

**WELLESLEY COLLEGE  
SOCIOLOGY 207**

**SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY**

**Fall 2018  
Monday's, 6-8:30pm  
Pendleton Hall East 139**

**Dr. Ethel Mickey**

Department of Sociology  
Pendleton East 334

[emickey@wellesley.edu](mailto:emickey@wellesley.edu)

Office Hours: Monday's, 3-5pm and by appointment

**Course Description**

Why does everyone go to school in the United States? How does the culture of a school shape the learning environment, and why do school cultures vary? Why do some students learn more than others? Do peers matter and how? How do schools perpetuate inequalities along lines of class, gender, and race? How does the "hidden curriculum" shape the educational experiences of students? How does the US school system compare to the education systems of other countries? What makes it so hard to bring about change in schools? Questions like these drive this course. This course is an introduction to the sociology of education, broadly exploring the role of education in American society. The course will cover key sociological perspectives to education, including conflict theory, functionalism, and human and cultural capital. Topics will include schools and communities, the role of teachers and students, educational inequalities (including tracking and measures of achievement), school violence, and school reform.

**Learning Goals:**

- 1) To introduce students to the sociological approach to education as an institution
- 2) To familiarize students with key research in the sociology of education
- 3) To develop a critical analytical approach to education, understanding of some fundamental problems with the contemporary US education system
- 4) To develop a sociological understanding of your own educational career
- 5) To engage in active and collaborative learning
- 6) To refine skills in active reading, critical thinking, and verbal and written expression

**Course Materials:**

Required Text

*The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of Education*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.  
Richard Arum, Irene R. Beattie, and Karly Ford, editors. Sage.

*\*Please make sure you purchase the most recent edition, available at the Wellesley College Bookstore. The reader is also available for rent through Amazon at a discounted rate.*

All other required readings will be posted on Sakai.

## **Course Requirements:**

### **1. Attendance, participation & discussion questions**

You are expected to attend class, to have completed required readings ahead of time, and to participate in class discussions. You will be most successful in the course if you participate in active reading. As you read, identify the main argument(s) the author is making, key concepts and their definitions, and examples. Avoid highlighting and instead take reading notes that summarize the material in your own words. Making outlines of the chapters and articles is often helpful. Prepare questions you want to raise in advance of class discussions.

Attendance: I will not be grading your attendance but keep in mind that more than 2 unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade. As we only meet once per week, our class time is valuable. Powerpoint slides and handouts will be posted on Sakai, but I will not review course materials outside of class. If you will be missing class for a religious day of observance, please fill out the new College form online [here](#) by September 14 and we will make arrangements for any work you will miss.

Participation: **This is not a lecture course!** At times, I will provide key course concepts and information during short lectures, but you are expected to be actively engaged in discussion. As this is a small class, it will be evident when students have not done the reading. Failure to participate and contribute to the class discussion will impact your overall grade assessment negatively. Please come and see me right away if you anticipate any concerns with participation. I encourage you to ask questions in class. Please try to remember that if you have questions, other fellow students are likely to have the same question. Thus, no question is too basic! You can also post your questions on the Sakai discussion forum (and I encourage you to do so, as other students can benefit from the question and response).

Discussion Questions: Each week, you will be asked to post short paragraph responses to discussion questions on Sakai. All discussion question responses are due by **3pm on the day of the class.**

### **2. Reflection Paper**

One short (3-4 pages, double-spaced) reflection paper on the readings will ask you to connect course materials and discussions to your personal experiences. You will reflect on what you have learned from specific readings, what further questions or issues have been raised for you, and how the readings relate to your own schooling and education. I will provide more information and a rubric in class. **The reflection paper will be due on Friday 9/28 by 5pm.**

### 3. Midterm and final exams

The exams will cover material discussed in the course reader, other readings, lectures, and class discussions. The exams will include a combination of multiple choice and short essay questions. The best way to prepare for the exams is to complete the readings, take notes, and be an active participant in class. The midterm will cover material from the first half of the semester, and the final will cover material from the second half only (the final is **not** cumulative). **The mid-term will be in-class on 10/22. The final exam will be self-scheduled.** More information will be provided in class.

### 4. Generational Differences in Education: Interview project

You will interview 2 members of the same family from different generations about their educational experiences (you can interview your family members: for example, a grandparent and a sibling). What kinds of schools did they attend, and in what types of communities? What is their highest level of education? How did they perform in school? What was their relationship like with teachers, other students? Record the interviews, take notes, and then write a 5-7 page, double-spaced paper of analysis. Identify similarities and differences in their experiences, and offer sociological explanations as to why these patterns exist. The goals of this assignment are for you to practice engaging in primary data collection and sociological research, and to incorporate concepts and theories from course readings and discussions to connect personal histories to social structures. More information and a rubric will be provided in class. **The interview project will be due on 11/19.**

## Grades

Attendance, participation & discussion questions	20%
Reflection Paper	10%
Midterm	20%
Interview Project	25%
Final Exam	25%

## Ground Rules:

**Courtesy and respect:** I expect all of us to treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. The classroom should be a comfortable learning environment for all of us. This necessitates that we each take responsibility for keeping the classroom free of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation. Debate and disagreements can (and should) occur during the collective learning process, as we will tackle some controversial issues. However, please be advised that all students are expected to respect each other's differing points of views. Students who are disruptive or disrespectful may be asked to leave the class meeting. In addition, arriving late and leaving early are distracting to those around you.

**Laptops and Electronics:** No laptops or electronics are allowed in this course, unless you have a documented need or injury that requires accommodation. I encourage you all to bring a notebook to class for note-taking, and we will often do in-class writing assignments. Please turn your cell phones off or on silent prior to the beginning of class. No audio or video recordings of class or photographs are permitted without the instructor's permission.

**Lateness and extension policy:** Work submitted late will be deducted one letter grade for each day late (B+→B, and so on), unless it is excused *in advance* via email. In general, extensions will be granted only for serious, unexpected life events that are outside of your control, like medical or family emergencies, but not interviews, recruiting, or other school work, tests, or extracurricular. Please plan ahead and communicate with me if you think you will have difficulty meeting a deadline.

**E-mail etiquette:** E-mail is one of the primary ways you will communicate with me outside of class when you have questions or need to set up a meeting time. I do my best to answer emails promptly, however, I am not available via email 24/7. If you email me after 6:00pm on weekdays, I will answer you by the next morning. If you email me on the weekends, I will answer by Monday morning. If it is an urgent matter, put "Urgent" in the subject heading.

**Food:** I recognize our class period is long, and I will try to take a mid-way break during each session for us to stretch, use the bathroom, or have a snack. Please try to avoid eating in class except during this break time, as it can be distracting to others.

**Accommodations and Disability Access.** All of us learn in different ways and with varying degrees of success. It is my job to help each and every one of you learn. Disabilities will always be accommodated. If you know of any factors that may hinder your ability to complete this course successfully, or if you will need accommodations for a documented disability or other appropriate reason, please let me know as soon as possible. Any student with disability accommodation needs should also contact [disabilityservices@wellesley.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@wellesley.edu) during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services, Clapp Library 316, Phone: (781) 283-2434.

**Academic Support:** I encourage you all to take advantage of the academic support resources provided by The Pforzheimer Learning & Teaching Center (PLTC). These resources include peer tutors, academic success coaches, and online materials with tips on test-taking, time management, etc. Visit the PLTC on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Clapp Library, or <http://wellesley.edu/PLTC/>. The Writing Program also has peer Writing Tutors who will work with you one-on-one to workshop papers: <http://www.wellesley.edu/writingprogram/tutors>. Finally, seek me out whenever you need help, by email or in person. Please make use of my office hours! We can arrange meetings by appointment if the regular office hours are not convenient for you. I am eager to help you with course material, but you must take the initiative and ask for assistance.

**The Honor Code, Academic Integrity, and Plagiarism:** All students are expected to abide by the Wellesley Honor Code, and any form of plagiarism, lying, cheating, or other academic

dishonesty will not be tolerated and could result in a failing grade for the assignment or course or further disciplinary sanctions. We will discuss what kinds of actions constitute academic dishonesty in class, including plagiarism. To learn more about plagiarism, I also encourage you to read the [Writing Program's statement](#) and the [library's Guide to Citing Sources](#).

### **Weekly Course Schedule:**

**Reminder: Discussion Questions due on Sakai by 3pm the day of class.**

*Updates to the weekly reading schedule will be announced in advance and posted on Sakai. All readings are chapters in the Arum reader unless otherwise noted.*

#### **I. How Do Sociologists Study Schools?**

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| 9/10 | Introduction to the course – What is the role of education in society?<br>No readings due.   |
| 9/17 | Theoretical Perspectives I – Functional and Conflict Theories of Education<br><u>Read:</u> Weber (1); Turner (3); Durkheim (8); Collins (10); Bowles, Gintis & Meyers (11); and Harry L. Gracey, “Learning the Student Role” (Sakai) |
| 9/24 | Theoretical Perspectives II – Human, Social, and Cultural Capital<br><u>Read:</u> Becker (5); Lamont & Lareau (6); Coleman & Hoffer (7); and Prudence Carter, “Black Cultural Capital and the Conflicts of Schooling” (Sakai)        |

**Due: Reflection Paper due Friday 9/28 by 5pm via Sakai.**

#### **II. School Organization and Processes**

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|-------------|---|
| 10/1        | Teachers, Classrooms, School Structures & Processes<br><u>Read:</u> Entwistle et al. (16);<br>Ingersoll & Collins, “The Status of Teaching as a Profession” (Sakai);<br>Maureen Hallinan, "Tracking: From Theory to Practice." (Sakai);<br>Jeannie Oakes, "More Than Misapplied Technology: A Normative and Political Response to Hallinan on Tracking."(Sakai);<br>Snyder & Broadway, “Queering High School Biology Textbooks” (Sakai) |
| <b>10/8</b> | <b>FALL BREAK - NO CLASS</b>  |
| 10/15       | Schools and Communities<br><u>Read:</u> Coleman Report (13); Orfield et. al (15)<br>Matthew Delmont, “The Lasting Legacy of the Boston Busing Crisis” (Sakai); (more on next page)  |

James Vaznis, "Boston's Schools are becoming Resegregated" (Sakai)  
N.R. Kleinfield, "Why Don't We Have Any White Kids?":  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/13/education/at-explore-charter-school-a-portrait-of-segregated-education.html>

10/22            **MID-TERM EXAM (in class)**

### III. Education and the Reproduction of Inequalities

- 10/29            Social Class & Economic Diversity in Education  
Read: Willis (22); Khan (12); Lareau (23); Stevens (47)
- 11/5             Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration in Education  
Read: Lewis (29); Tyson (17); Fordham & Ogbu (25); Gonzales (48)
- 11/12            Gender & Education  
Read: Thorne (32); Bettie (24); Paula England and Su Li, "Desegregation Stalled" (Sakai)
- 11/19            Gender, cont'd: Masculinity, Bullying, and School Violence  
Read: Pascoe (36); Excerpt from Katherine S. Newman's, "Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings" (Sakai)  
**Due: Interview Project**
- 11/26            Higher Education  
Read: Armstrong & Hamilton (41); Brint & Karabel (45)  
Excerpt from Tressie McMillan Cottom's *Lower Ed* (Sakai)

### IV. Educational Reform and Social Change

- 12/3             School Choice and Market-Based Solutions  
Read: Jennings (50); Condron & Roscigno, "Disparities Within" (Sakai); Klein, "Are Charter Schools the Future of School Desegregation?" (Sakai); Dynarski, "Urban Charter Schools Often Succeed, Suburban Ones Often Don't." <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/upshot/a-suburban-urban-divide-in-charter-school-success-rates.html>
- 12/10            Future Directions & Social Change  
Read: Binder (51); Michael W. Apple, "Can schooling contribute to a more just society?" (Sakai); William Bigelow, "Inside the Classroom: Social Vision & Critical Pedagogy (Sakai)

**Final Exam: Self-Scheduled, more information will be provided**