



SOCIOLOGY 315: Sociology of Education

Course Description and Objectives: The U.S. education system is currently under critical review for failing to achieve expected levels of academic performance. This is particularly true at the primary and secondary levels but it is also a reasonable critique of higher education. In this respect, the U.S. education system stands at a critical juncture in history. In this course we explore the historical precedents that structure the current education system as a means of understanding how *individual* factors such as race, ethnicity, social class and gender drive educational outcomes in the U.S. In turn, we will also pay particular attention to how *institutional* factors, such as funding (private vs. public), academic governing body, faculty direction (research vs. teaching) and so on, influence educational results. In short, this course explores how educational institutions affect students' learning outcomes. This course will be run in a seminar fashion and as a result, student participation in discussions will be absolutely imperative to both the individual success of students and the course itself.

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Adams State College
Department of Sociology
Spring 2011
MWF 11:00-11:50am
PH, 104

Textbooks:

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

The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education (DL), by Diane Ravitch. Basic Books, 2010.

Bright College Years: Inside the American College Today (BCY), by Anne Mathews. University of Chicago Press, 1997.

*Additional articles are available on Website and via hyperlinks in syllabus.

Assignments/Exams

Learning and Dialogue Journal (45%): Students are required to maintain a weekly journal of reflections regarding the assigned readings. Each journal entry should be a concise essay of 1 to 2 pages that weaves together a *limited* number of themes/issues addressed in a given week's assigned readings. The latter point is very important, as it is almost impossible to address every issue discussed in a week's readings. The goal of this exercise is to integrate assigned content and personal perspective into one text. The journal is a place to explore questions, present new arguments and in general, debate complex dilemmas found in each week's readings. Your initial journal may be hand written but your final versions must be

typed. Students are required to hand in a copy of their journal entries at the intervals denoted in the class schedule laid out below. Finally, as the semester progresses students *should* begin to focus their journal entries on issues central to their individual final papers.

Final project (25%): Students will pick a research topic related to the class and write an eight to ten page essay. Each student will also provide an in-class presentation related to their research topic. The paper can be on any topic related to the course with written approval or in consultation with the instructor. Each student should begin to develop his or her paper topic early in the semester. The primary requirement of the paper is that you incorporate sociological concepts into your research topics (i.e., social capital, stratification, tracking, etc). Each student must submit a topic paragraph to the instructor by 03/01/2011 and the final paper is due 05/03/2011. Literature used to develop the paper must be from professional, research and other academic sources.

Final Presentation (15%): Students will present their final paper topics in class during the last week of the semester. All presentations should formally introduce the content of the final paper to the rest of the class and provide a brief period for feedback and suggestions.

Participation (15%): To do well in this class you must attend lectures *and* participate. Quality class participation is contingent on reading *prior* to attending lecture. In this sense, in order to receive a 100% on participation, students must attend class, participate in discussions *and* demonstrate a general grasp of the readings assigned for the day. Note: Each student has the right to three excused absences. Any additional absences will result in the reduction of participation points.

Quizzes (?%): I hold the right to administer in-class quizzes at the beginning of class if students begin to demonstrate a lack of knowledge of the assigned readings.

Extra Credit (5%): Students may write a report on a film or cultural/community event related to the class. For each report students will receive an additional 1% (up to 5%). Students should watch the film/attend the event first and then research the subject (drug trade, organ trade, discrimination, migration, etc) of the film. Your final report should provide: (1) a synopsis of the film/event, (2) additional information concerning the issue at hand and (3) a brief critique of the film/event. Reports should not go beyond 2 pages and they should include citations in the form of footnotes. Please note, this assignment is credit/no credit. If you meet the standards I will assign the 1% to your grade but if you do not, you will not receive credit.

Written work: All written work must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font (Garamond or Times New Roman preferred), with 1" margins on all sides. Papers *may not* be turned in via e-mail unless I request a digital copy. Late papers will be penalized with a 10 point deduction for each day after the deadline.

Persons with Disabilities: If you have any sort of disability or personal problem which prevents the fullest expression of your abilities, please let me know as soon as possible during the semester - before it interferes with your work - so that I can make a reasonable accommodation to your needs.

Academic Misconduct: Taking the easy way out will have real consequences in this class (check out turnitin.com). Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student engaging in academic dishonesty will be dropped from the course and formal charges will be brought before the Department Chair.

Week 1: (01/18/11) Introduction

-SS, "Introduction," p. xi-xx.

-Obama and education:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQ5kqTcXfTk&feature=related>

Week 2: (01/25/11) Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of Education

-*Imagined Communities*, p. 1-7 and p. 37-65 (Website).

-“Mass Society and Liberal Education,” C. Wright Mills p. 353-373 (Website).

-SS, “Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” p. 1-3.

-SS, “The ‘Rationalization’ of Education and Training,” p. 4-6

-SS, “Social and Cultural Mobility,” p. 7-11.

Week 3: (02/01/11) Cultivating Capital: The Utility of Education

-Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” p. 15-29 (Website).

-Robert Putnam, “Social Capital and Public Affairs,” 5-19 (Website).

-Hernando De Soto, “The Mystery of Capital,” 99-105 (Website).

-SS, “Schools, Families, and Communities,” p. 50-59.

-Alejandro Portes, “The Two Meanings of Social Capital,” p. 1-12 (Website).

Week 4: (02/08/11) Morality, Community and the School

Journal entries due 02/08/11 in class!

-SS, “The First Element of Morality,” p. 59-66.

-SS, “The School and the Community,” p. 67-73.

-DL, Chp 1 and 2, p. 1-30

-“A Nation at Risk,” 1983 (<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>).

-“The End of History,” Lynne Chenny (Website).

Week 5: (02/15/11) The Role of Education in Stratification

-SS, “Stratification Within and Between Schools,” p. 101-104.

-SS, “Beyond the Educational Frontier,” p. 91-99.

-SS, “The Chosen Ones,” p. 105-113.

-SS, “Trust in Schools,” p. 114-120.

-DL, Chp 3, p. 31-47.

Week 6: (02/22/11) Stratification, INequality and Education

-*Brown v. the Board of Education*, 1954 (Website).

-SS, “Equality of Education Opportunity: The Coleman Report,” p. 120-136.

-SS, “Brown at 50: King’s Dream or Plessy’s Nightmare?,” p. 165-177.

-SS, “Tracking: From Theory to Practice,” p. 188-192.

-SS, “Is Ability Grouping Equitable?,” p. 193-198/

-SS, “The Distribution of Knowledge,” p. 199-208.

Week 7: (03/01/11) Free-market education

- SS, "Charter Schools and the Public Good," p. 572-579.
- DL, Chp 4, 5 and 6, p. 47-113.

Week 8: (03/08/11) Measuring Performance and Providing Choices

- DL, Chp. 7, 8 and 9, p. 114-194.
- “Lynne Cheney’s attack on the history standards, ten years later,” p. 1-5 (Website).
- In class film, *The Lottery*.

Week 9: (03/15/11) Spring Break, no class.

- Begin thinking about topics for final presentation/paper. Schedule meeting with me.
- DL, Chp. 10 and 11, p. 195-242.

Week 10: (03/22/11) Class Explanations for Educational Outcomes**Journal entries due 03/22/11 in class!**

- SS, “Persisting Barriers,” p. 214-228.
- SS, “Invisible Inequality,” p. 243-264.
- SS, “Exceptions to the Rule,” p. 264-274.
- BCY, forward and chp. 1 (Summer: The Price of Passage), p. 17-45

Week 11: Racial and Ethnic Explications for Educational Outcomes

- SS, “It’s Not a Black Thing,” p. 281-295.
- SS, “Straddling Boundaries,” p. 295-312.
- BCY, chp. 2 (Fall: Dreaming in C), p. 45-90.

Week 12: (04/05/11) New Americans in the Education System**Start Writing Final Paper**

- SS, “The New Second Generation,” p. 355-363.
- SS, “English-Only Triumphs, But The Costs Are High,” p. 567-571.
- SS, “Rewriting Race and Gender High School Lessons,” p. 382-391.
- Flip through the high school curriculum standards laid out in, “The New Coloradans: Immigration in Colorado” (Website).
- BCY, finish chp 2 and chp. 3 (Fall Break: Through the Groves), p. 90-135.

Week 13: (04/12/11) Higher Education**Journal entries due 04/12/11 in class!**

- “Do Employers Really Need More Educated Youth?,” p. 484-494.
- BCY, chp. 4 (Winter: Important Minds), p. 135-193.
- BCY, chp. 5 (Spring Break: Behind Closed Doors), p. 193-207.

Week 14: (04/19/11) Higher Education

- “Creating a Class,” p. 559-566.
- BCY, chp. 6 (Spring: The Image Keepers), p. 207-245.

Week 15: (04/26/11) Taking Stock: Sociology of Education in Perspective

- BCY, chp. 7 (Summer: Eternity’s Eye), p. 245-.

-Begin presentations 05/28/2011.

Week 16: (05/03/11) Final Presentations in Class

Final Essay and Complete, 16 week journal due 05/03/11 in class!

-Presentations.

-Turn in final essays.