SOED-GE 2371: SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND EDUCATION
Spring 2018
Professor Sean J. Drake
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Office Hours: By appointment
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Class Schedule: Wednesday, 6:45 p.m. – 8:25 p.m., Bldg.: 25W4 | Room: C-1

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course examines the ways in which social inequality begets educational inequality, and how educational inequality reproduces social inequality in broader society. Drawing primarily from sociological scholarship, the course will review some of main academic debates on the nature of links between social and educational inequality. Students will engage these debates by studying classic and contemporary theories and case-study research in these areas. Students will come to recognize the structural forces of inequality in neighborhoods and schools, and how those forces contribute to unequal opportunities, experiences, and achievement outcomes for students along lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, and immigration status. Specific topics to be covered include neighborhood and school segregation, culture, networks, stereotypes, and immigrant assimilation patterns.

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class participation: 20%
1 in-class presentation: 10%
8 critical summaries (optional, in lieu of final paper): 70%
Final paper proposal (only for those writing final paper): 10%
Final paper (optional, in lieu of critical summaries): 60%

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In-Class Presentations and Participation: Each student will be responsible for making one 20-minute in-class presentation based on the weekly readings. Presentations can be made alone or in groups of 2. The student(s) will start with a summary and synthesis of the main points of the readings, identification of the key issues that the authors raise. Presenters should also pose at least 2 questions to the class based on the readings. Presenters should endeavor to formulate questions that will stimulate a lively discussion in class, and the thoughtfulness of these questions will be part of my assessment of each presentation. Questions should be emailed to me by 9:00AM on the day of class. It is important to understand how the authors engage with one another – both within and across weeks of course material – and presentations should keep this in mind.

Each week, every student, regardless of whether they are a discussion leader or not, will be expected to actively participate in class and critically engage in the debates that the authors
raise, as well as their classmates’ reactions to those debates. Active participation is critical to the success of every graduate seminar.

**Critical Summaries OR Final Paper:** You may write 8 critical summaries for this course, although you may write more if you wish, and your 8 highest scores – graded on a scale from 1 to 10 – will be counted toward your final grade. The summaries should be approximately three double-spaced pages in length (approximately 800 words), and reflect a short synopsis, critical reading, and synthesis of the assigned texts. As you write your reflections, here are some questions to consider: what main points do the authors make, and based on what data? How do the authors inform and engage with each other? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the authors’ arguments? What might a follow up study look like? Finally, please include in your summary at least one question that you have after reading the week’s material. Keep this question(s) in mind as you come to class. Summaries should be turned in to me in paper form at the beginning of each class period.

Alternatively, you may choose to write a final research paper of about 20-25 double-spaced pages (approximately 6,000 words). You may choose any topic related to social inequality and education, but the topic must relate to and integrate readings from the syllabus as well as at least 5 sources that are not included on the syllabus. Papers should focus on the ways in which the authors engage with one another. The paper can be written as a literature review, but please conclude by proposing a research project based on the work outlined and compared in the paper. The research proposal component of the final paper should be about 3 pages, and should touch on elements of the proposed project such as research questions, a paragraph or two about why the proposed study would be important, and methods. Please email your final papers to me; I will return them to you electronically, with comments and a letter grade.

**Final Paper Proposal:** Students will submit a 2-page summary of your research topic, why you are choosing this topic (i.e. why others should care about this issue), and how you plan to approach it. Also include the class and outside references you plan to use. Please do not email your paper proposal to me; proposals are due at the beginning of class in week-7. If you plan to address a topic that appears later in the syllabus, you will need to plan accordingly. I am happy to discuss paper topics during office hours.

Whether one chooses to write critical summaries or a final paper, the goal of these exercises is to practice academic writing, which is based on comparing existing research findings, identifying gaps in our current knowledge, posing salient questions, and answering the questions posed. Please choose a form of writing – critical summaries or final paper – that you feel will be most useful to you.

**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**

**Deadlines:** All assignment deadlines are firm. I will not grant extensions, except in the case of an emergency. Papers are considered late if they do not meet the time deadline (e.g., a paper due at the beginning of class is due promptly at 6:45 p.m.). For each day that a paper is late, the final grade will be lowered by one-third of a grade (e.g., an A- becomes a B+ if a paper is one day late).
Proofreading: In this course, students will practice the critical skill of reading academic writing and distilling that information into the most pertinent findings and implications of the work, and the ways in which the authors inform and engage with each other. This process will hone students’ writing skills in ways that will be advantageous in graduate school and beyond. As such, proofreading your work is absolutely essential. Please do not submit written work that has not been thoroughly proofread for grammatical errors, formatting, and clarity.

Academic Integrity: All students are responsible for complying with the NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity. A copy is available at:
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

Students with Disabilities: Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation. Please see:
https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-andgroups/students-with-disabilities.html

Citation Style: Please use APA style for your work. Please consult a manual for citation help. A good online resource can be found here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

REQUIRED TEXTS

This course features 10 required books, which are listed below in the order in which we will read them. We will also read a few journal articles and selected book chapters, which are included in the course outline.

The complete, chronological list of books is as follows:


**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1 (1/24): Course Introduction**

**Week 2 (1/31): Foundations of Social and Educational Inequality**


**Week 3 (2/7): Social Reproduction: How Schools Reproduce Social Inequality**


Week 4 (2/14): Oppositional Culture?: Arguments and Counter-Arguments


Week 5 (2/21): Whose Culture Has Capital?


Week 6 (2/28): Structuring Failure and Success


Week 7 (3/7): Race and Gender in Urban, Underclass Neighborhood Schools

*final paper topic due: Submit a 2-page summary of your research topic, why you are choosing this topic (i.e. why others should care about this issue), and how you plan to approach it. Also include the class and outside references you plan to use. What research questions will your paper address? Do you have any original data that you wish to include, or will you be writing the paper as a literature review and research proposal? Include the full citation for at least 3 sources that you have identified and plan to use that are not included on the syllabus.


**Week 8 (3/21): The Experience of Segregated Schools**


**Week 9 (3/28) Desegregation Without Integration**


**Week 11 (4/11): The Rich Get Richer: The Culture of Elite Schooling**


**Week 12 (4/18): Stereotypes and the Racialization of Achievement**


Week 13 (4/25): Immigrant Dreams and American Realities

Week 14 (5/2): Class Wrap-Up