Schools are the primary institution for instructing, training and socializing the next generation. School attendance or equivalent instruction is mandatory in this country, and the subjects and methods of instruction have been hotly debated. This course will explore sociological research and theories that are useful for examining the roles of educational institutions and practices in the United States. We will critically examine the place and role of schools and schooling in the wider society, both through a brief historical overview as well as modern perspectives and current debates on the role and function of schools. Class participants will investigate ways in which schools reinforce, and/or challenge prevailing social, economic, and political relationships. Issues to be discussed include: the purpose of schooling, the structure and organization of schools, curriculum development, social reproduction, family/school relationships, and the role of teachers. The meaning of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation and identity will also inform our investigations into these topics. We will examine the school as a society within itself, with its own dominant system of values, ideology, and relationships of power and authority. We will also examine the interpersonal relationships within schools: the types of interaction that occur, and the opportunities for learning and development.

**Course Requirements**

This course requires you to complete each week’s reading before the week’s first class session, attend class, and participate in discussions and exercises. In class, we will cover concepts and principles that will apply to written assignments. Attendance is required, and I will pass around a sign-up sheet during each class session. In general, I do not excuse absences unless you have a serious problem. If such a problem occurs, you need to let me know.

During class sessions, you should feel free to ask questions, challenge ideas, and respond to me and to your classmates. I insist that participation be appropriate to the topic and respectful of everyone, but you are otherwise free to express your views. You need not agree with everything you read. You need not even understand all of the reading. Class discussions will, ideally, answer questions, foster critical engagement, and explore areas
of disagreement.

You are welcome to contact me between class sessions and during times outside my office hours. If you are working on an assignment or concerned about some aspect of the reading, please do not hesitate. You need not hesitate anyway. I usually check my e-mail more than once a day, and I try to respond promptly. I’m on campus on a regular basis on Tuesdays and Fridays, and I’ll be happy to make an appointment when I am available.

I will calculate grades as follows:

- Attendance and participation: 30 percent
- First (short) assignment: 5 percent
- Second, third, and fourth (longer) assignments: 20 percent each
- Take-home final/paper: 25 percent

Due dates are noted in the course outline. Instructions for assignments will be distributed in class.

**Written Assignments**

Final versions of written assignments are due in hard copy on the deadlines listed. Written work should be typed, double spaced, with margins on all four sides of the page. I expect hard copies, but please keep your electronic files for back-up until the semester is over.

Please be sure to refer specifically to the class readings. Please use the ASA style guidelines for references and citations.

You may submit a draft copy of your paper before the due date for feedback by e-mail in MS Word .doc or .docx format. Please allow a reasonable amount of time (at least two days) for me to read your papers carefully and give you notes and suggestions in “track changes” mode. Be sure not to show “track changes” in your final copy!

These papers will be graded based on the criteria distributed with the written assignments.

**Articles**

Students should check news sites such as newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and radio, for articles and reports on issues relating to the sociology of education. If possible, please e-mail the article or information about the article to me in advance. If not, please be sure to notify me at the start of class. Please briefly present the main argument of the article in the context of the themes of the course and the article’s source. These presentations will contribute to your class participation score.
Student Accountability

Accountability includes a number of classroom norms: class attendance and punctuality, timely submission of assignments, and attention to the class sessions without diversion from texting or web surfing. These elements of normative accountability will be part of your grade.

Recognizing that unanticipated problems do occur, I will consider occasional extensions for assignments if asked before the deadline passes. I do, however, review patterns of lateness and other elements of accountability. A pattern that violates these norms more than occasionally will result in a lower grade.

Please turn off phones and other devices during all class sessions. Texting in class is not only rude but also disruptive; please refrain from all electronic communication. I expect not to have to ask you again at any time during the semester. If I do have to ask, I will consider it a breach of accountability.

Laptops are emphatically discouraged and require permission for note taking. If I grant permission, laptop users must occupy the front rows of the classroom during each class session. Please think carefully before asking for permission to use a laptop in class. If several people seek permission, I will ban laptop use entirely.

Please hand a printed hard copy of each paper. Only in very rare circumstances do I accept papers in electronic form. If you need to send an electronic file (and have a good reason), please obtain permission in advance.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a student who needs academic accommodation because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. Undergraduates and graduate students with questions about documenting a disability should contact the Director of Disabilities Services and Support Office of Academic Services, 6-3470. Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use words or ideas of another without proper acknowledgment of the source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or ideas in published volumes, on the Internet, or created by another student. Violations of university policies on academic integrity, available at
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/ai/index.html, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, be sure to ask for clarification.

Course Readings

Class readings will be available on-line in Latte or as handouts in class. It will not be necessary to purchase any additional books.

Course Outline

PART 1: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

WEEK 1: Introduction, Sociological Themes and Perspectives, the Origins of Public Schooling in the U.S. January 17-20, 2012

(1) Course Overview: What is Sociology of Education?

Introduction to course
Raising sociological questions: themes of the course

(2) Historical overview I: The Common School


(3) The Administrative Progressives: A Factory Model of Schooling

in *One Best System: A History of American Urban Education.*
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.


(4) John Dewey: A Democratic Model of Schooling


*FIRST PAPER DUE*

PART 2: PERSPECTIVES ON THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF SCHOOLS

WEEK 3: Perspectives on the Aims and Ideals of Education  January 30-February 3

(5) Sociological Themes and Perspectives: on the Sorting Function of Schools


(6) Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Function of Schools:


WEEK 4: On Schooling and the Social Order: Social Class, Social Reproduction, Cultural Capital February 7-10

(7) Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity: Social Class, Social Reproduction, Cultural Capital I

Read:  


(8) Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity: Social Class, Social Reproduction & Cultural Capital II

Read:  


WEEK 5: Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity in Education II: The Tracking Debate, Language and Immigration February 14-17

(9) On Schooling and the Social Order II: The Tracking Debate

Read:  


(10) Privilege, Inclusion, Opportunity: Language, Immigration, Cultural Legacy


SECOND PAPER DUE

MIDTERM BREAK FEBRUARY 20-24, 2012

WEEK 6: Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity in Education III : Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Disability February 28-March 2

(11) Privilege, Inclusion, Opportunity: Gender, Sexual Orientation


(12) Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity: Religion & Disability-Federal Regulations in Education


WEEK 7: Busing and Racial Desegregation of Boston’s Schools  March 6-9

(13) Case Study: Separate but Unequal? Busing and School Desegregation in Boston


(14) Separate but Unequal? What Now? Critical Race Theory and Education


SECTION 3: TEACHING AND AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

WEEK 8: Authority Patterns in Schools, Racial Exclusion, Cultural Dissonance  March 13-16

(15) Authority Patterns in Schools: Racial-Ethnic Exclusion:


(16) Authority Patterns in Schools, Cultural Dissonance Between Students and Teachers


(15) Perspectives on the Transmission of Culture and Values: The Culture of the School


(16) The Textbook Industry & Curricular Standards Debates


OR


**March 27-30**

(17) **The Panopticon: Are Schools Going Too Far?**

**Read:**
- Recent Articles on current debates in education (*Articles to be selected from current news sources during the semester. Likely to relate to issues such as regulating school lunches, sex education, etc.*).

(18) **Standardization Debate/Market Approaches to Education Reform**

**Read:**

**OPTIONAL:**

**OPTIONAL:**

- article about changes to NCLB (TBA)


**April 3**

(18) **Perspectives on the Transmission of Culture and Values: Power and Authority**

**Read:**

**SPRING BREAK APRIL 6-13**

**WEEK 12: Power & Authority, Classroom Roles & Relationships  April 17-20**

(19) Perspectives of Classroom Roles and Relationships


**THIRD PAPER DUE**

(20) Between Teachers and Students


**WEEK 13: Interpersonal Relationships in Education: Relationships Between Teachers, Students & Parents  April 24-27**

(21) Interactions Between Students, Student Culture


(22) Between Parents and Teachers


WEEK 14: IDEAS ON THE GROUND: Schools and Communities, Looking at Teachers in Action  
May 1

(23) Between Communities and Schools


(24) Looking at First-Year Teachers in Action

Summary of due dates:

Three Five- to Six-PAGE PAPERS
Due at the start of class on the following dates:

Paper 1: Tuesday, September 13
Paper 2: Friday, October 14
Paper 3: Tuesday, November 22

Take-home final due: Monday, December 19