

SOSC2130: EDUCATION AND SOCIETY
Spring 2024
Wednesday, Friday: 1330-1450 Rm 5583, Lift 29-30

Prof. Julian M. Groves
sosc2130@ust.hk
 Division of Social Science, rm 3371.
 Office hours: One hour after each class.

Teaching Assistant: Yilin WANG
ywanggl@connect.ust.hk
 Division of Social Science, rm3001

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 and economically disadvantaged students marginalized in education systems? Why do boys perform so poorly compared to girls in school? What should be the role of the humanities and the arts in education? Why is there a “crisis” in higher education? How might education be reformed? What is the role of new technologies in education? What is the future of education? To answer these questions, we will study several 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.	Exploring the ideas of major sociological thinkers.
An awareness of how formal education can perpetuate social inequalities.	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 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 and “culture wars”.
An appreciation of alternative educational practises and institutions	Critically reviewing various attempts to reform education; student-run schools, creativity, experiential learning, online education, the Finnish education system.

--	--

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Attendance and participation

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes* and, whilst doing so, *to disconnect yourself from the internet and participate*. The PowerPoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the materials covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance. You are responsible for taking your own notes during the classes and for catching up and obtaining notes from others/watching the online video of the class if you miss a class. To accommodate students who test positive for Covid 19, recordings of the classes will be made available in the Pages section of the Canvas website.

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. I'll announce the reading assignments at the beginning of each class. You must read, at least, the 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 the required readings 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.

Examinations

There will be two **closed-book examinations**; a Midterm and a cumulative Final examination (that covers the entire course). Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will test your understanding of the required readings (particularly the questions that I ask about them in the class) and the in-class lectures, exercises and discussions.

Written Assignment

The written assignment for this course will be a small-group research project in which you will collect some information from the internet, or your own experiences related to the course and write up in around 5-10 pages. Details of the groupings and assignments will be given after the drop add period. In order to encourage all groupmates to contribute equally to the

project, a proportion of the assignment score will be based on a peer-review in which you each get to evaluate the contributions of your groupmates.

Class participation

I will reserve a small percentage of the final grade (up to 5%) for the top 5-10 participators in the class. Participation includes frequently answering questions in the class, asking questions in the class, responding to other students in the class and taking part in my in-class activities.

The Final Grade

Final Examination	40%
Midterm examination	35%
Assignment	20%
Participation	5%

CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 31	How much do you know about education and society? Common Sense Quiz	
Feb 2	Thinking sociologically about education	

PART I: SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT FOR?

Feb 7	What are the functions of education? Emile Durkheim and the functionalist perspective	Required: <i>Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Bootcamp</i> . Harry L. Gracy Required: <i>Patriotic Education in a Chinese Middle School</i> . W. O. Lee
-------	---	---

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

Feb 9	Whose interests does education serve? Marxist approaches to education	Required: <i>Schooling in Capitalist America</i> . Bowles and Gintis. Short version. Supplementary: <i>Schooling in Capitalist America</i> . p.131-148. Bowles and Gintis
Feb 14	What are the unintended consequences of education?	Required: <i>Elements of a Culture</i> (from <i>Learning to Labour</i>) Paul Willis

PART II: LABELING THEORY

Feb 16	What happens when we label children?	Required: <i>Racial Stereotyping in Hong Kong's textbooks undermines harmony</i> , SCMP Required: <i>The Saints and the Roughnecks</i> , William Chamblis
Feb 21	How do students in need of good teachers end up with the worst teachers?	Required: <i>Skimming and Dumping at Penrose High: Career Mobility and the Perpetuation of Inequality</i> . Demie Kurz

PART III: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CLASS

Feb 23	What is social class? What is cultural capital?	Required:
Feb 28	How do parents influence their children's educational success?	Required: <i>Unequal Childhoods</i> Ch. 8, and Ch 10. Annette Lareau
March 1	How do elite colleges fail disadvantaged students	Required: "Introduction", "Come with me to Italy" Anthony Abraham Jack.

PART IV: EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY

Mar 4	How to think sociologically about "race" ethnicity and nationality? Documentary: IQ testing: the great deceit	
Mar 6	Does Increasing School Resources help ethnic minorities? The Coleman Report.	

Mar 8	Why are Asian Americans so successful in their studies?	Required: <i>From Unassimilable to Exceptionable: The Rise of Asian Americans and "Stereotype Promise"</i> Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou
-------	--	--

PART V: GENDER AND EDUCATION

Mar 13	Thinking sociologically about gender	
Mar 15	Why are boys performing so poorly at school?	Required: <i>The gendered classroom</i> Michael Kimmel Supplementary: <i>The War Against Boys</i> . Christine Hoff Sommers

Mar 20 MIDTERM EXAMINATION. Attendance is required.

PART VI: ISSUES IN HONG KONG EDUCATION

Mar 22	What explains the current state of Hong Kong's high-stress education? Colonial and globalizing forces	Required: <i>A critical evaluation of Education Reforms in Hong Kong: Counting our Losses to Economic Globalization</i> . Choy Po King Supplementary: <i>"The best students will learn English": Ultra-utilitarianism and Linguistic Imperialism in Education in post-1997 Hong Kong</i> . Choy Po King.
Mar 27	What problems do ethnic minorities face in Hong Kong's educational system?	<u>Reading:</u> Required: <i>Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling</i> . Wai-Chi Chee. Supplementary: <i>What accounts for the Underachievement of South Asians in Hong Kong? The Voices of Pakistani and Nepalese Parents</i> . Linda Tsung and Fang Gao.
March 28- April 5	MIDTERM BREAK	

PART VII: ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

April 10	Are academic standards falling at universities?	Required: <i>College Cultures and Student Learning</i> . Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa.
Apr 12	Why is university education becoming so expensive? Movie: <i>Ivy League</i> .	
April 17	Are universities indoctrinating students? Is academic freedom in danger?	Required: <i>The Coddling of the American Mind</i> . Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt Required: <i>The Death of American Universities</i> . Noam Chomsky
April 19	Culture Wars: What is “cultural appropriation?” Required: <i>What’s Wrong with Cultural Appropriation?</i> Maisha Johnson	Required: <i>Oberlin Students Take Culture War to Dining Hall</i> . The New York Times Required: <i>What’s Wrong with Cultural Appropriation?</i> Maisha Johnson

PART VIII: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

	Labour Day	
Apr 24	What if students managed their own education? The Ideas of John Dewey	Required: <i>Summerhill</i> . AS Niel. pp1-45

	Student-governed schools	
Apr 26	<p>What is the place of the Humanities and arts in the education system?</p> <p>The ideas of Ken Robinson</p>	Required <i>Is Hong Kong dumbing down its education system?</i> Regina Yip.
May 1	Labour Day	
May 3	<p>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?</p>	<p>Required reading: Learning from the Fins.</p> <p>Required readings: <i>What other countries can learn from the Singapore schools.</i> The Economist</p>
May 8	Guest speaker: AI and education	
May 10	Catch up and review	

<p>FINAL EXAMINATION TO BE SCHEUDELED ACCORDING TO THE UNIVERSITY TIMEABLE: 17-29 May</p>
--

RULES AND PROCEDURES

This is a 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 may be accustomed to different learning environments with different expectations. This means that we need to have some common rules and understandings about how the class is to proceed so that everyone has an opportunity to learn and perform well.

In the classroom

Coming late/leaving early

The class will not begin until all students are seated and quiet. When students come late to the class, they disrupt class by walking around the classroom to look for their friends while the class is in progress. They also miss important information that will be covered in the exams. To minimize disruption, however, I will reserve some seats nearest to the doors on one side of the classroom to assist late students. On the occasion that you must come late to the class, please sit at these seats, rather than walk around the lecture theatre while the class is in progress.

As with late students, students who leave the class early disrupt the class and miss important information too. 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 a medical emergency or fire). If you know, in advance, that you have to leave early, please contact me or the teaching assistant before the class so that we can seat you close to an exit to prevent disruption of the class.

Laptop computers

Mastering the course content will require your full attention during the class. The classes will be highly interactive. I would prefer it if you took notes on iPads/Tablets/Mobile phones rather than bury your faces in laptop/notebook computers. If, however, you must take notes on a laptop computer, please be aware that my teaching assistant will be monitoring you and if you are performing tasks not related to the class (i.e. watching movies, playing games, messaging on social media etc) you will be asked to close your computer. Mobile phones are to be switched off.

Eating and Drinking

Bringing food into the classroom leaves a mess and smell for your classmates. This is not a conducive atmosphere for learning. Would you like it if your classes were held in a McDonald's 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

Examinations will be closed book and must be taken without communicating with other students.

This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams for individual students who miss quizzes, except where medical documentation is provided by a licensed Western medical practitioner to say why you cannot attend. If you have to miss a quiz due to medical circumstances, you must contact us within a week after the missed exam to arrange a make-up quiz, otherwise, your entitlement to a make-up quiz will be forfeited. The quiz 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. The Midterm examination for this course is scheduled for March 20th. The Final Examination will be scheduled by the University (May 17-29th). International students should not book trips home during this period, since no make-up examinations will be given for those not present.

We will do our best to announce your quiz scores within a week after each quiz and offer you a checking session where you can see how your quiz was graded. However, please bear with us if we occasionally miss this target by a few days, since you are a very large class!

PowerPoints

I'm happy to share my PowerPoints with you after each class, but under the following conditions:

1. PowerPoints are intended only as outlines for each class and not substitutes for class attendance. Some students ask me to put more detailed lecture notes on the Canvas webpage. My experience, however, has been that if you do not have the time or the inclination to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have the time or inclination to study the materials outside of class.
2. It is impossible for me to release PowerPoints *before the class*. This is because the PowerPoints may give away answers to my questions, as well as information that will compromise my in-class exercises and activities. Also, providing PowerPoints in advance does not allow me the flexibility to change the content of the class and PowerPoints in accordance with student's interests.
3. The power points are intended for your own study purposes only. Please *do not share my PowerPoints or any other materials* on course-sharing websites, social media, or anywhere else on the internet. If we find you have done this – and we look around the internet quite often for our materials, we will ask you to take them down and may have to report you to the website and to the University for violating our copyright.

Policy on re-grading

I have noticed that increasing numbers of students are expecting higher grades for their work. Students sometimes contact me with a request that their work be re-graded with the hope of obtaining a higher score. You will, however, appreciate that the grading of 80 assignments and exams requires tremendous resources. We make every effort to grade your work accurately. If you do, however, request that your work/grade is reviewed, please be prepared for the possibility that your grade may move up *or down* (if, in the latter case, we find your work more deficient than our original assessment). If you do ask us to look at your work again, please make sure that you have a very strong and clear justification for doing so.