the University Center for Student Conduct. In order to guarantee that you are not suspected of cheating, please keep your eyes on your own materials and do not converse with others during the quizzes and exams.

Plagiarism: To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see, for

example:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html#Plagiarism>

<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/misconduct/prevent-plag.html>

Academic Integrity and Ethics: Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity are of great importance in all facets of life. They help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are key to building trust within relationships, whether personal or professional. There is no tolerance for dishonesty in the academic world, for it undermines what we are dedicated to doing – furthering knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Your experience as a student at UC Berkeley is hopefully fueled by passion for learning and replete with fulfilling activities. And we also appreciate that being a student can be stressful. There may be times when there is temptation to engage in some kind of cheating in order to improve a grade or otherwise advance your career. This could be as blatant as having someone else sit for you in an exam, or submitting a written assignment that has been copied from another source. And it could be as subtle as glancing at a fellow student’s exam when you are unsure of an answer to a question and are looking for some confirmation. One might do any of these things and potentially not get caught. However, if you cheat, no matter how much you may have learned in this class, you have failed to learn perhaps the most important lesson of all.

Required Assignments

Learning in Small Teams

During the first week of the class, students will be assigned to learning teams of 5 to 7 students to amplify learning opportunities, including peer feedback on writing. Small team members are expected to read reflection papers from each person in their group each week (see “Understanding the Problem” section below) and present to the class each Thursday (see “Discovering Real-World Solutions” section).

Weekly Reflection Papers (25% of the overall course grade)

Each Thursday, by the start of lecture, students are expected submit a brief (1 page to 2 pages, hard-copy, single-sided, double-spaced) reflection paper. The reflection paper summarizes what students have learned from the week’s readings. High quality reflection papers will name and explain key theories from the readings then describe how the readings account for the key social issue(s) in education covered that week. Students are encouraged to share their papers with team members Wednesday night and be prepared to discuss what they learned during class on Thursday. The summary table at the end of this syllabus lists guiding questions to which students can reply when writing their weekly reflection papers.

Examinations (50% of the overall course grade)

The midterm and final exams are each worth 25% of the overall course grade.

Examinations will comprise of short-answer questions intended to test content mastery and an essay in which students are asked to use theory and research from the course to design a targeted, effective intervention to address a key social issue in education of their choice.

Weekly Presentations

Each week, except the first, student teams are expected to identify and present findings in class about a credible organization or policy that works to address that week’s social issue. For example, in week one we learn that a key prediction of Human Capital Theory is that early interventions are most effective at shaping longer-term educational trajectories. A corresponding 5 to 7 minute presentation would following the following format:

| Task | Example Case |
|---|--|
| Briefly explain the logic of the theory | Describe Human Capital Theory based on the reading |
| Highlight an organization or policy | Describe The Ounce of Prevention Fund discovered through research and discussion with the team |
| Discuss how the theory underlies the organization or policy | Explain theoretical basis for why The Ounce of Prevention Fund targets early childhood |

Students earn 25% points for attendance and active participation throughout the course, including work in the learning team and presentations.

Lecture Topic, Weekly Synopsis, and Reading List

Week of May 26: Introduction to Social Theories and Perspectives on Education

This week's readings provide an overview of key social perspectives on dynamics that produce and sustain educational inequalities, including inequalities in educational outcomes by traditional axes of race, social class, and gender. A noted economist, Heckman (2013) proposes early interventions to address educational achievement gaps, based on key insights from Human Capital Theory. Next, sociological research by Hasan and Bagde (2013) provide some of the strongest evidence to date about Social Capital Theory, suggesting the ways that peers affect learning outcomes. Kingston (2001) critiques research on Cultural Capital Theory, a contested theory about how cross-group differences in various lifestyle factors (such as clothing, ways of communicating, musical tastes, etc.) relate to achievement. An excerpt from the psychologists Brenda Major and Laurie O'Brien (2005) describe a psychological account of educational underperformance. Lastly, David Labaree (2008), a historian, raises questions about the degree to which schools constitute the source of (and potential silver bullet for fixing) social problems in American society.

Heckman, James J. "Giving Kids a Fair Chance" Pp 3-41 in [Giving Kids a Fair Chance](#). Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT, 2013. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Hasan, Sharique and Surendrakumar Bagde. 2013. "[The Mechanics of Social Capital and Academic Performance in an Indian College](#)." *American Sociological Review* 78(6):1009–32.

Kingston, Paul W. 2001. "[The Unfulfilled Promise of Cultural Capital Theory](#)." *Sociology of Education* 74 (January 1): 88–99.

Major, Brenda and Laurie T. O'Brien. 2005. "[The Social Psychology of Stigma](#)." *Annual Review of Psychology* 56(1):393–421. [Focus on "Academic Achievement" section]

Labaree, David F. 2008. "[The Winning Ways of a Losing Strategy](#): Educationalizing Social Problems in the United States." *Educational Theory* 58 (4): 447–460.

Noguera, Pedro. "[Are We Failing Our Students?](#)" TED. July. 2012. Lecture.

Guiding Questions

1. How do Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Capital Theory, and Identity Threat Theory account for educational inequality generally?
2. How might these theories explain educational inequalities by social class, race, and gender specifically?

Week of June 1: Social Class Inequalities in Schooling

*Sociologists have been pre-occupied with social class inequalities in educational outcomes for generations. In fact, [social reproduction theory](#) posits that schools serve as key sites for sorting and socializing the next generation in preparation for adult roles in similar circumstances as their parents. This debate about whether schools provide opportunity for upward mobility or simply reproduce inequalities remains at the heart of contemporary popular discussion (see article *The Economist*). Recent evidence suggests that schools narrow learning gaps by social class but the black-white test score gap worsens while school is in session, as opposed to the summer (Downey et al 2004). Lareau's (2002) much-cited research suggests social class differences in parenting ---by class but not race --contribute to achievement inequality. Lastly Leonhardt's article in the *New York Times* and Torche's (2011) study examine issues of college access and completion as means for leveling the playing field for later-life economic outcomes such as employment and earnings.*

Unknown Author. 2015. "[America's Elite](#): An Hereditary Meritocracy?" *The Economist*, January 2015.

Downey, Douglas B., Paul T. von Hippel, and Beckett A. Broh. 2004. "[Are Schools the Great Equalizer?](#) Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year." *American Sociological Review* 69(5):613–35.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "[Invisible Inequality](#): Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67 (5) (October 1): 747–776.

Leonhardt, David. 2015. [College for the Masses](#) *New York Times*

Torche, Florencia. 2011. "[Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer?](#) Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of Schooling in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(3):763–807. [Read "Discussion and Implications" section only]

Guiding Questions

1. How does social class background affect educational outcomes?
2. What role does parenting have in affecting educational outcomes?
3. Do schools widen or narrow achievement gaps by socioeconomic background?
4. How might we analytically separate social class from race when thinking about achievement inequalities?

Week of June 8: Race and Culture Debates

Prominent explanations of black-white achievement gaps point to cultural differences between racial groups as a key cause of inequality in educational outcomes (see Warikoo and Carter 2009). However, over a decade of sociology studies find little evidence that culture causes racial achievement gaps as suggested by Cultural Capital Theory and descendant explanations such as the Oppositional Culture Hypothesis (see Downey 2008). Instead, research suggests that other factors such as economic inequalities and resegregation contribute to unequal learning opportunities, on average, for students of different racial and ethnic origins. A growing body of strong evidence find that psychological factors typically cause academic underperformance among black students, on average,---but not for some black ethnic groups (see Deaux et al 2007). Recent research (see Walton and Cohen 2011) hold the promise of removing important social-psychological barriers that sometimes suppress academic achievement in some contexts.

Annamma, Subini, Deb Morrison, and Darrell Jackson. 2014. "[Disproportionality Fills in the Gaps](#): Connections between Achievement, Discipline and Special Education in the School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Berkeley Review of Education* 5(1).

Deaux, Kay et al. 2007. "[Becoming American: Stereotype Threat Effects in Afro-Caribbean Immigrant Groups](#)." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70(4): 384–404

Downey, Douglas B. 2008. "[Black/White Differences in School Performance](#): The Oppositional Culture Explanation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34(1):107–26

Kao, Grace. 1995. "[Asian Americans as Model Minorities?](#) A Look at Their Academic Performance." *American Journal of Education* 103(2):121–59.

Walton, G. M. & Cohen, G. L. (2011). [A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students](#). *Science*, 331, 1447-1451.

Warikoo, Natasha, and Prudence Carter. 2009. "[Cultural Explanations for Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Academic Achievement](#): A Call for a New and Improved Theory." *Review of Educational Research* 79 (1) (March 1): 366–394.

Guiding Questions

1. *Why are there average differences in educational outcomes by race, according to psychological theory and Oppositional Culture Theory?*
2. *Do cultural differences in values account for Black-White test score gaps?*
3. *Do stigmatizing stereotypes affect academic performance?*
4. *Which students might be most affected by stereotype threat?*

Week of June 15: Immigration and Assimilation

Midterm (covering weeks 1-3): Monday, June 15 at 2:10pm

Sociological research on immigrant incorporation have found differences in educational outcomes among ethnic groups, primarily the children of Asian, Hispanic, and Black immigrants. Haller, Portes and Lynch (2011) present recent findings on Segmented Assimilation Theory, a key theory with roots in Social Capital Theory and Cultural Capital Theory. Segmented Assimilation Theory aims to explain how a few factors such as whether American society welcomes or shuns immigrants cause the children of immigrants to succeed or perform poorly in school. Alba, Kasinitz, and Waters (2011) argue that the implications of the Haller study are too pessimistic. Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller (2009) aim to begin identifying trends among successful students, particularly the children of Mexican immigrants.

Alba, Richard, Philip Kasinitz, and Mary C. Waters. 2011. "[The Kids Are \(Mostly\) Alright: Second-Generation Assimilation](#)." Comments on Haller, Portes and Lynch." *Social Forces* 89 (3): 763–773.

Haller, William, Alejandro Portes, and Scott M. Lynch. 2011. "[Dreams Fulfilled, Dreams Shattered](#)." Determinants of Segmented Assimilation in the Second Generation." *Social Forces* 89 (3): 733–762.

Portes, Alejandro, Patricia Fernández-Kelly, and William Haller. 2009. "[The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America: A Theoretical Overview and Recent Evidence](#)." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (7): 1077–1104.

Guiding Questions

1. *According to Segmented Assimilation Theory, why are there differences in educational outcomes among the children of immigrants, including students with Mexican-origin parents and West Indian parents?*
2. *Why do you think research on immigrant incorporation often analyze Asian immigrant groups separately, by country-of-origin?*
3. *Do cultural differences in values account for educational achievement gaps among immigrant groups?*
4. *How does Segmented Assimilation Theory relate to Cultural Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory?*

Week of June 22: Gender

Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) and Buchmann, DiPrete, and McDaniel (2008) systematically review trends in educational attainment by sex. A key finding of such research is the growing gender gaps in college completion---favoring women. This “female advantage” marks a dramatic reversal --- but not for black women (who have had higher rates of educational attainment than black men since the 1950s). Despite such gains, other forms of inequality persist by sex, and Correll (2001) provides evidence of one explanation of how socialization and psychological expectations might steer college-going women away from STEM fields.

Buchmann, Claudia and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2006. “[The Growing Female Advantage in College Completion](#): The Role of Family Background and Academic Achievement.” *American Sociological Review* 71(4):515–41.

Buchmann, Claudia, Thomas A. DiPrete, and Anne McDaniel. 2008. “[Gender Inequalities in Education](#).” *Annual Review of Sociology* 34(1):319–37.

Correll, Shelley J. 2001. “[Gender and the Career Choice Process](#): The Role of Biased Self-Assessments.” *American Journal of Sociology* 106(6):1691–1730.

“[The STEM Gender Gap](#).” Science Friday on *NPR.org*. Retrieved May 20, 2015

Guiding Questions

1. *How have gender gaps in college participation and completion changed in recent decades? How does the gender gap vary by race?*
2. *What types of inequalities by gender persist in education?*
3. *What factors contribute to underrepresentation of women in science and technology fields?*

Week of June 29: What Works: Discussions and Presentations

Final Exam Date: Thursday, July 2 at 2:10pm

Throughout the course, we have reviewed core theories about the causes of educational inequality by class, race, and gender. For example, we learned that many cultural explanations for the black-white achievement gap receive very little empirical support while strong bodies of evidence show that psychological dynamics cause underperformance among some segments of black students---suggesting that targeted interventions within certain contexts may be effective. In this final week, we will turn our attention to surveying effective policies and practices that address the social problems that we have discussed so far. You may find the [What Works Clearinghouse](#) a helpful resource.

Duckworth, Angela. "[The key to success? Grit](#)" TED. Apr. 2013. Lecture.

Strauss, Valerie. 2015. "[Why Teaching Kids to Have 'grit' Isn't Always a Good Thing.](#)" *The Washington Post*, May 14.

Scrivener, Susan, Michael Weiss, Alyssa Ratledge, Timothy Rudd, Colleen Sommo, and Hannah Fresques. 2015. "[Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\) for Developmental Education Students](#)"

Scott, Janelle and Rand Quinn. 2014. "[The Politics of Education in the Post-Brown Era Race, Markets, and the Struggle for Equitable Schooling.](#)" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 50(5):749–63.

Tepper Jacob, Robin, Thomas Smith, Jacklyn Willard, and Rachel Rifkin. 2014. "[Reading Partners: The Implementation and Effectiveness of a One-on-One Tutoring Program Delivered by Community Volunteers](#)"

Guiding Questions

1. *How well do the theories in this course explain differences in education achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups? Between men and women? By social class and status background?*
2. *In your opinion, what are key social issues in education? Do theories discussed in this course help us better understand such issues? How?*