Sociology of Education 104

Sociology 104a: The Sociology of Education
Pearlman 113 (Lounge)
Brandeis University
Spring 2016

Mitra K. Shavarini, Lecturer
Class Meeting: Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 1-1:50pm
Office: Pearlman 211
Office Hours: Mon, Wed, Thrs 8am-12:45pm
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Teaching Assistants:
Ann Ward; agward@brandeis.edu; Office Hours: Mon 2-3pm; Pearlman 104
Jacqueline Gonzalez (“Jax”); jaxgonz@brandeis.edu; Office Hours: TBA
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Course Description

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 the 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.
“Trigger” Warning: Brandeis University values and encourages civil expression and respectful personal behavior. However, you may at any moment, and without further notice, encounter ideas, expressions and images that are mistaken, upsetting, dangerous, prejudiced, insulting or deeply offensive. I cannot offer a trigger warning for all that emerges in this class. Moreover, it is essential that we have difficult conversations for they form the basis of what I call an education.

Class Format
Most class sessions will combine some mix of lecture and discussion/debate. All students should come to class having read the assigned reading for the day. However, class lectures may not always simply repackage the reading material and may, instead, expand well beyond the reading to related themes or tackle the themes of the reading in different fashion. In other words, lectures will complement the readings, not provide a substitute for doing them. Current events may be discussed throughout the course. Additionally, we will on occasion make use of video resources and guest speakers.

Course Requirements
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, group work, etc.).

I will calculate grades as follows:
- Attendance: 15%
- Participation: 15%
- Article “ice-breakers”: 15%
- First (short) assignment: 5%
- Second AND third assignments**: 15% each
- Take-home final/paper**: 15%
- Extra Resources: 5%

***Due dates are noted in the course outline. Instructions for assignments will be distributed in class (also on Latte – see last block). I will include a grading rubric that clearly sets expectations.

Grading scale
- A=100-93 A-=90-92
- B+=87-89 B=83-86 B-=80-82
- C+=77-79 C=73-76 C-=70-72
- D=60-69 F=below 60

Attendance
Because participation constitutes a substantial portion of your grade, attendance is important. In my course I allow 2 absences for any reason. Beyond this, an absence will result in a lower final attendance grade; each absence lowers the attendance grade by one “notch” (from A- to B+). Moreover, 3 tardiness equals one absence. I will pass around a sign-IN sheet during each class session.

Participation
In-class contribution is a significant part of our shared learning experience in this course. You should be able to organize your thoughts and to convey them in a succinct and meaningful fashion. There will be “cold-calling.” This is not to embarrass any individual but to keep the class fully engaged. Here are some guidelines for you to consider when it comes to participation:
Provide strong evidence to support your claim/observations/reflection.

Advance the discussion by contributing insightful comments and – perhaps more importantly – questions.

Listen attentively in class.

Demonstrate interest in your peers’ comments and provide constructive feedback when appropriate.

**Individual Response Option** – While I expect you to participate and voice your ideas in class, I realize that this may be difficult for some of you. Use the individual response paragraph to tell me where your thinking is. Hand-in (drop off at my office) or email me an individual response to any of our class topics.

**Article “Ice-Breakers”** – In *Flip Your Classroom* Jonathan Berman and Aaron Sams talk about the importance of having students come up with questions around the material that they read. In a similar vein, I ask that you come up with a couple (several) questions that you are left with after you finish our due reading for the day. I also ask that you make connections to previous readings/personal experiences. At times you will hand-in your “ice-breaker” question … at other times, you’ll be asked to share your questions … and/or put them on board for discussion. As previous cohorts will tell you, this is one reason you need to do the readings!

**Written Assignments**

Please be sure to refer specifically to the class readings. Please use the ASA style guidelines for references and citations. I am a stickler for good writing. I believe it is an important skill that a liberal arts institution must provide for their students. So please take your writing seriously. If you need help, see either myself and/or the TAs. I highly recommend the writing center, a valuable campus resource you should familiarize yourself with, if you haven’t already.

Papers are due at the start of each class. Please send me an electronic version in addition to the hard copy you hand-in. Plan accordingly to be on time for class. I frown upon those who are late to class because they forgot to print their papers!

Our class is large and it will take time for us to properly read and comment on your papers. Please allow at least two weeks before they are returned to you.

Note I will not accept late papers unless you have arranged for an extension before the deadline passes.

**Summary of due dates for written work:**

Paper 1: Monday, February 1

Paper 2: Thursday, February 11

Paper 3: Thursday, March 24

Final paper: Monday, May 9

**Extra Credit**

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. I will post these articles on our course’s website and email to the class. Please briefly present the main argument of the piece in the context of the themes of the course and the article’s source.

**Office Hours**

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 email more than once a day, and I try to respond promptly. I’m on campus on a regular basis on class days, and I’ll be happy to make an appointment if those times do not work. Our TAs are always available to meet with you as well. They hold weekly office hours (see above for times and locations).
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**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.

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 check your Brandeis email on a regular basis. I will be sending you articles/clips and what is due for the next class.

**Community of Learners**
I strive to create a supportive, stimulating and active class environment. This effort is in a huge part contingent on YOU to be not only a student in this class but rather assume the role of a teacher yourself. After all, our personal experiences contribute greatly to our understanding of theories, patterns, current events, etc. My pedagogy, therefore, is NOT rooted in a didactic/rote approach. Instead, I embrace experiential learning where students participate in the construction of knowledge.

This said, please be sure to be consciousness of how much “floor” time you take to express your ideas. Don’t go on and on; this puts pressure on me to cut you off.
I also expect you to build on what your peers have already said – if the thought is aired, don’t repeat … if the conversation has moved on then don’t redirect. Simple rule for class conversation is to be active and to think how each comment builds on the next.

Since our class is fairly large this semester, I will devote one week’s session to small group discussions. This venue will enable you to digest class discussions, grapple with difficult concepts and/or prepare for assignments.

**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](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**
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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**

| INTRODUCTION, SOCIOLOGICAL THEMES AND PERSPECTIVES, THE ORIGINS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN THE U.S. |

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**Course Overview:** What is Sociology of Education?

- Introduction to course
- Raising sociological questions: themes of the course

**Wednesday, January 13**

- Introduction to class continued

**Thursday, January 14**

NO CLASS

**Monday, January 18**

- Historical overview I: The Common School  
  *Brandeis Monday, January 20*


**Thursday, January 21**

- The Administrative Progressives: A Factory Model of Schooling  
  *Brandeis Monday, January 20*


**Monday, January 25**

- America Expands – Immigrants & Assimilation

  Read: - *A Walker in the City* by Alfred Kazin pp. 5-51. Also read Gina Bellafante’s recent NY Times book review of the book on Latte.

**Wednesday, January 27**

- John Dewey: A Democratic Model of Schooling


### PERSPECTIVES ON THE AIMS AND IDEALS OF EDUCATION

**On the Sorting Function of Schools**

- **Thursday, January 28**


**Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Function of Schools**

- **Monday, February 1**


- **PAPER 1 DUE @ start of class: see Latte for instructions & topics**

### ON SCHOOLING AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

**Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity: Social Class, Social Reproduction, Cultural Capital I**

- **Wednesday February 3**


- **Bowles & Gintis continued …**

**Privilege, Inclusion and Opportunity: Social Class, Social Reproduction & Cultural Capital II**

- **Monday February 8**


### THE TRACKING DEBATE, LANGUAGE AND IMMIGRATION

**The Tracking Debate**

- **Wednesday February 10**


Tracking debate continued …

Thursday February 11

SECOND PAPER DUE @ start of class: For Topics see Latte

February Break – No class

February 15-19

Reading Wars

Monday February 22

Watch: “A tale of Two Schools: History of the Reading Wars” PBS 2003

Language, Immigration, Cultural Legacy

Wednesday, February 24


Immigrants and Education continued …

Thursday, February 25


GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RELIGION, DISABILITY

Monday, February 29

Sexual Orientation


Read: “Family forced out of Lexington, MA” ALSO read the “Opposition” segment of Wikipedia regarding the book King & King.


Gender & Education

Wednesday, March 2


-“How Schools Shortchange Girls” – the AAUW Report pp. 35-54.

OPTIONAL:
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Disabilities & Education

Thursday, March 3


Religion

Monday, March 7


BUSING AND RACIAL DESEGREGATION OF BOSTON’S SCHOOLS

Wednesday, March 9

Separate but Unequal? Busing and School Desegregation in Boston


Desegregation continued …

Thursday, March 10


Critical Race Theory and Education

Monday, March 14


**Note: In Latte, both these articles are scanned into one entry.


AUTHORITY PATTERNS IN SCHOOLS, RACIAL EXCLUSION, CULTURAL DISSONANCE
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Authority Patterns in Schools: Racial-Ethnic Exclusion

Wednesday, March 16


Cultural Dissonance Between Students and Teachers

Thursday, March 17


TRANSMISSION OF NORMS AND VALUES: WHAT GETS TAUGHT IN SCHOOL AND WHO DECIDES? PART I

Monday, March 21

The Culture of the School


The Textbook Industry & Curricular Standards Debates

Wednesday, March 23


Curriculum debates continued …

Thursday, March 24


OR

And read about the Scopes Trial. There is an article on Latte, as well as a video clip. Read and watch, familiarize yourself with the case.

Paper 3 Due @ start of class: See topics on LATTE

TRANSMISSION OF NORMS AND VALUES: WHAT GETS TAUGHT IN SCHOOL AND
WHO DECIDES? PART II

Monday, March 28

The Panopticon: Are Schools Going Too Far?

Wednesday, March 30


Thursday, March 31


ALSO find and bring in other 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.

Monday, April 4

Standardization Debate/Market Approaches to Education Reform


Listen to Iran Glass Piece on This American Life called “Back to School.”


WHAT GETS TAUGHT IN SCHOOL? WHO DECIDES? PART III

Wednesday, April 6

Perspectives on the Transmission of Culture and Values: Power and Authority


Thursday, April 7

POWER & AUTHORITY, CLASSROOM ROLES & RELATIONSHIPS

"Race to Nowhere” –

WATCH FILM BEFORE CLASS …DISCUSSION IN CLASS …
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Interactions Between Students, Student Culture

Monday April 11


Homeschooling (as antidote to public education?)

Wednesday April 13

-“Does Homeschooling Pose a threat to Public Education?”

-“Why Are Public School Proponents So Afraid of Homeschool Kids?”
http://buehlereducation.com/homeschool/indianasportsbill/

Watch: Ted Talk: Ken Robinson, “How Schools Will Kill Creativity.”

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATION: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS, STUDENTS & PARENTS

Thursday, April 14

Between Teachers and Students


Between Parents and Teachers continued…

Monday April 18


IDEAS ON THE GROUND: SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES, LOOKING AT TEACHERS IN ACTION

Wednesday April 20

Between Communities and Schools

Watch “Waiting for Superman” – Discuss in class

Spring Break No Classes

April 21-28

Final Thoughts

Monday, May 2