

## **Sociology 7491: Seminar: Education and Inequality**

Spring 2017

Tuesday: 9:00 – 11:30. Room 26 Stubbs

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Office: 215 Woodin Hall: Open Door, email for appointment

### **Description:**

Welcome. In this seminar, we will explore the relationship between education and inequality. We will examine differences in access to, experiences in, and outcomes from schooling for categories such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and/or nationality, among others. Consideration will be given to various theoretical approaches to understanding the production, reproduction, and eradication of inequalities in schooling. We will address many substantive topics, including but not limited to: family-school relationships, segregation, school effects, tracking and standardized testing, “cultural” explanations for educational inequality, higher education, and the consequences of educational mobility. We will examine educational processes from the pre-school level up through post-graduate education. This seminar is appropriate for students interested in pursuing projects of their own in educational sociology and those wishing to gain a background in the sociology of education subsection.

### **Course Requirements**

The seminar will follow a relatively standard graduate format, with some twists.

#### **1. Term Paper: 80%**

My goal is for each student to write an empirical research paper for this course.

The end-of-semester goal is a complete paper (roughly 30 pages, double-spaced) and includes (1) Title, (2) Introduction, (3) Conceptual Framework--or literature review, (4) discussion of methods, (5) findings—including tables and figures-- (6) a final discussion section.

While doable, one semester is a short time to complete a publishable paper. Success will hinge on three things: (1) starting early and working diligently throughout the semester, (2) developing a clear research question, and (3) identifying data sources to use.

To assist you, I will set the following requirements:

- a. Due Jan 31: Paper proposal finalized. I invite all of you to meet individually with me in January to discuss term paper ideas, including data sources and methods (email to arrange a time to meet).

b. Due February 21: Short Paper. 750 words. No citations. Three key elements:

- (1) Introduction that provides context and clearly states research question(s)
- (2) Conceptual Framework oriented around research question
- (3) Key empirical findings relevant to research question

--The purpose of this assignment is to encourage all students to quickly complete the literature review and get oriented so you can devote the second part of the semester on data collection and analysis.

c. Due May 5. Final Term Paper. The final paper (details above) should be unique to this course.

## **2. Participation: 10%**

Students will write a 1-page (single-space) reflection on each set of weekly readings. Your reflections should reflect a thoughtful understanding of the set of readings. Your preparation is essential as the best graduate seminars get strong contributions to critical discussions by students, thereby extending the readings.

We will meet as a class 13 times. I will “co-lead” each week’s discussion with one student in the course. I will communicate with each student in advance by email to discuss how we plan to go about discussing the readings. I invite variation in approaches.

## **3. Undergraduate Syllabus: 10%**

Each student will be required to submit and course syllabus for an undergraduate course in Sociology of Education. This is due on **March 28**. You can find resources on the Internet and through the American Sociological Association website. Explore what’s out there, but don’t just copy. Design a course customized to suit your particular perspective.

### **Class Format:**

Every Tuesday, we will start our discussions at 9:00am. I plan for us to have a 10-15 minute break in the middle of each seminar (about from 10:00 to 10:15). My approach will be to identify key aspects of each reading and also to place the selected readings within the broader extant literature. I encourage each of you to do the same think. That way, we can spend the majority of our in-class time engaging in critical discussions about the selected readings and their broader implications.

I may provide the overview at the beginning of some classes, but my preferred way is to jump right in with discussion questions. That way the seminar becomes more about you than about me. Please come fully prepared to discuss the readings at the start of each class.

Readings: All readings will be made available on Moodle.

Weekly Schedule (Subject to Revision)

Read before First Meeting (Jan 17): Syllabus and Short Paper

Read before Second Meeting (Jan 24): Sociology of Education foundational

Read before Third Meeting (Jan 31): Stratification/Inequality foundational

Read before Fourth Meeting (Feb 7): Families and Schools (1)

Read before Fifth Meeting (Feb 14): Families and Schools (2)

Read before Sixth Meeting (**Feb 23**): Schools: Teachers and Students  
**-Conflict on Feb 21—Reschedule class for Th?**

February 28: **Mardi Gras, no class**

Read before Seventh Meeting (Mar 7): Schools: Peers

Read before Eighth Meeting (Mar 14): Schools: Tracking & High Stakes Testing

Read before Ninth Meeting (Mar 21): Schools: Desegregation & School Effects

Read before Tenth Meeting (**Mar 28**): Culture: Bourdieu and Cultural Capital  
**-Possible conflict with SSS meetings—may need to reschedule**

Read before 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Apr 4): Culture: Other Cultural Explanations

April 11: **Spring Break, no class**

Read before 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Apr 18): Higher Education

Read before 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Apr 25): Educational Mobility

**Final Papers Due before May 5**