

THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION - SYLLABUS
THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL ORDER AND CULTURAL VALUES ON
TEACHING AND LEARNING
FOCUS ON SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE USA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class looks at the features of modern educational systems that have developed in industrial and post-industrial societies over the past century. With a primary focus on the American experience, we will look at the influence of the social structure, the culture, and the political system on ways teaching and learning have been organized and supported, at different stages of the social educational process. Students will be asked to examine their own and others' educational experiences to capture the effects of social forces on the structure of schooling, the forms of pedagogy they have been exposed to, and the curriculum that students are expected to learn. The role of education in supporting economic and social development and in promoting opportunity and advancement for individuals and groups in the US, China, and other places. We will look at how the organization, pedagogy, and curriculum of schools affect the major outcomes of schooling – students' aspirations, identities, strategies of advancement, learning of academic content, and engagement with the learning and achievement processes.

AMERICAN STYLE, PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

As we explore these educational institutions and processes, this course will ask that you acquire some basic sociological skills *in carrying out research yourself*.

Under the instructor's guidance, you will design some small study projects, gather some data, and analyze it to reflect on the claims of established research on the design of educational institutions and processes and their effects on learners involved in them.

I encourage you to examine facets of Chinese social life using tools and templates from US sociology, to discover what sociology can illuminate about Chinese life, and equally, what Chinese life shows us about the limitations and potential of US-style sociology.

The key to success in US colleges and universities is the ability to identify a problem in any field of study and develop a reasonable analysis of its origins, consequences, and significance. Learning to apply ideas found in books to better understand the nature and dynamics of social experience in the real world is a fundamental feature of most social science courses in the US. We will apply ideas in this course in exercises aimed at creating new knowledge or new interpretations of familiar features of experience.

A related talent required for success in the US is critical analysis of scholarly materials in a field. In our course, you will take steps to identify thesis claims that writers present in their books, chapters and articles, and which they develop or support with logic or evidence from fresh observations and other studies. Please note: course materials will be resources for you to carefully use in developing your own work. They will help you challenge established ideas, and to support new ones with convincing evidence, new findings and new interpretations of classic ideas.

This course, finally, will help you refine your skills in formal, written, academic English. It will also help find your own voice as a thinker and writer within the conventions of this scholarly field. You will develop confidence and skill in oral discussion of complex ideas, especially to defend a position that you find important or to constructively criticize and challenge those of others.

We will use course time for lectures and formal presentation by the instructor, in discussions among students, in quick reflective writings on course topics and materials, in workshops on conducting social research, and in analysis and discussions of visual and other media that illuminate course themes and features of American life.

COURSE DETAILS

- Class Meetings: MTWThF – 10.45 to 12.45
- Meeting Location: TBA Hotel Conference Room
- Course Materials: Distributed via we chat and hard copies
- We Chat contact: bpowers1017

REQUIRED WORK, WEIGHTED VALUE, AND DUE DATES (W/D OR WEEK NUMBER/DAY NUMBER)

- **(RL)** Reading Logs – Two submissions on two assigned readings for each, 1 page comment on each reading **10 percent**
- Several in-class or overnight one paragraph thematic reflections (P/NP) **5 percent**
- **Midterm Paper** – 3-5 pages Reflective Writing and Cross Cultural Journal **25 percent**

The midterm paper will ask students to critically examine an assigned piece of US scholarship on schooling and evaluate its relevance to Chinese society. How would the author's ideas be modified to be relevant to an analysis of issues in Chinese life.

- **Final Course Paper** -- one, 5 pages **40 percent**

This paper will be a description and an analysis of aspects of the personal experience of two individuals in their educational journeys. How do the goals of the educational system and its formal design reflect Chinese cultural values and social priorities? How are these goals expressed in the curriculum, organization, and instructional methods in these educational settings? What have been some of their effects on learners? How have families and the social and cultural backgrounds of students affected their learning experiences?

- **Final Exam**, in-class essay on topic distributed in advance **10 percent**
- Participation in class, office hours, leadership in group work **10 percent**

GROUND RULES

- Regular Attendance
- Work Submitted on Time

- Written Work in English and Typed in Conventional American Format
- Prepare for Active Participation in Whole Class and Small Group Activities.
- Grading: On US 4.0 scale – holistic method
- All work must be submitted for credit! Skipped assignments can mean a failure. Missed work can be made up with consent of the instructor.
- Attend an office hour, alone or with other students.

CLASS TOPICS AND SOURCES OF READINGS

1. The Structure of Schooling – The standard model of schooling in the US and China
2. Pressures to “reform” national educational systems: sources and directions of change
3. Explaining Achievement Differences among students – a global imperative, an American perspective
4. Education for Economic Development
5. Class Issues and Gender in Education – A system offering Opportunity or Hierarchy
6. Constructing a National Educational System – Policy and Finance
7. Identity Formation in Schools
8. Technology and the Transformation of School
9. The Transformation of Higher Education
10. Asian Advantage – What leads Asian origin students in the US to outperform other social groups

These topics will be covered in readings selected from from the following texts:

- [Richard Arum](#), [Irene R. Beattie](#), [Karly Ford](#), *The Structure of Schooling* Third Edition. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, December 2014
- Kimberly Goyette, *Education in America*. Berkeley: UC Press.2017.
- Loewen, James T. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York. New Press. 2007. (selections)
- Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege: The Making of An Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou. *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2015. 93-114; 179-199.

- Patricia Gandara and Frances Contreras. *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequence of Failed Social Policies* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. “Beating the Odds and Going to College,” pp. 196-249.
- Institute for the Study of Social Change, University of California, Berkeley. *The Diversity Project: Final Report* (Second Edition) with a new Introduction by Troy Duster. November 2009, pp. 11-47.
- David Kirp, *Einstein, Shakespeare, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005
- Michael Kirst and Mitchell Stevens. *Remaking College: The Changing Ecology of Higher Education*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.
- Cathy N. Davidson. *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*. New York: Basic Books, 2017
- Vivian Louie, *Compelled To Excel: Immigration, Education and Opportunity Among Chinese Americans*. Stanford, CA: Stanford U Press, 2004.

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