

SOSC2130: EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

FALL 2017

Wed, Fri 1500-1620, Room 6591

Prof. Julian M. Groves

sosc2130@ust.hk

Division of Social Science Rm 3371 (Lift 13-15)

Office hours: One hour after each class

Teaching Assistant:

Ms. Vivien Pong

vivienpong@ust.hk

Office hours: 10:30 – 11:30am, Wednesday

The course will initiate a sociologically informed conversation about education. What is school for? What social forces have shaped our current educational practices? Does schooling provide new opportunities, or perpetuate old inequalities? How are ethnic minorities marginalized from education systems? Why do boys perform so poorly compared to girls in our schools? What should be the role of the humanities and creativity in education? Why is there a “crisis” in higher education? How might education be reformed? To answer these questions, we will study a number of important sociological works on education and you will be encouraged to reflect upon your own educational experiences, as well as examine contemporary debates about education at all levels in Hong Kong, and across cultures.

Intended Learning outcomes

Intended learning activities

An appreciation of how to be <i>sociologically mindful</i> about education.	By reading about the ideas of major sociological thinkers.
An awareness of how formal education can perpetuate social inequalities.	By collecting data and looking at studies of how social class, ethnicity, and gendered ideologies influence educational opportunities.
A critical understanding of the Hong Kong education system.	Exploring the global context of the Hong Kong education system, specifically the forces of colonialism and globalization. Reading articles about recent controversies surrounding language, national education and ethnic minorities.
An appreciation of the problems in higher education.	Reading critical accounts and reflecting upon our own experiences in higher education: increasing student debt, insecure job prospects, managerial ideologies.
An appreciation of alternative educational practises and institutions	A critical review of various attempts to reform education; student-run schools, creativity, experiential learning, online education, the Finnish education system.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Readings

Required Readings:

Any worthwhile university course in the social sciences requires that you do some reading outside of the class on your own. I have tried to keep these to a minimum. There will be one or two *required* short articles or book chapters assigned for most classes. These will be included in the course assessment. The relevant reading assignments will be announced at the beginning of each class. You must at least read these required articles before coming to class in order to be able to understand the class and take part in it. I may call on you to answer questions about them in the class. Do not worry if you don't understand everything in the required readings. I will assist you by telling you in advance what I want you to get out of them. I will also help you with the more difficult points in the class, so please be sure to attend.

Supplementary Readings

Students often tell me that they want to read more about a particular topic. For these students, I have provided some *supplementary* readings. Supplementary readings will not be covered in the course assessment, but they will enhance your understanding of the subject, and students tell me that they find them interesting.

I shall make all the readings available on the Canvas webpage.

Written Assignment

The written assignment for this course will involve you doing some data collection (observations, interviews or statistics) on topics related to course, specifically class, race and gender in education. It will be carried out in a group of 3-6 students. Full details of the assignment and groupings will be announced after the add-drop period (Sept 14th). If there is sufficient time, some groups may be asked to give a brief (ten minute) presentation on their findings.

The Final Grade

Assignment and presentation (if applicable)	25%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam (cumulative)	40%

Extra Credit. Up to 10 percent **extra credit** may be awarded to individual students who make regular and outstanding contributions to the in-class discussions, or who frequently ask relevant questions.

CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

Sept 1: **How much do you know about education and society?** Common Sense Quiz

Sept 6: Thinking sociologically: People, themes, events.

PART I: SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT FOR?

Sept 8. **What are the functions of education?** Emile Durkheim and the functionalist perspective

Reading:

Required: *Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as*

Academic Bootcamp. Harry L. Gracy

Required: *Patriotic Education in a Chinese Middle School*. W. O. Lee

Sept 13: **Whose interests are really served by the education system?**

Reading:

Required: *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Bowles and Gintis. Required version.

Supplementary: *Schooling in Capitalist America*.p. 131-148. Bowles and Gintis

Sept 15: **What are the unintended consequences of education?**

Reading:

Required: *Elements of a Culture* (from *Learning to Labour*) Paul Willis

PART II: LABELING THEORY

Sept 20: **What happens when we label children?**

Reading:

Required: *Racial Stereotyping in Hong Kong's textbooks undermines harmony*, SCMP

Required: *The Saints and the Roughnecks*, William Chamblis

Supplementary: *Kids at Fat Camp*. Marcia Millman

Sept 22: **Why do the poorest students end up with the worst teachers?**

Reading:

Required: *Skimming and Dumping at Penrose High: Career Mobility and the Perpetuation of Inequality*. Demie Kurz

PART III: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CLASS

Sept 27: **What is cultural capital?**

Sept 29: **How do parents influence their children's educational success?**

Reading:

Required: *Unequal Childhoods* Ch. 8, and Ch 10. Annette Lareau

¹ Dates and readings may be subject to change. Please listen out for announcements at the beginning of each class.

PART IV: EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY

Oct 4th. **How to think sociologically about “race” ethnicity and nationality?**

Movie: IQ testing: the great deceit

Oct. 6th. **Does Increasing School funding help ethnic minorities?** The Coleman Report.

Oct. 11th. **Why are Asian Americans so successful in their studies?**

Reading:

Required: *From Unassimilable to Exceptionable: The Rise of Asian Americans and “Stereotype Promise* Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou

PART V: GENDER AND EDUCATION

Oct 13th : **How to think sociologically about gender?**

Oct 18: **Why are boys performing so poorly at school?**

Reading:

Required: *The gendered classroom* Michael Kimmel

Supplementary: *The War Against Boys*. Christine Hoff Sommers

Oct 20th: Midterm Examination in Class. <i>Your attendance is required</i>
--

PART VI: ISSUES IN HONG KONG EDUCATION

Oct 25th. **What explains the current state of Hong Kong’s high-stress education?**

Colonial and globalizing forces

Reading:

Required: *A critical evaluation of Education Reforms in Hong Kong: Counting our Losses to Economic Globalization*. Choy Po King.

Supplementary: *“The best students will learn English” : Ultra-utilitarianism and Linguistic Imperialism in Education in post-1997 Hong Kong*. Choy Po King.

Oct 27th: **What problems do ethnic minorities face in Hong Kong’s educational system?**

Reading:

Required: *What accounts for the Underachievement of South Asians in Hong Kong? The Voices of Pakistani and Nepalese Parents*. Linda Tsung and Fang Gao.

Required: *Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling*. Wai-Chi Chee:

PART VII: ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Nov 1: **Why is university education becoming so expensive?**

Movie: *Ivy League*.

Nov3. **Are academic standards falling at universities?**

Reading:

Required: *College Cultures and Student Learning*. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa.

Nov 8: **Are universities indoctrinating students? Is academic freedom in danger?**

Reading:

Required: *The Death of American Universities*. Noam Chomsky

Nov 10: **Culture wars: What is “cultural appropriation?”**

Reading:

Required: *Oberlin Students Take Culture War to Dining Hall*. The New York Times.

Required: *What’s Wrong with Cultural Appropriation?* Maisha Johnson

Nov 15: **Gender wars: Are universities dangerous places for women?**

Reading:

Required: *Fraternities and Rape On Campus*. Patricia Yancey Martin

Movie: *The Hunting Ground*.

PART VIII: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

Nov 17: **What if students managed their own education?**

The Ideas of John Dewey

Self-governing schools

Reading:

Required: *Summerhill*. AS Niel. pp1-45

Nov 22: **What is the place of the Humanities and arts in Hong Kong’s education system?**

The Ideas of Ken Robinson

Is Hong Kong dumbing down its education system? Regina Yip.

Nov 24: Technology in higher education: MOOCs.

Guest speaker: Sean McMinn

Nov 29: **What if children started school at age 7, had little or no homework until their teens, were taught in the same classrooms regardless of their ability, and 63 percent went to university?**

The Finnish Education System

RULES AND PROCEDURES

This is a relatively large class with a diversity of students from many backgrounds. Most of you will be studying in a second language (English) because this is the only language that we all share. Some of you may not have taken social science classes before. Others will have been used to different academic environments with different expectations. All this means that we need to have some common rules about how the class is to proceed so that everyone has an opportunity to learn and perform well.

Attendance

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes* and while doing so, disconnect from all electronic devices and participate. The PowerPoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the main concepts covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance and will not make sense to you unless you have attended the class. You are responsible for taking your own notes during the classes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up from another classmate.

Students often ask me to put more detailed notes on the course webpage. My experience, however, has been that if you are not inclined to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have the time or inclination to study the materials outside of class. Please note also that I do not permit any recording or filming in the classroom. I will do my part, however, to make the classes worthwhile, going *slowly* in the class, and making frequent summaries to assist those with language difficulties. Fair enough?

Coming Late and Leaving Early

The class will not begin until all students are seated and quiet. When students come late to the classroom they delay the whole class by walking around the classroom to find a seat or look for their friends while the class is in progress. They also miss important information that will be covered on the exam. Some instructors solve this problem by locking the doors after the class has begun. This, however, is an extreme measure and sends a negative message. To minimize disruption, I will reserve the tables nearest to the doors at the side of the classroom for late students. On the occasion that you have to come late to the class, please sit at these tables, rather than wonder around the room.

As with late students, students who leave the class early disrupt the class and miss important information. Each class will have a ten minute break in the middle. Please wait until the break or the end of the class before leaving (except, of course, in the case of medical emergency or fire). Students who repeatedly come late or leave early will not be eligible for extra credit for class participation.

Mobile Phones, Emailing, Texting and Computers

This course has a strict policy on the use of electronic devices in the classroom which will be rigorously enforced. Ringing and bleeping mobile phones disrupt the class. If you are texting on your phone or using laptop computers (for whatever purpose, including note taking or translating) you will miss important information. You are also turning away from your

classmates, the instructor, and the course content and depriving everyone of a good learning environment.

I use to simply require that electronic devices be switched off during the class. But I have discovered that as long as the devices are in front of you, it is impossible to resist the temptation to play with them or continue to take calls and text messages. I am therefore going to require that all electronic devices ***not only be switched off, but also put away*** in a bag or purse and remain completely ***out of sight*** while the class is in progress. The class will not begin until this is done. If walk out in the middle of a class to take a call, you will be asked to return to your seat.

If you continue to text or take phonecalls during the class, your name will be recorded and ***your Final Grade for the course may be affected.***

Eating and Drinking in the Classroom

Bringing food into the classroom leaves a mess and smell for your classmates. This does not create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Would you like it if your classes were held in a McDonalds restaurant? I wouldn't think so. For this reason, the University prohibits eating in the classroom. There are many places where you can eat on campus. Please observe the "No Eating" signs in the classroom, and have your meals before or after the class.

Examinations

Exams will be closed-book and must take place without communicating with other students.

This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams for individual students, except where medical documentation (from a licensed Western medical practitioner) is provided to say why you cannot attend. In the case of an exam missed due to medical circumstances, you must contact us within a week after the missed exam to arrange a make-up, otherwise your entitlement to a make-up will be forfeited. The exam dates will be announced early in the semester, which will give you plenty of time to plan. Do not schedule job interviews or other activities on these dates.

A special note to **international students**: You have been instructed by the University during your orientation that you are required to stay for the entire exam period. Please do not book your flights home before the Final Exam. Similarly do not schedule trips outside of Hong Kong during the mid-term examination (**Oct 20th**). No make-up exams will be offered should you choose not to attend the exams for these reasons and you will not be credited with any score for the exam you miss.

A special note to **students taking, or who have taken other courses with with Prof. Groves**: As introductory sociology courses, it is unavoidable that there will be some overlap between these courses. I do not encourage you to take more than one course from me. It is better that you get a broader perspective in the social sciences by taking courses from other professors. If, however, you do decide to take more than one of my courses, please allow other students in class to answer questions that you may already know the answer to from ny other courses. I do appreciate your cooperation on this.