

San José State University
SOCIOLOGY/SOCIAL SCIENCE 177:
Sociology of Education
Spring 2020

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Maria Luisa Alaniz, Ph.D.
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Email:	maria.alaniz@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesday: 3:00 – 3:30 and 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	T-Th @ 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. (1); T @ 6:00 – 8:45 p.m. (2)
Classroom:	T-Th (1) DMH 226A; T (2) DMH 231

Course Description

This course will provide an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis and critique of the education system in the United States. We will focus on sociology of education theory to assist us in identifying and examining the relationship between society and education. We will explore issues such as the role of schools in socialization, social certification, institutional legitimation, cultural capital, social capital, inequality in educational/occupational outcomes and formation of individual values.

We will also examine issues specific to race/ethnicity, class and gender in the U.S. educational system. In particular, we will look at historical and contemporary factors that positively and negatively affect the educational experience of students of color. We will examine issues related to the academic achievement (opportunity) gap, attrition and retention, sexism in the classroom and the exclusionary curriculum.

Throughout the semester we will explore the effects of micro-level student-teacher interaction, specifically the short and long-term effects of positive reinforcement (praise, recognition) and negative reinforcement (neglect, criticism) on a student's sense of self and subsequent academic achievement. We will also discuss the critical role of the teacher in creating an inclusive classroom culture conducive to the learning of all students. Finally, we will look at the teacher's role and agency in education policy issues.

This course will combine lecture, group work and class discussion. Active participation is expected on a regular basis. In order to apply theory to practice, the course includes a fieldwork component. You will be required to engage in a minimum of twenty-five hours of observation and/or participation in a public-school classroom.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define the major theories that serve as the foundation of sociology of education.
2. Use an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to analyze and critique the US educational system.
3. Explain the social causes and effects of inequity in the US educational system.
4. Use social theory to analyze teacher classroom practices that foster or hinder academic achievement.
5. Identify and analyze current topics and policy issues in education and their implications.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

Ballantine, Spade and Stuber, *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*, Sage Publication, 2018 (Sixth Edition)

McNamee, Stephen J., *The Meritocracy Myth*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018 (Fourth Edition)

Course Policies

By definition, if you are going to participate and benefit from the class it is necessary that you be fully present. It is essential that you attend each class session and that you come prepared to discuss, question and/or critique the ideas expressed by the authors and the instructor.

Completion of reading assignments prior to the designated class session is critical to your participation. In order to get the full benefit of the class, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assigned for the week. To that end, it is essential that you analyze the readings and come to class with your contributions, inquiries and comments.

YOU are responsible for all material presented in class whether or not you are present. Students are responsible for all assignments and announcements presented in class. If you are late or absent, it is your responsibility to contact another student. Assignments are collected in class on the day designated in the course syllabus. **I have a no late work policy.** I will make exceptions for extenuating circumstances; accommodations for submittal of the assignment must be made prior to the due date. If you have an extenuating circumstance; please schedule a time to discuss the issue. **I do not accept assignments via email.** Bring a hard copy of your assignment on the day it is due.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, reading or course related activities, including school site field work (25 hours/semester).

Course Assignments and Grading

In Class Participation (10 points)

Attendance and engagement in thoughtful discussion regarding the readings is essential to the learning process. Since you are a product of the K-12 educational system, you have relevant experience to participate in a critique of the perspectives presented in class. Your participation and sharing will greatly enhance the understanding and analysis of the course content. I will take attendance.

*Please note: If you engage in inappropriate use of **technology** during class time you will be marked absent for the day; please put your electronic devices away during class time unless otherwise indicated. Improper use of technology during class time will be reflected in your grade.

Four Take-home Assignments (40 points)

Four times in the semester you will be asked to respond to a set of questions regarding the readings, documentaries, class discussions and fieldwork. The take-home assignment will require that you analyze, contrast and synthesize the course material covered in the previous weeks. This assignment will not require rote memorization but rather critical reflection. I am interested in your perspective and interpretation of the course material. You will have one week to submit the 3-page assignment. Due dates are in the syllabus.

Group Discussion Facilitation (10 points)

Once or twice in the semester you will be required to facilitate a small group discussion and submit a review specific to one of the chapters in “The Meritocracy Myth.” We will have sign-ups and more details regarding this activity in class.

Field Work in Public School Setting (K – 12) (40 points)

You are required to spend a minimum of 25 hours in a public-school classroom (elementary, junior high or high school). The purpose of this assignment is three-fold: 1) observation in a public-school classroom; 2) if requested; provide a service to the teacher (i.e. tutoring, grade papers) and 3) apply the theories, concepts and research we discuss in class to a K-12 public school setting.

Field Work Assignments

Mid-term: School Site Descriptive Overview/Contract (15 points)

You are required to secure a K-12 public school site by the third week of the semester. We will discuss this assignment in class. In the first half of the semester you will collect demographic data on your fieldwork/school site and surrounding community. Mid-term assignment: 1) a four-page descriptive overview of your school site and surrounding community and 2) school site contract.

Final: Field Work Report: Observation, Analysis and Evaluation (25 points)

You will engage in observation/service in a classroom at your school site; as you observe the classroom structure and social interaction you will identify manifestations of the theories we discuss in class (i.e. labeling) Final assignment: 1) a 5-page report using a social theory to analyze and critique your fieldwork/classroom experience, 2) a 5-minute power point presentation/overview of your fieldwork/classroom experience, 3) fieldwork evaluation form completed by and signed by the teacher and 4) a copy of your thank you note/card/email to the teacher.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>93 – 99</i>	<i>93 to 99%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 - 92</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 - 89</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 - 85</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 - 82</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 - 79</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 - 75</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 - 72</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>63 to 65</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D minus</i>	<i>60 to 62</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

Course Schedule

The schedule is subject to change with fair notice. If a change occurs an announcement will be made in class and via Canvas.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/23 - 30	Welcome, Overview and Introduction to the Course
2	2/4-6*	Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education Reading: Introduction <i>*Fieldwork orientation session</i>
3	2/11-13	1. What is Sociology of Education? Theoretical Perspectives Readings 1 – 3 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter 1 <i>*Select a school site; schedule fingerprints and TB test if needed</i> <i>*Take Home Assignment #1</i>
4	2/18-20	1. What is Sociology of Education? Theoretical Perspectives Readings 4 – 6 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Two <i>*Take Home Assignment # 1 Due</i>
5	2/25-27	2. Studying Schools: Research Methods in Education Readings 7 – 9 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Three
6	3/3-5	3. Schooling in a Social Context: Educational Environments Readings 10 – 13 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Four <i>*Take Home Assignment #2</i>
7	3/10-12	4. Schools as Organizations: Formal and Informal Education Readings 14 – 18 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Five <i>*Take Home Assignment #2 Due</i>
8	3/17-19	5. Roles and Responsibilities: Administrators, Teachers and Students Readings 19 – 23 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Six <i>Midterm Assignment Due</i>
9	3/24-26	6. What We Can Teach in School: Knowledge for What and for Whom? Readings 24 – 26 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Seven <i>*Take Home Assignment #3</i>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
10	3/31-4/2	Spring Break
11	4/7-9	7. Who Gets Ahead? Race, Class and Gender in Education Readings 27 – 32 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Eight <i>*Take Home Assignment #3 due</i>
12	4/14-16	8. Education and Opportunity: Attempts at Equality and Equity in Education Readings 33 – 38 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Nine
13	4/21-23	11. Can Schools Change? Educational Reform and Change Readings 48 – 51 Meritocracy Myth: Chapter Ten <i>*Take Home Assignment #4</i>
14	4/28-30	Final Fieldwork Presentations
15	5/5-7	Final Fieldwork Presentations <i>*Take Home Assignment #4 due</i> The following are due on the last day of class: <i>(1) Final Fieldwork Report</i> <i>(2) Fieldwork evaluation form</i> <i>(3) Copy of thank you note to the teacher</i> <i>(4) Take Home Assignment #4</i>

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>". Make sure to visit this page, review and be familiar with these university policies and resources.