This course draws on the fields of anthropology and sociology to ask several key questions about education, introducing central concepts in social theory and illustrating how these concepts might shape educational research.

This course is organized around several key questions:

- What are the purposes of education?
- What is the relationship between social structure and agency in schooling?
- What is the relationship between individuals and social contexts in the learning process?
- How is education interwoven with the production of identities?
- How do schools reflect certain/particular types of cultural knowledge and practices?
- Are education and schooling forces for the reproduction or transformation of inequalities?

At the conclusion of this course, our goal is that all students:

- Become familiar with a range of approaches to educational research drawing on the disciplines of anthropology and sociology
- Begin to frame their own research interests in relation to broader theoretical concepts and framework
- Develop critical perspectives on the contexts, institutional structures, practices, and dominant assumptions of schooling that produce social inequalities, with particular attention to how historically rooted systems of oppression manifest in educational settings
- Consider the ways that schools and classrooms can be re-imagined to support educational equity
- Connect critical social theory to concrete educational issues
- Become prepared for the next stages of doctoral study (for doctoral students)

**Course Materials and Resources**

Please purchase this book from your preferred bookseller. All other readings are available through the course website on Canvas.

*Required*


**Assignments**

1) **Reading Response Papers** (1 single-spaced page, 50% of your final grade).

You will write 10 reading response papers over the course of the semester. *(All 12 papers are required for a passing grade in this course.)* These papers are due on Saturday nights at 8:00 PM on Canvas. They should focus on the week’s theme, draw parallels between the texts and include your questions about the readings (i.e., what you are grappling with, your frustrations, etc.). Although I do expect you to pay reasonable attention to writing style and mechanics, the papers do not need to be polished. During the semester, you can request feedback to make sure you are on the right track.
2) Applying Theory Paper/Presentation (500-word vignette, 2000-word analysis, 25% of your final grade)

There are two parts to this assignment:

First, you will write a 500-word vignette about an educational issue or episode that you are facing or have faced or have observed or experienced. The vignette could be drawn from your own schooling, your professional life, your children or elsewhere (a story told by a friend). Make the vignette as descriptive as possible, without using evaluative or analytical language or proffering opinion or theory. Your goal is to describe a complex or troubling educational episode as vividly as possible. These will be shared online with the class (10 points)

Second, you will choose three theoretical frameworks that illuminate what is going on in your vignette. Use them to analyze the vignette, referring to readings from class. This analysis should be approximately 2,000 words long and should help the reader understand the incident from three different theoretical vantage points. The three might interconnect to explain distinct aspects of the vignette, or each one might be applied to its own discrete analysis of the vignette. You will do a 10-12-minute presentation on your theory paper to the class, as well. (15 points)

3) Final Paper. (8-10 pages, double-spaced paper using course readings; 30% of your final grade.)

Your final paper must address one of the following questions through the lens of how education and schooling are forces for both the reproduction and the transformation of inequalities.

• What are the purposes of education?
• What is the relationship between social structure and agency in schooling?
• What is the relationship between individuals and social contexts in the learning process?
• How is education interwoven with the production of identities?
• How do schools reflect cultural knowledge and practices?

Summary of Assignments

1. Response Papers (1 single spaced page, 50% of your grade)
2. Applying theory paper/presentation (25% of your grade)
   a. Vignette: Due Week 5 (10 points)
   b. Analysis: Due Week 10 (15 points)
3. Final Paper (25% of your grade)

Course Guidelines/Expectations:
A successful class will depend on every member of the group being actively engaged as both learners and teachers. It is my assumption that each of us has valuable perspectives and experiences that will inform our collective, developing knowledge.

Class attendance is a requirement. Students are expected to be on time for our virtual (Zoom) sessions. This is our only opportunity to discuss the material as a group. If you are unable to attend class, please let me know prior to the start of our session. Please refer to the university policy for excused absences. In general, inconsistent attendance will result in a significantly lower grade.

This class is a discussion-oriented seminar and learning in this class will require your active participation. For this class to be effective, all students must come prepared to discuss the week’s assigned readings. Response papers are intended to help you think about the issues raised in the readings ahead of class time. This seminar requires a high degree of independence, responsibility, and intellectual resourcefulness (ability to search out and make connections
across theory, practice, sites, ideas, people) in your work. There are many ways to participate in class; actively listening, asking questions, commenting on the thoughts of others, or discussing tentative, speculative ideas are valued as much as stating original, completely formed thoughts.

All assignments are required to pass this course. An “A” assignment is an exceptional one. It is not an assignment that merely meets the requirements outlined in the syllabus. All written work is graded on thoroughness, quality of analysis, level of support from data and/or research literature, organization and clarity.

Final grades will be assigned as follows:
- 93-100 A
- 88-92 B+
- 83-87 B
- 78-82 C+
- 73-78 C

Email will be my primary mode of communication with you. Please check your Rutgers email regularly; all Canvas notifications are sent there. Generally, I will respond to your messages within 24-48 hours of receiving them. If I do not reply within that time frame, feel free to follow up with me.

Anyone with a differing need that requires any accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. We want to make sure that you receive the support that you need, to be successful in the course. Those who require accommodations must complete an intake interview. Then, s/he/they will be provided with documentation (Letter of Accommodations)—which should be presented to all your professors as well. This link will direct you to the information: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines.

Academic Integrity Any breach of academic integrity is very seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the University Policy on the issue; it can be found here: https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.
Weekly Themes and Readings

*Denotes chapter from textbook

**Week 1: Critical social theory and transformative knowledge**

**September 13**

Class will not meet tonight.

First response due September 11th


**Week 2: Why do we need theory to study education?**

**September 20**


**Week 3: Economic and Social Reproduction**

**September 27**

3) Willis, P. *Learning to Labor* (summary)

**Week 4: Social and Cultural Capital**

**October 4**


**Week 5: Hidden Curriculum, Hegemony, Knowledge/Power**

**October 11**

Apply Theory/Presentation: Vignette is Due
No Response Paper this Week.

Week 6: Learning Identities, Situated and Sociocultural Approaches
October 18th


Week 7: Constructing Disability and Difference
October 25th


Week 8: Communities of Practice and Figured Worlds
November 1st
(Class will not meet via Zoom this week)


Week 9: Theorizing Gender and Sexuality in Education


Week 10: Critical Race Theory


Vignette Analysis Due
No Response Paper Due

Week 11: Critical, Social Justice and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy


Vignette Presentations: Part I
Week 12: Democracy and Education

November 29th


5) Dewey, selected readings.

Vignette Presentations: Part II

Week 13: Globalization, migration, education

December 6th


Vignette Presentations: Part III

Week 14: Final Class--Paper is Due

December 13th