

University of Georgia
College of Education
Social Foundations of Education
EFND 7120: Sociological Theories of Education
Fall 2007

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Office Hours: Wed. 3:30 to 4:30 pm and by appointment

Course Description

The tension between human agency and social structure is a common theme in social research. People do not always control the material circumstances of their lives, the choices they make, the social parameters of their existence. This tension is clearly evident when we examine formal education from a sociological perspective. In this course we will undertake a critical analysis of the intersections of identity, schooling and society, within social institutions including the family, the economy, and the polity. Student's research interests and their work experiences will provide part of the focus for our collective inquiry as we grapple with political crosscurrents in education and schooling practices.

Education and schooling practices, the persistence of class and racial stratification, are often viewed as the rubric under which inequities in American society persists. We will examine how sociological theorists critique the U.S. social order. Social theorist use different theory construction and evaluation principles to explain individuals in various social settings. One particular context we will study is the relationship between American schools and society and the role both play in mediating stratification on the one hand, and democratic ideals, on the other.

Course Objectives:

Study how citizens become socialized into society; schools.

Examine how single-cause theories (e.g., class) are inadequate for explaining life chances, schooling success and failure.

Critique how education and school structures, school culture and pedagogical practices are influenced and shaped by American culture.

Examine the role of social institutions outside of school, (e.g. family, religion, peers) play in shaping formal and informal definitions of the sociology of knowledge.

Required Texts and Readings

These books can be purchased from the UGA bookstore and the FTX Bookstores on Baxter Street. Additional articles will be placed on reserve.

Texts:

1. Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class*. Berkeley CA.: University of California Press.
2. Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
3. Lemert, C. (2001). *Social things: An introduction to the sociological life (2nd ed.)*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Inc.

Grade Distribution

As much as possible, I will follow the class outline in chronological order as a reference point for class discussions. However, I may make changes in the assignments and grade distribution if necessary but will allow you enough time to make necessary adjustments.

Class Lead 20% (10% ea.)
Midterm Exam 30%
Final Exam 30%
Class Participation 5%
Critique 15%

Appendix

The readings contain the classical and contemporary sociological themes and central ideas of social theory and education. Though broad, social theory relates largely to social order or how society as a whole is held together. Theorist contributions to studying and critiquing social order can problematize order in its attempt to explain it. The goal of this course is not to convert you into sociologists, but to better equip you to recognize the social forces that guide, constrain and govern your behavior both consciously and unconsciously. Why is this important? It provides a foundation upon which we can develop our own philosophy of education, teaching, and research. Understanding theory enables us to not only know what it is we do in our daily lives (at work and home), but WHY we do what we do.

To get through the readings, you much develop a strategy. Read carefully and try to get the main idea of the author's work. When you have mastered this, you will be able to read faster and with

more confidence. There are several concepts you should keep in mind while reading:

1. A central concept of class is power.
2. A second concept of authority also relates to power
3. A third concept of the social order is the State.
4. A fourth concept is difference
5. A fifth concept is identity.

As a guide to reading:

1. What is/are the main argument(s) proposed by the author(s)?
2. Why are the issues important?
3. Do you agree, or disagree? Why?
4. What other work corresponds to, or differs from, what you are reading? Describe.

One important writing distinction is between the active voice and passive voice. The active voice is simpler, and it makes clear what you and others are saying. It pushes you to “take a position” and explain why you take a certain position. I am aware that some of you are familiar with using the passive voice. One explanation given for its use is that it supposedly signals “objectivity.” I would prefer that those of you who are “passive writers” liberate yourself and give an active “voice” to your ideas, opinions, and theories.

A Note on Plagiarism and Cheating: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are extremely grave ethical violations. All students are to be aware of the University Academic Honesty Policy. In this course, any instance of academic dishonesty will result in referral to the administration for disciplinary action in accordance with university policies. All students should review the guidelines at the website:

http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_hoesty/culture_honesty.htm.