EDLD 610  
Social and Cultural Foundations of Education  
4 Credits ~ CRN 16300  
Fall 2015

Class time and location:  
Mondays 4:00-7:50  
ED 115

Professor:  
Ilana Umansky  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3pm  
Preferred contact: ilanau@uoregon.edu

Course Description

Schools serve many roles in society: preparing individuals for future work, inculcating particular ideas about one’s place within society, and teaching ways of thinking and knowing about the world, nation, and self. This survey course examines education in U.S. society from sociological, cultural, and structural perspectives with a focus on inequity and the intersecting roles of race, language, class, gender and ability/disability. We will probe and critique education in the U.S. through historical overview, theory on the various functions of education in society, and in-depth examinations of the structures of curriculum, teaching, privilege, and inequity. We will look at how schools both reproduce and transform society and how society both reproduces and transforms schools. The class will be both theoretical and applied: we will use systems-thinking to identify points of intervention for creating empowering and equitable schools.

This class is targeted toward graduate students interested in the social context of education and/or educational equity.

This course is a wide-reaching survey course. Because of this we will only have the chance to read one or a couple of selected pieces on any given topic. I am selecting the pieces because I think they offer important, thought-provoking and challenging perspectives that will deepen our thinking, discussions and writing. I am also making an effort to include readings that are both critical sociological and cultural examinations of our current education system(s) as well as aspirational works that challenge us to transform our current system(s). Of course, we could (and some of you will) spend years studying just one of the many topics covered in the class. The course assignments, including an annotated bibliography, class presentations, and final paper, are all opportunities for you to delve more deeply into a chosen topical area and explore multiple perspectives.
Student Learning Outcomes

- Through engaged and critical reading, develop an understanding of the different functions of education in society, the socio-historical roots of those functions, and different perspectives on the functions of education in society.
- Understand some of the main axes of inequality in education in the U.S. and the ways in which education both reproduces and destabilizes those inequalities.
- Develop skills for thinking systemically and writing academically about educational issues and challenges, recognizing key points of intervention for education leaders, policy-makers, teachers, families, and communities.

Reading Materials

All reading materials will be provided on Canvas. Students are welcome to purchase books they are particularly interested in but there are no purchases required for this class.

Grading Components and Criteria

1) Participation, 15%. Your engagement and participation in this class are crucial both for your own learning and for the success of the class as a whole. I expect you to come to every session, and to share your thoughts in an open, respectful, and engaged way. In our first session we will read and talk about strategies and ground rules for communicating with each other about subjects that are personal and important. Your participation should be grounded in informed reading.

2) Weekly reading reflections, 25%. (2-3 pages, double-spaced). This class is an intimate seminar in which rather than learning ‘facts’ or listening to lectures we will be engaging in reflective conversations about education, guided by the readings we do for each week. Therefore it is critical that each student arrives to class having done the reading and ready to discuss them and their application to our thinking, research, and actions. We’ll read about 100 pages per week.

   Write a reflection on the readings and submit it to Canvas by noon each Monday before class. (Note: there is no reading reflection due in week 1).

   I have found that it is helpful to read and reflect with a few guiding questions in mind. Below is the list of questions I suggest. I do not expect you to discuss all of these questions for each reading (given the short length of the reflections). Please be sure to also use the reflection as a space to reflect on the weeks’ readings as a whole.
What is the context in which the scholar is writing? (biographical)  
What and who is the scholar in conversation with? (intellectual)  
What is the thesis/main contribution?  
What does this theory succeed in explaining?  
What does this theory miss?

All reflections that meet the guidelines will receive a check for full credit. If I have any concerns about your reflections I will discuss them with you and discuss how to make sure you are meeting expectations to receive credit for your reflections. You can miss one reflection (in a week of your choosing) and still receive full credit for the weekly reading reflections (don’t skip the reading for that week though!).

3) **Class leadership, 10%**. The first week of class we will establish a schedule so that each student will have a session in which they will be responsible for leading class for a portion of the class (45-60min). You must communicate with me by at least the Friday prior to your class session on Monday about what you plan on doing with your leadership time. Your leadership time should tie directly into the course topic for that week. I suggest you use your time creatively: bringing in outside articles or resources, organizing an activity, or preparing discussion questions.

4) **Annotated bibliography, 20%, due Friday, November 6th**. Write an annotated bibliography on a topic of your choosing related to the social and cultural foundations of education. I encourage you to choose a topic that is both interesting/engaging to you and that is useful for your advancement toward your dissertation. Please submit a brief 1-paragraph explanation of your topic and why you are selecting that topic by **Wednesday, October 21st**. I’ll confirm your topic by the following Monday at the latest. Your annotated bibliography should include the following sections:

- A brief (2-4 double-spaced pages) introduction that synthesizes the literature on your topic. Why does this topic matter? What are the main findings in the literature? What are the main gaps in the literature? How would you characterize the strength of the findings? Are there groups or sub-topics into which you would group scholarship on your topic? What are the main debates in the field?
- A bibliography of 8-12 publications. Please include important or seminal writings on your topic. You can also include more obscure publications that you have wanted to read.
- A brief (typically 1 paragraph) summary of each publication (argument, methods, findings, etc.) and a brief evaluation of each publication (strengths, weaknesses, questions).
5) **Final paper, 30%, due Monday, December 7th.** Please submit a brief 1-paragraph explanation of your topic and why you are selecting that topic **by Friday, November 13th.** I’ll confirm your topic by the next Monday.

Write an 8-12 page double-spaced paper about a topic of your choosing related to the social and cultural foundations of education. I encourage you, if at all possible, to include some original data and analysis in this project. This original analysis can be quantitative or qualitative (one or a couple of interviews, a small survey, analysis of extant data, etc). It is fine – even encouraged – for your final paper to build from your annotated bibliography, but it should not be a re-writing of your annotated bibliography. The expectation is that you will make this assignment interesting to you and helpful for your academic trajectory. Think about how you can use the paper to advance your own intellectual and professional agenda. What are you interested in exploring in your program? What issues brought you here in the first place? How can you configure this paper as an opportunity to examine some part of this larger agenda, in a way that will move you along intellectually and professionally? This is a good opportunity to explore some of the theoretical foundations of your dissertation topic.

**Final Grades**

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

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*Please note that if this class is taken P/NP, 80% or higher is required to pass the class and all class assignments must be completed.*

**Attendance and Absence Guidelines:** I expect you to be in class every session. We have only one meeting per week in a short ten-week quarter. If you need to be absent for some reason (illness, family emergency, or the like) please let me know with as much advance notice as possible. Attendance will factor into your participation grade.

**Interacting with me:** I welcome being in touch with each of you and hope you come and chat during office hours. I look forward to getting to know each of you better over the course of the quarter. That said, before you send an email, please make sure that you’ve first carefully checked to make sure that I haven’t already answered
your question either in the syllabus or in other course materials. I want the substance of our interactions to be meaningful and enjoyable.

**Course principles**

*Learning from each other:* Each of us—myself included—comes with limited perspectives on education. We gain depth of understanding by learning others’ views. For this reason it is imperative that we each try to listen and understand the perspectives of others, especially those with whom we disagree most strongly. This also means that you are responsible for teaching others. If you’re having trouble finding ways to bring your perspectives into the class conversations please see me so we can work this out.

*Sensitive topics and respectful disagreement:* This class involves topics that are often challenging to discuss (race, class, gender, immigrant status, identity issues of various sorts, privilege...). I welcome the creation of a dialogue that is open, thoughtful, and founded on the basis of research in the field and personal experience. At times, some of you will not agree on the positions that are taken. This diversity is welcomed. However, I ask that you exercise thoughtfulness, introspection, and respect both in our conversations in class and online.

*Work with me to make this course suit your needs:* There are plenty of worthwhile topics related to social and cultural foundations of education that are not included in this syllabus due to time limitations. And taking only the topics we do cover, there are many worthwhile perspectives that we will not explore. If you have interests that are not addressed in the syllabus, I encourage you to use the flexibility of assignments (especially the annotated bibliography and final paper) to address these.

________________________________________________________________________

* Adapted from Paul Skilton-Sylvester.
Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Notes:
• This calendar and reading assignments may change at the professor's discretion.
• Readings under a given date are to be completed by the time of class on that date.
• You can read in any order you like but I have ordered readings for each week in what I think may make the most sense.

Session 1 -- History of US Education
September 28


Optional / References:


Assignments Due: None.

Session 2 -- Perspectives on the Role of Education in the US, Part I
October 5


Optional/references:


Assignments Due: Reading reflection #1.

Session 3 -- Perspectives on the Role of Education in the US, Part II
October 12


Optional/references:


Assignments Due:

By noon before class (10/12): Reading reflection #2
October 14th: Annotated bibliography proposed topic

Session 4 -- What Gets Taught in School and Who Decides? Part I Curriculum and Standards
October 19


Assignments Due: Reading reflection #3.

**Session 5 -- What Gets Taught in School and Who Decides? Part II**
October 26


Optional/references:


Assignments Due:  
*By noon before class (10/26): Reading reflection #4*  
*October 30th*: Annotated bibliography

**Session 6 -- Teaching and Authority**
November 2


Optional/references:


Assignments Due: Reading reflection #5.

**Session 7 -- The Structure of Educational Opportunity Part I: Whiteness, Wealth and Privilege**

November 9


Assignments Due:

*By noon before class (11/9): Reading reflection #6*

*November 13th: Final paper proposed topic*

**Session 8 -- The Structure of Educational Opportunity Part II: Language and Immigration**

November 16


Optional/references:


Assignments Due: Reading reflection #7.

**Session 9 -- The Structure of Educational Opportunity Part III: Race and Ethnicity**
November 23


Optional/references:


Assignments Due: Reading reflection #8.

**Session 10 -- The Structure of Educational Opportunity Part III: Class and Disability, Gender, Sexuality**
November 30


Assignments Due:

Reading reflection #9

December 7th: Final paper
**Important Boilerplate Information:**

**Diversity**
It is the policy of the University of Oregon to support and value diversity. To do so requires that we:

- respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals.
- promote a culture of respect throughout the University community.
- respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others.
- reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind.
- practice personal and academic integrity and expect it from others.
- promote the diversity of opinions, ideas and backgrounds which is the lifeblood of the university.

**Documented Disability**
Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability and require accommodation, arrange to meet with the course instructor within the first two weeks of the term. The documentation of your disability must come in writing from the Accessible Education Center in the Office of Academic Advising and Student Services.
Disabilities may include (but are not limited to) neurological impairment, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, chronic medical conditions, emotional/psychological disabilities, hearing impairment, and learning disabilities. For more information on Accessible Education Center, please see http://aec.uoregon.edu

**Mandatory Reporting**
UO employees, including faculty, staff, and GTFs, are mandatory reporters of child abuse and prohibited discrimination. This statement is to advise you that that your disclosure of information about child abuse or prohibited discrimination to a UO employee may trigger the UO employee’s duty to report that information to the designated authorities. Please refer to the following links for detailed information about mandatory reporting:
https://hr.uoregon.edu/policies-leaves/general-information/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect/presidents-message

**Academic Misconduct Policy**
All students are subject to the regulations stipulated in the UO Student Conduct Code http://conduct.uoregon.edu). This code represents a compilation of important regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to student life. It is intended to inform students of their rights and responsibilities during their association with this institution, and to provide general guidance for enforcing those regulations and policies essential to the educational and research missions of the University.

**Conflict Resolution**
Several options, both informal and formal, are available to resolve conflicts for students who believe they have been subjected to or have witnesses bias, unfairness, or other improper treatment. It is important to exhaust the administrative remedies available to you including discussing the conflict with the specific individual, contacting the Department Head, or within the College of Education, you can contact Associate Dean for Research and Academics, at 346-1399 or lindstrm@uoregon.edu; or Surendra Subramani, student advisor, at 346-1782 or surendra@uoregon.edu.

- Outside the College, you can contact:
  - UO Bias Response Team: 346-1139 or http://bias.uoregon.edu/whatbrt.htm
  - Conflict Resolution Services 346-0617 or http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/SupportandEducation/ConflictResolutionServices/tabid/134/Default.aspx
- Affirmative action and Equal Opportunity: 346-3123 or http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/17

**Grievance Policy**
A student or group of students of the College of Education may appeal decisions or actions pertaining to admissions, programs, evaluation of performance and program retention and completion.
Students who decide to file a grievance should follow the student grievance procedure, or alternative ways to file a grievance outlined in the Student Grievance Policy (https://education.uoregon.edu/academics/student-grievance) or enter search: student grievance.

In Case of Inclement Weather
In the event the University operates on a curtailed schedule or closes, UO media relations will notify the Eugene-Springfield area radio and television stations as quickly as possible. In addition, a notice regarding the university’s schedule will be posted on the UO main home page (in the “News” section) at http://www.uoregon.edu. Additional information is available at http://hr.uoregon.edu/policy/weather.html. If an individual class must be canceled due to inclement weather, illness, or other reason, a notice will be posted on Canvas or via email. During periods of inclement weather, please check Canvas and your email rather than contact department personnel. Due to unsafe travel conditions, departmental staff may be limited and unable to handle the volume of calls from you and others.

Course Incomplete Policy
Students are expected to be familiar with university policy regarding grades of “incomplete” and the time line for completion. For details on the policy and procedures regarding incompletes, please see: https://education.uoregon.edu/academics/incompletes-courses