

Sociology 4431, Fall 2005: Sociology of Education

Section 1: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:10 pm-4:30 pm, 104 Audubon

Instructor: Professor Susan A. Dumais

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This class provides a broad overview of the field of sociology of education. We will study the history of schooling in the United States, and examine how sociological theories apply to the educational system. We will consider the role of family background, race and ethnicity, and gender on educational processes, and how education affects people's outcomes in life. We will also examine how schools are organized and how students are organized within schools. We will focus on current policy debates in the United States, such as school choice, special education, and affirmative action.

The format of this class will be a combination of lectures, discussions, debates, and videos. I know that education is a subject about which many people have strong and differing opinions, and I want to give you a chance to express your thoughts as often as possible. Additionally, the students in this class come from a wide variety of backgrounds in both sociology and education; I will try to incorporate these views in our lectures and discussions.

Required Books:

There are four required books for the course. The Ballentine and Spade book is a collection of readings on the sociology of education. The Kauffman and Hallahan book is a thin volume that provides a good overview of special education in the United States. The third and fourth books are case studies on particular issues in the sociology of education: Lareau studies social class differences in elementary school, and Eder studies popularity and gossip in junior high school. All books have been ordered at the LSU Bookstore in the Union, and you may also be able to find them discounted online at amazon.com or half.com.

Ballentine, Jeanne H., and Joan Z. Spade. 2004. *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*. Second Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Kauffman, James M., and Daniel P. Hallahan. 2005. *Special Education: What It is and Why We Need It*. Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon.

Lareau, Annette. 2000. *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Eder, Donna. 1995. *School Talk: Gender and Adolescent Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Course Website:

I use the Blackboard system to post slides from lecture, reading assignments, and any announcements that may come up during the semester. You should be able to access Blackboard through your PAWS account. After you log into PAWS, you will find the link to Blackboard under the “Student Services” category. I will try to post the lecture slides before each class, so that you have the option of printing out the slides, bringing them to class, and adding your own notes to them during lecture. Make sure to check the website regularly.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Grades for the class will be based on the following:

1. Class participation **15%**
2. Midterm exam **25%**
3. A literature review of selected research articles in the sociology of education **30%**
4. Final exam **30%**

Class Participation: Class participation has several components: attendance, general participation, presentation of readings, and debates.

You are expected to **attend** class regularly. I will take attendance on random days during the semester to ensure that students are coming to class, and if you miss class repeatedly, your grade will be affected.

You are also expected to **participate** in class discussions. I will often ask questions during my lectures, and there will also be questions about the readings—all students are encouraged to share their thoughts. You are expected to read the material assigned for each class meeting (or each week's meetings) before coming to class and to be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Participation is especially important on the days that I have set aside to discuss our two case studies: *Home Advantage* (**September 29 and October 4**) and *School Talk* (**November 8 and 10**).

Each student will be responsible for **presenting** on one set of readings. On the day we discuss a set of readings, the students responsible for them will present their thoughts on the readings and the main themes that the readings explore. The students will also prepare some discussion questions to ask the rest of the class. I will explain what I expect from you in more detail when I email you the list of the readings and the people assigned to them, and will also post this information on Blackboard. Whenever possible, I will try to do most of my lecturing on Tuesday, and leave Thursday for class discussions.

We will have three debates, all of which will be held on the last day of class (**December 8**). The topics are high-stakes testing, special education/inclusion, and school choice. Every student will participate in one of these three debates (that is, approximately 18 students will participate in the testing debate, 18 will participate in the special education debate, and 18 will participate in the school choice debate). For the debate in which you participate, you are required to submit a two-page (double-spaced) statement in which you argue for your position. The debates are meant to get you thinking critically about some of the issues we will be discussing in class. I will

distribute more information about the format and requirements for the debates a few weeks into the semester.

Exams: We will have a midterm exam (in class on **October 20**) and a final exam (**December 13**). The exams serve to make sure that you have done the readings, come to lecture, and have a basic understanding of the concepts we have discussed in class. The format of the exams will be a combination of definitions, short answer questions, and essays. If you miss an exam, *you must provide written documentation for an excusable absence within 24 hours of exam day*. Otherwise, you will not be permitted to take a make-up exam.

Literature Review: A one-paragraph description of the topic for your literature review is due in class on **November 8**, and the literature review itself is due at the final exam, **December 13**. If you would like to hand your paper in earlier than that (on the last day of class, for example), I will gladly accept it. The literature review should be a detailed, original, and integrated review of scholarly articles all related to the same topic within the sociology of education. Topics may involve an area that is covered in the class or another area related to the sociology of education. Examples of topics include: social promotion, testing, desegregation, and the role of community colleges. You are welcome to meet with me if you are having trouble thinking of a topic. I will give you much more information about the paper and its requirements in class on October 25.

Undergraduates must include at least 5 research articles in their literature reviews, and graduate students must have at least 10 sources. If you use a book, it will count as 2 articles; however, I prefer that you use articles rather than books. You may use materials from class, but they will not count toward the article total. In other words, if you include two class readings in your literature review, you still need to include five other sources that are not from class. Although the popular press includes a great deal of material about issues covered in class, the articles chosen for the review must come from high quality, social science or policy related journals. Students are encouraged to use the various indices available through the library computer system, such as JSTOR and ERIC, to choose their articles for review.

The literature review must include a full description of each article, including the author's purpose, major question, methodology, results, and conclusions. This description must not simply repeat the abstract provided by the author. The literature review should also compare the articles. The comparison should include the extent to and ways in which the conclusions of the articles are in agreement or disagreement, and other research questions that could emerge from the reading of these articles. It is fine to merge the summaries of the articles with the comparisons of the articles; this procedure often makes the paper flow more smoothly. For undergraduates, the literature review should be approximately 8 pages in length, and for graduate students, the papers should be between 15 and 20 pages long. All papers must be word processed and double-spaced, and should include a bibliography of all the articles that you have reviewed. Points will be deducted for extensive spelling and grammatical errors. For more information on literature reviews, I recommend consulting the book *Writing Literature Reviews* by Jose L. Galvan (Pyrzczak Publishing, 1999). There are also many sources available on the Web; you can find them by searching Google for "literature reviews" or "writing literature reviews."

All Louisiana State University students are responsible for observing the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. All cases of alleged academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

To summarize, the important dates to remember are:

October 20 Midterm
November 8 Literature Review proposal due (1 paragraph)
December 8 In-class debates; debate statements due
December 13 Literature Reviews due
December 13 Final Exam

Your responsibilities are:

1. Attend class regularly, do the readings, and participate in discussions
2. Present on one set of readings or book chapters (I will email you your assignment)
3. Participate in one debate on the last day of class (High-Stakes Testing, Special Education and Inclusion, or School Choice; I will email you your assignment)
4. Turn in a two-page position statement for the debate in which you participate
5. Turn in a one-paragraph proposal for your literature review on November 8
6. Write an 8-page literature review (15-20 pages for graduate students)
7. Take the midterm exam
8. Take the final exam

Course Schedule and Readings

8/23: Introduction: What is the Sociology of Education?

Ballentine and Spade pages xviii-xxii (from “What can Sociologists Tell Us About Education?” to the end of “Step 5: Feedback”)

8/25: A History of Schooling in the United States

In Class Video and Discussion: In Schools We Trust

9/6, 9/8: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives on Education and Society

Ballentine and Spade pages 1-5

Ballentine and Spade reading #1: “Theories in the Sociology of Education”

Ballentine and Spade reading #4: “Conflict Theory of Educational Stratification”

Ballentine and Spade reading #7: “Bridges to the Future: Contributions of Qualitative Research to the Sociology of Education”

9/13, 9/15: The Organization of Schools and Teachers

Ballentine and Spade pages 73-75

Ballentine and Spade reading #8: “How Schools Work”

Ballentine and Spade reading #9: “School Size and the Organization of Secondary Schools”

Ballentine and Spade reading #10: “Teaching in America: The Slow Revolution”

Ballentine and Spade reading #11: “The Status of Teaching as a Profession”

9/20, 9/22, 9/27: The Relationship between Social Class and Education

Ballentine and Spade reading #6: “Schooling in Capitalist Societies”

Ballentine and Spade reading #12: “Real School: A Universal Drama Amid Disparate Experience”

Ballentine and Spade reading #25: “American Schooling and Educational Inequality: A Forecast for the 21st Century”

Ballentine and Spade reading #43: “Education and Social Stratification Processes in Comparative Perspective”

Ballentine and Spade reading #27: “Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships”

Ballentine and Spade reading #21: “How Money Matters: The Effect of School District Spending on Academic Achievement”

Ballentine and Spade reading #24: “Public Schools and the Public Good”

Ballentine and Spade reading #33: “The National Head Start Program for Disadvantaged Preschoolers”

9/29, 10/4: Discussion of Lareau’s book

Lareau, *Home Advantage* (entire book)

10/11, 10/13: Race and Ethnicity and Schooling

Ballentine and Spade reading #22: “Comprehensive Reform for Urban High Schools”

Ballentine and Spade reading #29: “Everyday Schooling and the Elaboration of Race-Gender Stratification”

Ballentine and Spade reading #30: “Deepening Segregation in American Public Schools”

Ballentine and Spade reading #31: “The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions”

10/18: Gender and Schooling

Ballentine and Spade reading #23: “Through the Back Door: The History of Women’s Education”

Ballentine and Spade reading #28: “Gender and Education in the United States”

Ballentine and Spade reading #39: “Gender Inequality and Higher Education”

Ballentine and Spade reading #35: “Equitable Classrooms in a Changing Society”

10/20: MIDTERM

10/25: Instruction on your Final Papers

Guest Speaker from LSU Libraries

10/27, 11/1: Ability Grouping, Tracking, and Testing

Ballentine and Spade reading #26: “Tracking in Mathematics and Science: Courses and Course Selection Procedures”

In Class Video: Secrets of the SAT

11/3: Peer Groups, Dropping Out, and School Violence

Ballentine and Spade reading #15: “Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence”

Ballentine and Spade reading #16: “Are America’s Schools Safe? Students Speak Out”

11/8, 11/10: Discussion of *School Talk*

Eder, *School Talk* (Entire book)

November 8: LITERATURE REVIEW PROPOSAL DUE

11/15, 11/17: Higher Education

Ballentine and Spade reading #36: “The Stratification of the Academy”

Ballentine and Spade reading #37: “The Community College: The Impact, Origin, and Future of a Contradictory Institution”

Ballentine and Spade reading #38: “Student Protest and Multicultural Reform”

Ballentine and Spade reading #40: “The Soul of a New University”

Ballentine and Spade reading #44: “Global Challenge and National Response: Notes for an International Dialogue on Higher Education”

11/22, 11/24: No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

11/29, 12/1: Bilingual Education and Special Education

Ballentine and Spade reading #34: “Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning”

Kauffman and Hallahan (entire book)

In Class Video: What’s So Special About Special Education?

12/6: School Choice

Ballentine and Spade reading #45: “Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform”

Ballentine and Spade reading #32: “School Selection as a Process: The Multiple Dimensions of Race in Framing Educational Choice”

12/8: In Class Debates:

Debate 1: High-Stakes Testing

Debate 2: Special Education and Inclusion

Debate 3: School Choice

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 13, 7:30-9:30am

LITERATURE REVIEW DUE