EDUCATION 301C 04: THE AMERICAN SCHOOL
Seigle Hall 106: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00-11:30 AM

Professor: Rowhea Elmesky
Office: Seigle Hall 144
Email: relmesky@wustl.edu
Office Hrs: By appointment

OVERVIEW

This course examines schools as social institutions that continuously shape students’ agency (empowerment) as learners and, ultimately, as citizens in the United States. We focus on understanding how the goals of American schooling include more than achievement around academic subject matter; students are additionally introduced and asked to comply to cultural norms and expectations that reflect the social, cultural, economic and political values of the culture of power. In addition, we examine, 1) the impact of resource access – material, human, and symbolic – on teaching and learning experiences; 2) how poverty and race, for example, shape educational opportunity; and 3) the ways in which school and classroom interactions contribute to students’ identity formation – as learners and as linked to future roles they may enact in society. The course challenges us to consider whether schooling is in fact a means for social mobility for all students, particularly those most marginalized by society. The course themes consider the multiple types of schools including, for example, comprehensive neighborhood, charter and magnet public schools. Lecture, readings, and discussion are supplemented by film, actual classroom footage and visits to schools.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Additional required chapter readings will be assigned. These readings and other assigned articles (listed in the syllabus) are available online via Blackboard/Canvas.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your participation is essential to this course and allows us to learn from each other. Hence, regular class attendance is crucial and required, readings are to be completed prior to each class meeting, and students are expected to participate in all class discussions and activities. Each class period, you have the opportunity to earn 5 participation points. Cell phones should not be used during class time. Laptops may be used to take notes during lectures and presentations. Disregard of these guidelines will impact your weekly participation grade. If you will not be able to attend class due to illness or an emergency, you should inform me as soon as possible in order for the absence to be recorded as “excused.” (In some cases, a doctor’s note may be requested.) Even if an absence is unexcused, you may be able to receive partial participation points for the class period missed, if make up work is completed. Four unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter. You will be automatically dropped from the course if you accumulate six unexcused absences.

ASSIGNMENTS

Required assignments and their due dates are indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted without written permission of the instructor. The required assignments include:

- Group PowerPoint presentation on readings (20 minutes)
- “Schools, Capital, and Social Reproduction” paper (5-7 pages)
- “School Experience” group presentation (20 minutes)
- “School Experience” group paper (8-10 pages)

Grading for the course will be as follows:

- Attendance and Participation (10%)
- Group PowerPoint presentation on readings (10%)
- “Schools, Capital, and Social Reproduction” paper (20%)
- “School Experience” group presentation (20%)
- “School Experience” group paper (20%)
- Final examination (20%)

PowerPoint Presentation

On designated dates throughout the semester, a group of students will lead the discussion on the assigned material for that class period. Your group will be responsible for making a presentation using PowerPoint. Your job is to: (1) point out three powerful/meaningful ideas that you gained from each assigned reading; (2) investigate the commonalities and differences between the assigned chapters and articles for that class period, as well as relate that day’s material to other themes from the course; (3) provide at least one connection via audio/video clip, quotation, personal experience, etc that will illustrate, further enhance or extend our understanding of the topic; and (4) pose at least two provocative questions that will invite discussion amongst your peers in the classroom. Three bonus points will be awarded to any group whose PowerPoint presentation includes a brief, creative activity related to the assigned reading that captures students’ interest and engages their active participation.
“Schools, Capital, and Social Reproduction” Paper
You will be asked to watch a film that focuses on American schools. Utilizing theoretical understandings of the forms of capital (embodied/institutional/objectified cultural capital and social capital), as presented in the course readings and lectures, provide a written analysis (5-7 pages) interrogating the ways in which American schools are spaces where socially reproductive cycles are both interrupted and reinforced. Specifically link social reproduction and capital by discussing how success in school is shaped by: 1) the capital one can access, both inside and outside of school; 2) the symbolic value of one’s capital; 3) opportunities to exchange existing capital into other forms; and 4) opportunities to ‘build’ new capital.

“School Experience” Presentation & Paper
For this assignment, you will spend time in an elementary, middle, or high school (or any combination thereof) of your choice (e.g., charter, magnet, urban/suburban public, private). Preferably, please select a school context that is different from one you attended growing up. Logistically, organize yourselves into groups of 4-5 and arrange to spend approximately 4 hours at a school. (This may be done in one visit; however, it is preferable to visit your school context at least twice.) While in the school, you are encouraged to tour the building(s), observe classroom teaching, and ask questions to any available administrators, staff and/or students. In addition, if the school allows, you may offer to assist with simple teaching and learning activities in the classrooms where you are observing. The purpose of this assignment is for you to acquire vivid images of school settings and a window into the students’ experiences. Your group will develop an in-class 20-minute PowerPoint presentation of observations, experiences, and theoretically grounded reflections. Group papers of 8-10 pages are also required to complete this assignment.

Unless otherwise indicated, all written assignments should be submitted electronically through Blackboard/Canvas. Students are always encouraged to make an appointment to meet with me to clarify specific questions and/or to discuss one’s progress.

Academic Integrity
All students are expected to adhere to high standards of academic integrity. In this class that means that all work presented as original must, in fact, be original, and the ideas and contributions of others must always be appropriately acknowledged. Quotations must, of course, be acknowledged, but so must summaries, paraphrases, and the ideas of others. If you have any doubts or questions about documentation requirements, please ask me.

Grading Expectations
90%+ Exceptional work; well-crafted; well-organized; well-articulated; very clear
80%+ Good work; fluid and clear with slight gaps in the articulation of ideas
70%+ Satisfactory work with substantial gaps in the articulation of ideas
60%+ Mediocre; poorly crafted; poorly articulated; rushed, evidently last minute
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class Focus and Associated Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/15/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Class introduction, organization and course requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Perceptions about the role of the American school; The purpose of the American school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1/22/19 | **Focus:** Competing purposes of schooling – The American struggle over educational goals  
**Reading:**  
| 1/24/19 | **Focus:** The Single Story; The Education Debt  
**Reading:**  
| 1/29/19 | **Focus:** Taking a historical look – The beginnings of American education  
**Readings:**  
Fraser, Chapter 1 (Focus on the following; skim other entries)  
- Chapter Introduction, p. 1-4; Virginia’s Cure, p. 7; MA’s Old Deluder Satan Law, p. 8-9; Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography, p. 9-10  
Fraser, Chapter 2 (Focus on the following; skim other entries)  
- Chapter Introduction, p. 17-20; Jefferson, p. 20-23; Rush, p. 25-29; Webster (Fraser Intro), p. 29; Webster, The American Spelling Book, p. 39-41 |
| 1/31/19 | **Focus:** Taking a historical look – The Common School Movement  
**Reading:**  
Fraser, Chapter 3, pages 44-53 (until "Religious Education" section) and "The Desegregation of the Boston Public Schools" - pages 73-82.  
**Film:** *School, The Story of American Public Education (The Common School: 1770 - 1890)* |
| 2/5/19  | **Focus:** Growing up in the margins of America: Culture and race as central issues in U.S. education  
**Readings:**  
Kozol: Chapters 1 & 3 |
| 2/7/19  | **Focus:** Growing up in the margins of America: Culture and race as central issues in U.S. education  
**Reading:**  
Kozol: Chapter 4 |
| 2/12/19 | **Focus:** The achievement ideology and social reproduction  
**Readings:**  
MacLeod: Chapters: 1, 2, 3 |
| 2/14/19 | **Focus:** Theory: Forms of capital and habitus  
**Reading:**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class Focus and Associated Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/19/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Social and cultural forces on academic achievement&lt;br&gt;<strong>Readings:</strong> MacLeod: Chapters 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Social and cultural forces on academic achievement&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> MacLeod: Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> “Social reproduction takes its toll”&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> MacLeod: Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/28/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Aspirations and outcomes&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> MacLeod: Chapters 9 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Defining success; Present-day educational policies&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> MacLeod: Chapters 12 and 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/7/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Introduction to structures and agency theory&lt;br&gt;<strong>Film:</strong> <em>The Boys of Baraka</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Schools, Capital, and Social Reproduction” paper due @ 11:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12/19 3/14/19</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break Week 😎</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/19/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Refreshing the hope; Structures and agency theory continued&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Sewell, W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. American Journal of Sociology, 98.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> School- and district-level reform&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Milner: Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Reconceptualizing classroom instruction&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Milner: Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/28/19</td>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> The school to prison pipeline; School discipline; The power of relationships&lt;br&gt;<strong>Readings:</strong> Noguera: Chapters 6 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class Focus and Associated Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4/4/19  | **Focus:** Limited options within the American education system?  
**Film:** *The Lottery* |
| 4/9/19  | **Focus:** Charter Schools; What difference does school choice make?  
| 4/11/19 | **Focus:** A call to action  
**Readings:** Milner: Chapters 4 and 5 |
| 4/16/19 | “School Experience” Presentations |
| 4/18/19 | “School Experience” Presentations  
“School Experience” Paper Due 4/19/19 @ 11:59 PM |
| 4/23/19 | **Focus:** Reclaiming the promise of education  
**Readings:** Noguera: Chapters 9 and 11 |
| 4/25/19 | **Collaborative final examination; Completed and presented in class** |