

SOCL/EDUC-303
THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION
FALL 2021, TRINITY COLLEGE, HARTFORD CT

Meeting Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30AM – 12:45PM
Meeting Place: 115 Vernon Street, Room 106
ZOOM Meetings will be used in the event of remote instruction
Instructor: Professor Daniel Douglas
Office Hours: Monday 1:30PM-3:30PM
Tuesday 11:00AM-1:00PM
Wednesdays 2:00PM-4:00PM, or by appointment.
Office Location: Seabury N-033, or via ZOOM.
[Schedule an Appointment with Professor Douglas](#)
Email: daniel.douglas@trincoll.edu
Phone: (860) 297-2348

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course intends to examine and make use of the ways sociology has examined education and its institutional form: schooling. The course will have two primary components. The first will be a survey of the various theoretical traditions in sociology as seen through texts which look at education and schooling. A related goal of this aspect of the course will be to see how various sociological theories are applied to inquiry, to bring theory in as a tool and not a mere collection of “this theorist says this and that theorist says that.”

The second part of the course will examine themes in the American and international educational systems. Having established a theoretical knowledge base in the first part of the course, we will be able to get into the topics and see how those theories can help us explain and analyze the currents in educational policy and practice. This part of the course will also encourage students to critique how schooling and its component features are used to maintain, and could be used to dismantle, racial and class-based hierarchies.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify different traditions in social theory and understand how they are used in relation to the systematic study of education and schooling.
2. Understand, explain, and compare perspectives from high-level texts related to sociological theories of education.

3. Apply sociological theory to the analysis of current issues in educational policy and practice.
4. Critique and challenge the role of education and schools in creating and maintaining inequality contemporary society.

CLASSROOM MASKING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

First, some reminders of things you should know already from emails sent by the college:

- 1) Students are required to be vaccinated in order to be on campus. A small number of students have been given exemptions. These individuals will be required to be tested weekly and to wear masks in all public settings.
- 2) Trinity College is requiring masks to be worn for all indoor activities and in common areas (classrooms, event spaces, and hallways) except when alone, such as in a private office or in college sponsored housing. Our previous policy allowed for informal agreements between vaccinated members of our community to remove masks while inside campus buildings. These agreements are now prohibited.
- 3) In order to avoid densely packed spaces, we are implementing a 50 percent capacity limit on all non-classroom indoor events. Classrooms, which are supervised environments where everyone is presumed to be vaccinated, will remain at full capacity.

Here are some implications of (1) through (3) in my class:

- 1) You are expected to wear a mask in class. The whole time. If you do not want to comply with the masking
- 2) If you need a break from wearing your mask, treat it like a bathroom break. Leave the room (and the building), and return once you have replaced your mask.
- 3) Our room for this class is too small to be safe. To make it as safe as possible, I will be using the air purifier in the room, and opening as many windows as possible, even on cold days. Dress accordingly.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like many things, the need for disability accommodations and the process for arranging them may be altered by the COVID-19 changes we are experiencing and the safety protocols currently in place. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access.

If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days' notice is required. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu or SARC@trincoll.edu.

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

Please refer to the [Trinity College Student Integrity Contract](#), specifically the section on Intellectual Honesty.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center is a resource for students who want to improve their written work and their ability as writers. To meet the needs of student-writers at Trinity during these uncertain times, the Writing Center is offering a mix of in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous tutoring appointments.

Please check out the Writing Center [Welcome Video](#) and the [Writing Center How-to](#).

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

In the middle of the semester, just as I am asked to evaluate your performance, I will ask you to evaluate mine using an evaluation form designed by other Trinity faculty. At the end of the year, you will be asked to evaluate the course using the standard Trinity College course evaluation.

MOODLE

We will use Moodle to access course materials and for submitting class assignments. Please log in to Moodle every week to keep alert to any changes to our course syllabus or schedule.

ASSIGNMENTS/COURSEWORK:

We will have three types of assignments in this class.

Ungraded Reflection – Week 1. This is a short reflection on some aspect of your schooling/educational experiences up to this point. It should be no more than 200-300 words long and does not need citations or formal language. Make some attempt to connect your experiences to why you want to study the Sociology of Education.

Weekly discussion assignments. These will be short: one double-space page, or 200-300 words. Each reaction paper should give a 2-3 sentence overview/summary of the readings. From there you have flexibility: You can discuss what you think the authors do well, and/or explain what (if anything) you feel is missing from the analysis. You can also connect the readings with either other readings, or with your experiences.

Discussion assignments are due, via Moodle, three days before class (Saturday) by 7:00 PM. This will give me time to look over the reactions so that we can have a thoughtful discussion based on your understanding the readings.

We have ten weeks of course readings. You are responsible for completing discussion assignments for eight of those weeks. The first two discussion assignments (Weeks 2 and 3) are required for everyone. You cannot skip them. After that, you get to choose which discussion assignments you complete. If you would like to buttress your grades by submitting more, I will use the eight highest grades when computing this portion of your grade. Discussion assignments are graded on a ten-point scale, and each is worth 6.25 points toward your final grade.

Quantitative data analysis project. This is the final paper and associated scaffold assignments. A description of that project is available on Moodle. Some notes:

- In Week 3, we will talk about available data sources. *It will be boring, but useful.*
- **In week 4, you will submit two potential research topic ideas (2-3 sentences)**
- In week 6, I will assign you to groups and you will have an in-class group meeting
- **In week 8, your group will submit a data memo for the research project**
- In weeks 11 and 12, we will set aside time to work on your projects
- **In week 13, you will do virtual group presentations.**
- **On the final exam date, your group will submit a final paper.**

COURSE TEXTS

All course readings will be available on Moodle. Because the course will take place entirely in a virtual format, it makes sense that the readings will also be in digital copy. You are welcome to print and assemble a course pack yourselves – use the medium that best supports your learning. Readings are selections from books (rather than books in their entirety), journal articles, and scholarly reports from educational organizations. *Research on education appears in many forms, so a “soft learning goal” of this course is to familiarize students with academic sources beyond scholarly books and articles.*

Below, I list some of books that follow the spirit of our course, and that are reasonably priced for those who are interested in collecting books for further study.

Aronowitz, Stanley (2008). *Against Schooling: For an Education that Matters*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Dewey, John (1916, 1997). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Free Press.

Willis, Paul (1977, 2017). *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

If you would like bibliographic information for any of the other class readings listed below, or would like recommendations for titles on topics related to this course, please send me an email or visit me in my office.

CLASS PARTICIPATION POLICIES:

1. You should engage and participate in class discussion. Your engagement must always be respectful of your peers and your professor.
2. You are allowed one unexplained absence. Please notify me in advance if you need to miss a class session.
3. Three Late Arrivals = 1 Unexplained absence. Please notify me in advance if you need to be late or leave early.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM POLICIES:

1. Enabling video is strongly encouraged. Video engagement should be treated like lateness and absence. If you cannot be on video for a given session, please notify me in advance.
2. You are also encouraged to add a picture to your Zoom profile. If you need help with this, let me know.
3. If you are studying off-campus and do not have a reliable internet connection or access to a quiet space to participate, please discuss your situation with me.

GRADING/EVALUATION

How will I be graded? Grades will be determined based on the following proportions:

Reaction Papers	50 points
Final Paper	30 points
Class Participation	20 points
TOTAL	100 points

COURSE TOPICS OUTLINE

You may ask yourself, how do I use this outline?

In a traditional lecture, the instructor delivers the course content and offers her perspective on that content; students are then asked to rehearse that perspective in a review assignment. This seminar follows a “flipped classroom” model; students prepare for the sessions in advance by reading and responding to the material. The instructor offers a review of the material, then a discussion among instructor and students. The goal of this format is to not prescribe an understanding of the material but to refine your understanding of what is covered in the class.

Each week of the syllabus (and the Moodle page) reflects this flipped classroom approach.

- A. “In Class” refers to what we will do during class sessions that week. **On Moodle, this is the slide deck of the presentation.**
- B. “Read This” refers to what you need to read during that week to be prepared for the following week. **On Moodle, these are the PDF files.**
- C. “Homework” refers to what you need to write during that week to be submitted by the Saturday Evening of that week in advance of the following week’s discussions. **On Moodle, these are the assignment submission portals.**

1. Week of September 6th. Greetings.

Welcome to the sociology of education! The first half of the course consists of units that link some key traditions in sociological theory with the concepts of education and schooling and their relation to society as a whole. The second half focuses on applying sociological thinking to contemporary educational issues.

In Class:

No Class Held

Read This:

C. Wright Mills (1959): *The Sociological Imagination*.

Karl Alexander and Stephen L. Morgan (2016): “The Coleman Report at Fifty: Its Legacy and Implications for Future Research on Equality of Opportunity”

2. Week of September 13th. Personal Observations, Social Implications.

Before proceeding, we have to do some myth-busting. The conventional wisdom in the US is that investment in schools and education are the best means by which to correct social inequality. But sociology tends to question conventional wisdom, and does so in this case as well. This week, we try to temper our belief in the transformative potential of education.

In Class:

Monday: Course Intro and Syllabus

Wednesday: Discussion of C. Wright Mills and the Coleman Report.

Read This:

Emile Durkheim (1956): *Education and Sociology*: “Education: Its Nature and its Role.”
John Dewey (1916): *Democracy and Education*: “Education as a Social Function”
Harry Gracey (1975): “Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Boot Camp.”

Homework:

Reflection about your experiences and interests related to the Sociology of Education.
(1-2 pages) ****Required - Ungraded****

Reaction Paper ****Required - Graded****

3. Week of September 20th. The Functionalist View of Education.

Many consider Emile Durkheim to be the founding figure of the Western sociological tradition. Fewer people know that he was keenly interested in education. How does he define the function of education? What are the differences between the perspectives of Durkheim, a late 19th century European; John Dewey, an early 20th century American philosopher; and Harry Gracey, an American sociologist writing in the 1970s?

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Durkheim, Dewey, and Gracey.

Wednesday: [Education Data Sources Part I](#)

Read This:

Jean Anyon. (1980). “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work”

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. (2012). “Schooling in Capitalist America Revisited.”

Pierre Bourdieu. (1985). “Forms of Capital.”

Homework:

Reaction Paper ****Required****

4. Week of September 27th. Critical perspectives on schooling.

We learned about the function of schooling last week, but the story of education may not be quite that linear. How does the critical story about classrooms told by Jean Anyon differ from the defined as the function of education in the first readings? What do Bowles and Gintis add to the discussion of the Coleman Report from Week Two? What do Bourdieu and Passeron mean when they use the phrase “Symbolic Violence?”

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Anyon, Bowles & Gintis; 5-minute writing: Your hidden curriculum experiences.

Wednesday: Close reading – Pierre Bourdieu’s *Forms of Capital*

Read This:

Stanley Aronowitz (1981). Preface to *Learning to Labor*.

Paul Willis (1977). Introduction to *Learning to Labor*.

John Ogbu (2004). “Collective Identity and the Burden of ‘Acting White’ in Black History, Community and Education.”

Optional Reading

Mats Trondman and Anna Lund. (2018). “Light, mind and spirit: Paul Willis’ Learning to Labor on and beyond its 40th Anniversary.”

Homework:

Reaction Paper

Research Interest Statement ****Required****

5. Week of October 4th. Cultural Studies: Resistance to schooling?

We've so far heard two functional stories in which societies pass on curricula from older generations to younger. Though the contents of the lessons were different, the notion of transmission appears passive in both accounts. For Paul Willis and John Ogbu, students aren't passive victims of symbolic violence; they actively resist their indoctrination. But reproduction still happens; how do they see reproduction being accomplished by students?

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Paul Willis, John Ogbu.

Wednesday: [Addressing 'problem behavior' in the early years](#)

Read This:

Willard Waller (1932): From *The Sociology of Teaching*

Aaron Cicourel and John Kitsuse (1963, 2012). Selections from *The Educational Decision-Makers*.

Write This:

Reaction Paper

6. Week of October 11th. Individuals and Institutions

Though they are sometimes an afterthought in sociological discussions of schooling, teachers and administrators are obviously a critical factor in the process of formal education. Willard Waller's classic but overlooked study of teaching seems as relevant today as when it was nearly 90 years ago. In a similarly important work – that utilizes the perspective of ethnomethodology – Aaron Cicourel and John Kitsuse look at the role of counselors and administrators in shaping students' educational futures in high school.

In Class:

Monday: Trinity Days, NO CLASS

Wednesday: Discussion of Waller/Cicourel & Kitsuse, Group Assignments

Required:

Nancy Lopez (2010) "Race-Gender Experiences and Schooling: Second-generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian youth in New York City."

Write This:

- What does Nancy Lopez mean by the terms race/gender experiences and race/gender outlooks?
- How does gender affect the in school experiences of West Indian young men and women?
- Describe the differences between the race/gender outlooks of West Indian young men and young women in Lopez's study

You may also choose to write the reflection assignment outlined in the syllabus.

Optional:

Lisa Delpit (1988). "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children"

Bronwyn Davies (1989). "The discursive production of the Male/Female dualism in School Settings."

7. Week of October 18th. Race, Gender, and Schooling.

So far, we've been talking more about how schools work, and less about the students in them. As a transition between teachers (from last week), we look at Lisa Delpit's classic essay "The Silenced Dialogue," which examines the use of a pedagogical technique constructivism from the perspective of non-white teachers and students. Bronwyn Davies looks at how gender is constructed by lesson content in the classroom. Nancy Lopez looks at how race and gender condition college students' experiences of schooling.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Nancy Lopez, Lisa Delpit, and Bronwyn Davies

Wednesday: Group Discussion: Identity and Experiences at Trinity College

Required:

Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle and Laura Olsen (2001). "Schools, Achievement, and Inequality: A Seasonal Perspective."

Write This:

- How many students were part of the survey used in this study? When did the survey start, and what grade were the children in? How many years were they followed? When did they take tests?
- According to Table 1, what happened to students test scores over time? How did scores differ among high-SES, mid-SES, and low-SES students?
- According to Table 2, did students learn at similar rates over the course of the year, or did learning vary by season? For students of different SES levels, was learning growth more similar over the winters or over the summers? Why do you think this is the case?
- Think about our prior readings - including Pierre Bourdieu, Paul Willis, and John Ogbu. How might their theories of education and culture explain "Summer Learning Loss"?

You may also choose to write the reflection assignment outlined in the syllabus.

Optional:

Annette Lareau (1987). "Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital."

Betty Hart and Todd Risley (2003). "The Early Catastrophe."

8. Week of October 25th. Review of the Theoretical Portion of the Course.

Let's come up for air, summarize of what we've done, and preview where we go next! We should also check to make sure you're all coming up with your questions and answers for your data projects.

In Class:

Monday: Review Lecture; 5-minute writing: What three key concepts do you remember from the course so far?

Wednesday: Group Project Discussion. PowerStats Demonstration.

Read This:

No Assigned Readings. Watch NCES tutorials on your chosen data file (see link below)

[Education Data Sources II](#)

[Educations Data Sources III](#)

Homework:

Research Project Data Memo. ****Required****

9. Week of November 1st. Early Childhood and Unequal Home Situations.

As our first contemporary issue, we will look not at schooling *per se*, but the time leading up to it. Many of the outcomes we attribute to schooling are in fact already being shaped long before children first arrive at school. Hart and Risley discuss one of the most important early childhood phenomena: language acquisition. Farkas and Beron take a different approach to the same phenomena. Garcia and Weiss use yet another data source to assess whether early childhood achievement gaps have narrowed over time. Think back to our readings that focus on class; how would those authors react to the argument in *Unequal Childhoods*?

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Alexander et al., Lareau, and Hart & Risley; Group work: Theories of Social Class and the Early Learning Gap

Wednesday: Review of Data Project Memos, Writing the Final Paper

Required:

John Wallace et al. (2008). "Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in School Discipline among US High School Students: 1991-2005."

Write This:

- How do the authors describe 'zero-tolerance policies' in US schools?
- What are four weaknesses of prior research described by the authors?
- According to Table 2, were there any major differences in behavior among racial groups?
- According to Table 3, what were the substantial differences among racial groups in the experience of school discipline?
- We learned in Alexander et al. that SES appears to affect student learning in and out of schools. Here the authors find that SES does not explain differences in school discipline experiences. How do we reconcile these divergent findings?

You may also choose to write the reflection assignment outlined in the syllabus.

Optional:

Jonathan Kozol (1991): from Savage Inequalities.

Jonathan Kozol (2006): from The Shame of the Nation

10. Week of November 8th. Unequal School Situations.

After (at latest) five years of age, most children spend about a third of their waking hours in schools for about three quarters of the year – about 25% of their conscious lives. Thus we need to understand how the condition of schools varies according to students’ race, ethnic and class backgrounds. Jonathan Kozol’s classic work on educational inequality is as relevant today as it was nearly 30 years ago, and is complemented well by a discussion of school discipline, which shapes many students’ experiences.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Wallace et al. and Kozol

Wednesday: [Three Miles](#) podcast

Required:

Christopher and Sarah Lubienski (2006): “Charter, Private and Public Schools and Academic Achievement: New Evidence from NAEP Mathematics Data”

Write This:

- What is the National Assessment of Educational Progress? What kinds of questions and topics are included on the NAEP math test?
- According to Table 1, how are charter, catholic, and public schools different in terms of the types of students who attend?
- Look at Figure 1 and Figure 2. What happens to average differences between student achievement in public schools and catholic schools *after* adjusting for the types of students that attend?
- Think back to week 2. *The Coleman Report* found that out-of-school factors mattered more for student achievement than in-school factors. Is there any reason to think that changing the control structure of schooling (public vs. private) would alter the situation? If so, how?

You may also choose to write the reflection assignment outlined in the syllabus.

Optional:

David Labaree (2010). “Teach for America and Teacher Ed: Heads they Win Tails We Lose”

Diane Ravitch (2011). “The Myth of Charter Schools”

11. Week of November 15th. The Private Option.

Privatization of public schools has been proposed as a solution to the problems of poor student achievement and unequal school situations. Another market-based solution has focused on contracting top students from elite colleges to teach in under-served public schools. Do these ideas have the power to resolve what have been intractable problems? And do they not have pitfalls of their own? Christopher and Sarah Lubienski ask a critical question: is it that public schools are doing worse by their students? Or, do they just have a harder job to do?

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Lubienski & Lubienski, Labaree, and Ravitch

Wednesday: Group Project Session

Read This:

TBD

Homework:
Reaction Paper

12. Week of November 22nd. COVID-19 and Educational Inequality

Readings to be determined. Updates will be posted on Moodle.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of TBD readings

Wednesday: No Class Scheduled

Read This:

Ivan Illich (1970). From *Deschooling Society*.

Patricia Hill Collins (2009). From *Another Kind of Public Education: Race, the Media, and Democratic Possibilities*.

Joy Dreyfoos (2005). "Full-service community schools. A strategy – not a program."

Homework:

Work on your papers and presentations.

13. Week of November 29th. Is there and Alternative? Possibilities Beyond Schooling.

In Class:

Monday: Discussion of Collins, Illich, and Dreyfoos

Wednesday: Course Wrap-Up, Group Meetings

14. Week of December 6th. Student Presentations

Note that you are still required to attend both days, even if you are not presenting.

In Class:

Monday: Student presentations

Wednesday: Student presentations

15. Week of December 12th. No Class scheduled.