

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION, EDUC453B

spring 2024, Thursday 2:30-5:20pm,

professor: dr. nadirah farah foley

email: [on website]¹

office: [on website]

office hours²: by appointment [calendly]

course description

There are few institutions that nearly all Americans pass through, and schools are one of them; around fifty million students are enrolled in preK-12 schooling in the United States. As such, schools are an institution deserving of rigorous scrutiny and careful interrogation. But in studying K-12 schools, we are in fact attending to a multitude of things — competing visions of and purposes for schools, and disparate experiences of accessing and navigating education that are widely divergent along axes of inequality.

In this course, which will be conducted as a discussion-based seminar, we will engage with texts examining the enterprise of education from varied vantage points, but always through a sociological lens. We'll discuss the varied purposes theorists and practitioners envision for schools, and the extent to which schools live up to those ideals. We'll talk at length about how schools are a microcosm of many of the inequalities we see in the broader society, looking at issues of race, class, gender, and place. By taking a sociological lens to studying education, we'll learn a language and facility for rooting discussion of issues in education in theoretical grounding and empirical evidence. In so doing, students will develop the capacity to more critically assess scholarly research and public discourses on education, as well as their own experiences.

course goals

I expect that through this class, you will:

- **Gain an understanding** of major issues in U.S. K-12 education
- **Be able to explain** how education shapes and is shaped by processes of inequality
- Build comfort **analyzing and engaging** with scholarly literature and popular conversations about education
- Learn to **apply** sociological theories and empirical evidence relevant to education

course expectations

My goal as an instructor is to create a community of learners, of which I am one. I aim to foster a space conducive to learning and growth, to facilitate generative conversations, and to support you in furthering your academic goals. We will talk about topics that have the potential to be sensitive, with which we may have divergent experiences, and about which we may have differing points of view. I

¹ Email is the best way to reach me. I aim to respond to emails within 48 hours, excepting weekends. As a note: I do not respond to emails outside of normal working hours, nor do I expect students to read or respond to email on evenings or weekends. In the event of an emergency, I will send an email update/announcement via Canvas.

² "Office hours" are a time instructors block off for meetings with students to discuss a range of topics, including but not limited to course assignments, readings, and development as a scholar and professional. I welcome these meetings as an opportunity for us to chat one-on-one and for me to learn more about you and your goals. Office hours will be available remotely and in-person; the signup link will make clear which days are available in which format.

hope we will all challenge and push each other's thinking, while being sensitive to the fact that the classroom does not exist in isolation from, but in dialogue with, the wider world.

assignments and grades

Your final grade is based on your performance in the following content areas:

- 30% class participation (including discussion board posts)
- 10% discussion leadership
- 25% midterm paper
- 35% final paper (10% bibliography; 25% paper)

I use the College of Arts & Sciences' grading scale to determine final letter grades:

A+ 4.0 (97-100%)	C+ 2.3 (77-79%)
A 4.0 (93-96%)	C 2.0 (73-76%)
A- 3.7 (90-92%)	C- 1.7 (70-72%)
B+ 3.3 (87-89%)	D+ 1.3 (67-69%)
B 3.0 (83-86%)	D 1.0 (65-66%)
B- 2.7 (80-82%)	D-/F 0.7 (Below 65%)

(For Pass/Fail Option: Students must earn a C+ to receive credit)

assignment descriptions

class engagement

tl;dr: seminar participation + 8 weekly response memos (200-300 words for undergrads; 300-500 words for graduate students); collective note-taking 1x/semester

As this course is conducted as a seminar, active engagement and contribution will in large part determine how successful we are in achieving our individual and shared learning goals for the semester. In order to participate meaningfully, good preparation (in the form of careful reading of assigned texts) is key; that means reading actively, including taking notes, marking up your text, and noting places where you agree, disagree, are confused, or have questions. This [blog post](#) by Dr. Jessica Calarco on how to read academic work for meaning may be helpful. In addition, good class participation is evaluated not in terms of how *often* one speaks — I encourage a practice of monitoring one's own airtime — but in the quality of contributions one makes: how one builds on, extends, challenges, and elevates the other voices in the room and the discourse in progress. Speaking up in class is one important way of participating, but so too are the weekly response memos that are a requirement for this course, beginning in the **second** week.

Consistent attendance is expected. That said, I get that life happens, so you get one absence free and clear, no questions asked. Further absences will risk affecting your grade, lowering your grade by 0.3 points (on a 4.0 scale). Requests for excused absences (including religious observances, emergencies, illness) must be submitted in writing in advance of class; if you are ill, please let me know ASAP, but please **do not come to class if you are actively sick and/or contagious**. If you know in advance that you have to miss a class, I strongly encourage you to write a discussion board post that week so that we still have an opportunity to hear your voice on that week's topic and you and I have a chance to engage each other around the readings. Regardless, you are responsible for the materials covered in your absence; I encourage you to exchange contact information with a classmate who can

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catch you up in the event that you miss class. Finally, per University policy, I am required to notify your academic advisor(s) and the dean's office if you are absent three times.

weekly responses (200-300 words for undergrads; 300-500 words for graduate students)

Weekly responses will be posted to the course discussion board. These response memos should **not** be a summary (I've read the readings and trust that you have as well!), but rather an opportunity for you to think about and respond to the reading, highlighting a central insight, drawing out tensions, reactions, and lingering questions, or raising issues you'd like us to take up in the whole-class discussion. If you're feeling stuck, you may want to try an exercise from the [Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routines Toolbox](#). These memos are an opportunity for you to take intellectual risks, try out ideas, venture untested thoughts. While your responses can reference current events or personal experiences, your response should primarily focus on engaging the *text*, and should offer clear evidence that you read the assigned text(s). Responses that are broadly on topic but are mostly exposition of a personal experience will be marked down. As 8 response memos are required, there are 4 weeks during the semester when you will not post a response, of which one is the week during which you're leading discussion, and the other three are "passes" you can take whenever. You do not need to inform me that you're taking a pass, and you should not post a response on a week when you are leading discussion. **Memos are due by Wednesday at 5pm.**

Class participation and discussion board posts will be graded each week on a check-, check, check+ scale. A check- indicates that an effort was made but that the student's discussion board post was incomplete or did not fully meet expectation. A check indicates that that expectations were met, with the discussion board post or class contributions showing thoughtful engagement of the course texts. A check+ indicates that expectations were exceeded, with the student raising a particularly generative question or insight. As with in-class discussions, discussion board posts should focus primarily on the *text* and its core ideas, rather than using the text as a jumping-off point for discussion of a personal anecdote. The same is true for discussion board replies.

discussion leadership

Each student will be responsible for taking a more active role in our discussion for one week of the course. On the week when you are discussion leader, you are responsible for doing three things: **1) developing a list of key concepts and terms from the readings 2) reading the discussion board and synthesizing your peers' posts, pulling out 2-3 common themes, questions, and points of interest and 3) developing a list of 3-5 discussion questions focused on the readings (more on that below).** Armed with those three things, you should plan to lead approximately the first 30 minutes of class. The purpose of this brief and relatively informal exercise is to get the ball rolling on our discussion; you are not expected to be an expert on the week's topic.

By noon on the day of class, students must email me an outline of their key concepts, discussion questions, and discussion board synthesis. I encourage students to come to office hours before class to discuss any queries or concerns; this gives us an opportunity to talk one-on-one about the readings, and also chat informally outside of the classroom setting!

For ideas on how to frame generative discussion questions, I recommend consulting this [blog post](#). You also may consider using something from the [Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routines Toolbox](#) to structure one of your discussion questions. Discussion leadership will be evaluated on 1) whether the student submits their discussion questions on time and 2) whether their discussion questions are

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framed in such a way as to open up room for conversation. Good discussion questions may, for example, ask the class to reflect on their lived experience (not just share it, but think about how the text illuminates, complicates, or conflicts with it), deeply engage a key passage in the text, or apply an idea in the text to a real-world experience or problem. Questions that have a yes/no or only one correct answer, or that simply ask classmates to share experiences without connecting them back to the text, however, are unlikely to spark the kinds of conversation I hope we'll engage in together. You may also find [this post](#) helpful if you're interested in engaging the class in a structured activity to facilitate our discussion and learning.

midterm paper

For the midterm paper (**due 8 Mar 2024 @ 11:59pm**), you will write a reflective personal essay (approx. 1500 words), putting your own journey through PK-12 education in conversation with the readings. By that, I mean that you should think of your own biography as a text, and read it critically alongside at least one of the texts we're engaging together in class. For this assignment,

- 1) Some discussion of early childhood is fine, but your essay should focus primarily on your experience accessing/navigating formal education, up through high school
- 2) Narrow in: pick a theme/lens and pull that thread through rather than trying to touch on a myriad of topics. Your paper need not have an *argument*, per se, but it should have a *thesis*.
- 3) Engage texts thoughtfully: bear in mind that it is better to engage deeply with one reading than to sprinkle a few citations on ornamentally. For example, you might reflect on how some of the authors we've read think about what a school means, and how *you* think about what a school means. How did you learn to think of school that way? How has that shaped your trajectory?
- 4) As a heuristic for whether you're on the right track: I strongly suggest you use a text as a starting point for your paper rather than deciding what you'd like to write about and then shoehorning a text into your paper. If you could have written your paper before the start of this semester, it likely does not meet the terms of this assignment.

final paper

For the final paper (**due 2 May 2024 @ 11:59pm**), undergraduates will do the first assignment; graduate students will have a choice of assignments. To ensure you are making progress on these assignments before the end of the semester, regardless of which assignment you are completing, you are required to submit a **brief topic proposal by 4 Apr 2024** and an **abbreviated annotated bibliography, consisting of at least 5 sources, by 11 Apr 2024**.

1) Policy/Program Proposal

Students will write an 8-10 page (double-spaced) paper consisting of two parts. In the first part, you will identify a problem or area of social inequality related to education. In the second part, you will propose a policy aimed at ameliorating this problem / reducing this area of social inequality. Of note: my goal for this assignment is for you to identify a problem and then make a thoughtful and evidence-based suggestion for an intervention, which means that you should *not* start with an idea for an intervention and then try to find evidence to support it. The page count does not include a title page or references. The paper must include at least 10 scholarly sources.

a. Part 1:

- i. Motivate your project proposal and illustrate the topic's importance. Who's talking about this issue? What are they saying?

- ii. Situate the area of inequality in its social, historical, political, and economic context
- iii. Demonstrate how sociological theories relate to the area of social inequality or inefficiency you are focusing on
- iv. Synthesize the previous research on this topic
 1. Include at least 10 peer-reviewed sources (at least 15 for graduate students)

b. Part 2:

- i. Propose a policy, program, or practice
 1. Describe your proposed policy/program/practice, how sociological theory and research informs it, and how your policy/program/practice will be implemented.
 2. Outline the effects you imagine your program having, being clear about what sorts of schools/communities/groups will be impacted
 3. Forecast outcomes you anticipate, including potential unintended consequences
 4. Describe how your theory of action/change, any assumptions embedded in that, and any experiences and values that inform your policy/program/practice

2) Annotated Bibliography (graduate students only)

The annotated bibliography is an ideal assignment for an early-stage doctoral student homing in on their interests. For this assignment, you will first identify a topic or research question related to education. You will then identify no fewer than 20 sources that are most relevant. For each source, write a few sentences summarizing the main ideas of the source (theoretical framework? Data? Methods? Key findings?) and a few sentences explaining the relevance of the source to your research interests. The purpose of this assignment is to help you get a sense of the available information, identify unanswered questions, and consider relevant methodologies.

You will also need to write a brief abstract (150-250 words) summarizing your topic, the literature you're drawing on, and the gaps that remain.

additional information

covid considerations

WashU guidelines state that masks are optional, but I welcome anyone who prefers to mask, especially during the flu/cold season, to wear higher-quality masks, such as N95/KN95/KF94s. I also encourage anyone feeling under the weather to stay home and notify me that they will be absent.

deadlines

Submitting assignments by the appointed time allows your peers to respond to your memos and me to offer feedback in a timely fashion. Submitting work late without touching base with me in advance of the deadline will negatively impact your grade on the assignment. But I am sensitive to the fact that life happens. You will not be penalized for discussion board posts being a few minutes late, for example. For larger assignments: as long as you communicate in advance, you can have an additional 24 hours on either the midterm or final, no questions asked. At the end of the semester, there's less room for flexibility on deadlines, but if you are unable to make the deadline for the

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midterm or final assignment and need more than 24 additional hours, please email me ASAP requesting an extension. I do not want you to feel pressured to share personal/intimate information, so there is no need to go into great detail about what is going on, unless you are so inclined to share, and only insofar as knowing your circumstances allows me to create a more supportive learning environment.

accommodations

At Washington University, we strive to make the academic experience accessible and inclusive. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability, please contact the Disability Resources Office at (314) 935-5970 or disabilityresources@wustl.edu. If you have a VISA, please email a copy to me as soon as possible.

academic integrity

As you write assignments, please bear in mind the importance of acknowledging the sources from which you draw ideas — whether that be course texts, classmates, or class discussions. It is not plagiarism to borrow ideas, language, or knowledge from others — with proper citation/attribution. Failing to clearly and specifically acknowledge such borrowing, however, is to be avoided. For additional details on the university-wide Academic Integrity policy, see the policy [here](#). Please use whatever citation system — ASA, APA, Chicago, MLA — you are most comfortable with, and be consistent. (N.B. If you haven't already, I cannot recommend highly enough using a citation manager of some sort; I use Zotero, which is free and makes managing citations much easier, in my experience.)

In addition, please bear in mind that using an AI-content generator (such as ChatGPT) to complete coursework without authorization is a form of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact me to discuss the issue.

writing assistance: If you would like to seek out additional help on your writing, I encourage you to consult the staff of The Writing Center (writingcenter.wustl.edu) in Mallinkrodt Center. While I am happy to meet in office hours to discuss the substance of your papers, I am unable to read drafts prior to submission. The Writing Center is an excellent resource if you want feedback on the strength, clarity, organization etc. of your argument.

I. INTRODUCTION

18 Jan 2024: thinking sociologically about education

no assigned readings

25 Jan 2024: what are schools for?

ALL

- Labaree, David F. 1997. "Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals." *American Educational Research Journal* 34(1):39–81. doi: [10.2307/1163342](https://doi.org/10.2307/1163342). **Read closely through "social mobility" (section ends at the top of p. 58). Skim 58-69. Read the conclusion.**
- Guhin, Jeffrey, and Joseph Klett. 2022. "School beyond Stratification: Internal Goods, Alienation, and an Expanded Sociology of Education." *Theory and Society* 51(3):371–98. doi: [10.1007/s11186-022-09472-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-022-09472-6). **Read pgs 371-384 only**

GRADS

- Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Basic Books. Chapter 1: Beyond the Educational Frontier: The Great American Dream Freeze, pp. 3-17. [accessible via ARES]

II. PLACE: SCHOOLS IN COMMUNITIES

1 Feb 2024: pt. 1, urban schools

ALL

- Ewing, Eve L. 2020. *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. **Introduction, Ch. 1, What a School Means, Ch. 3, Dueling Realities** [accessible via ARES]

GRADS

- Cucchiara, Maia Bloomfield. 2013. *Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses When Schools Become Urban Amenities*. University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 3: Institutions of Last Resort** [available through library]

8 Feb 2024: pt. 2, suburban schools

ALL

- Lewis-McCoy, R. L'Heureux. 2014. *Inequality in the Promised Land: Race, Resources, and Suburban Schooling*. Stanford University Press. Chapters 1, 3, and 4 [available through library]

GRADS

- Diamond, John B., and Linn Posey-Maddox. 2020. "The Changing Terrain of the Suburbs: Examining Race, Class, and Place in Suburban Schools and Communities." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 53(1–2):7–13. doi: [10.1080/10665684.2020.1758975](https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1758975).

III. RACE

15 Feb 2024: whiteness and "colorblindness"

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ALL

- Hagerman, Margaret A. 2018. *White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America*. NYU Press. Chapters 1 & 3 [available thru library]
- Lewis, Amanda E. 2001. "There Is No 'Race' in the Schoolyard: Color-Blind Ideology in an (Almost) All-White School." *American Educational Research Journal* 38(4):781–811. doi: [10.3102/00028312038004781](https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004781).

22 Feb 2024: immigration, "model minorities," and Asian Americans

ALL

- Lee, Jennifer, and Min Zhou. 2015. *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*. New York, UNITED STATES: Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 1, 3, and 4. [available thru library]

GRADS

- Jiménez, Tomás R., and Adam L. Horowitz. 2013. "When White Is Just Alright: How Immigrants Redefine Achievement and Reconfigure the Ethnoracial Hierarchy." *American Sociological Review* 78(5):849–71. doi: [10.1177/0003122413497012](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413497012).

29 Feb 2024: "acting white," and being Black at school

UNDERGRADS: JIGSAW. Groups TBD

EVERYONE READ Carter (2006)

Aisha, Luke, Annika, Christian, Klara, Reyna read Tyson Intro + Ch 1

Maggie, Sam, Bella, Emily, Antonia, Molly, Joyce read Tyson Ch 2

- o Carter, Prudence L. 2006. "Straddling Boundaries: Identity, Culture, and School." *Sociology of Education* 79(4):304–28. doi: [10.1177/003804070607900402](https://doi.org/10.1177/003804070607900402).
- o Tyson, Karolyn. 2011. *Integration Interrupted: Tracking, Black Students, and Acting White after Brown*. New York: Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press USA - OSO. Introduction, Chapter 1, Ch 2 [available thru library]

Additional reading

- o Carter, Prudence L. 2003. "Black" Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth." *Social Problems* 50(1):136–55. doi: [10.1525/sp.2003.50.1.136](https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2003.50.1.136).

IV. CLASS

7 Mar 2024: Class, pt. 1

ALL

- Anyon, Jean. 1980. "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work." *The Journal of Education* 162(1):67–92.
- Golann, Joanne W. 2021. *Scripting the Moves: Culture and Control in a "No-Excuses" Charter School*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch 1: Intro [read pgs 1-15] [available through library]

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- Whitman, David. 2008. *Sweating the Small Stuff: Inner-City Schools and the New Paternalism*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Excerpt of Ch. 4, “Who We Are, Proud to Be, Amistad Academy,” pp. 96-113. [*You are required to read to p. 113 of the chapter; skim the rest if you wish.*]

14 Mar 2024: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

21 Mar 2024: Class, pt. 2

ALL

- Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2018. *Negotiating Opportunities: How the Middle Class Secures Advantages in School*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 [available through library]
- Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch 3, The Ease of Privilege [available through library]

GRADS

- Pick an additional empirical chapter from *Negotiating Opportunities* — either Chapter 3, 4, or 5

V. GENDER

28 Mar 2024

ALL

- Bettie, Julie. 2014. *Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity*. Berkeley, UNITED STATES: University of California Press. **Everyone read: Introduction, Chapter 3, and Chapter 6, pg 183- 189 only.** [available thru library]

GRADS

- Also read Ch 5

4 Apr 2024

ALL

- Pascoe, C. J. 2011. *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School, with a New Preface*. Berkeley, UNITED STATES: University of California Press. Ch. 1-3 [available thru library]

GRADS

- Also read Ch 4 and 6

11 Apr 2024: CLASS CANCELLED, AERA ANNUAL MEETING

In lieu of class this week, you are strongly encouraged to continue work on your final papers. As noted above, you are responsible for submitting an abbreviated annotated bibliography; instructions will be forthcoming about what you should have submitted by the end of the day on Thursday, 11 Apr.

VI. BEYOND THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOOR

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18 Apr 2024: the Universal Carceral Continuum

ALL

- Shedd, Carla. 2015. *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 1 and 4 [available through library]

GRADS

- Wallace, Derron. 2018. "Safe Routes to School? Black Caribbean Youth Negotiating Police Surveillance in London and New York City." *Harvard Educational Review* 88(3):261-286.
- *Unequal City*, methods appendix

VII. IMAGINED FUTURES

25 Apr 2024: searching for goodness in schools

JIGSAW: groups TBD by 18Apr2024

- Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. 1981a. "Portraits of Exemplary Secondary Schools: George Washington Carver Comprehensive High School." *Daedalus* 110(4):17-37.
- Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. 1981b. "Portraits of Exemplary Secondary Schools: Highland Park." *Daedalus* 110(4):59-80.
- Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. 1981c. "Portraits of Exemplary Secondary Schools: St. Paul's School." *Daedalus* 110(4):97-116.