

Education and Society

SOSC2130/CORE2730. 3 Credits

Wednesday and Friday 1500-1620 Rm 5583

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Office hours: One hour after each class

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The course will initiate a sociologically informed conversation about formal education. What is school for? What social and institutional arrangements 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 (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- ILO 1: Identify and apply sociological perspectives to the study of education
- ILO 2: Identify, analyze and articulate economic, gender, and ethnic inequalities education
- ILO 3: Analyze and identify how neoliberal ideologies and globalization shape educational practices in Hong Kong and higher education
- ILO 4: Compare and contrast different educational systems and philosophies from a cross-national perspective
- ILO 5: Envision and critically analyze the educational reforms and the future of education.

Required texts and materials

Class Attendance

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.

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 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.

Assessments

In-class examinations

There will be two in-class **closed-book examinations**; a Midterm and a cumulative Final quiz (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 and the in-class lectures, exercises and discussions.

Research project and Short Presentation [time permitting]

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 add/drop period. To encourage all group members to participate equally, a component of the grade for the assignment will be based on peer-review, in which group members will evaluate each other's contributions. Toward the end of the semester, students will be required to present their work in a short (ten minute) PowerPoint presentation to the class.

In-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.

Assessment weighting and dates

Assessment Task	Contribution to overall course grade (%)	Due date
Cumulative final Examination	40%	According to the University calendar (16-29 May)
Midterm examination	35%	20 March (in class)
Group research project	20%	TBA
Participation	5%	Throughout the semester

Mapping of course ILOs to Assessment tasks

Assessed Task	Mapping ILOS	Explanation
Midterm Quiz	ILO1 ILO2	This task will assess the ability to identify and apply sociological approaches to the study of education, most notably functionalist and Marxist/conflict theory. Student will identify educational inequalities with respect to class, gender and ethnic minority status.
Final Examination	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4 ILO5	In addition to the tasks listed above, this task will assess students' ability to identify sociological approaches to understanding the social forces shaping higher education and the Hong Kong education system. Students will also be assessed on their ability to identify and evaluate alternative philosophies of education and various educational reforms in cross-national comparison.
Research project and presentation	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4 ILO5	In this task, students will use their sociological understanding to identify and articulate educational inequalities, applying the relevant sociological perspectives.
In-class participation	ILO1 ILO2 ILO3 ILO4 ILO5	In the classroom, students will be assessed on their familiarity with the reading materials and, specifically, on their ability to articulate different sociological approaches to the study of education, identify educational inequalities and the social forces shaping Hong Kong education and higher education as well as assessing various educational reforms in different national contexts.

Grading Rubrics

Detailed rubrics for each quiz/examination will be provided before the exam. These rubrics clearly outline the criteria used for evaluation. Students can refer to these rubrics to understand how their work will be assessed.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter, ability to identify and creatively apply sociological concepts in the field of education and think critically consistently throughout the entire course.
B	Good Performance	Demonstrates a good working grasp of the main subject matter, ability to identify and apply sociological concepts in the field of education and think critically throughout most of the course. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to learn.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, some capacity for applying sociological perspectives and critical thinking in the field of education. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has a threshold knowledge of core subject matter, and demonstrates potential to achieve a sociological understanding of some of the material and engage in critical thought
F	Fail	Unable to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the subject matter and an understanding of sociological perspectives in the field of education.

Course AI Policy

The midterm quiz and final examination will be closed book without the assistance of AI. The group project requires original research that requires considerable detail. I encourage students not to try to use AI since students who use AI for this project usually produce poorer reports.

Communication and Feedback

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.

Resubmission Policy

If any review of grading is requested, students should be aware that their grade may move up or down, depending on the outcome of such review.

CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

Date	Topic	Reading
Feb. 4	How much do you know about education and society? Common Sense Quiz	
Feb. 6	Thinking sociologically about education	

PART I: SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT FOR?

Feb. 11	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
Feb. 13	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 18	Second day of Lunar New Year. No class.	
Feb. 20	What are the unintended consequences of education?	Required: <i>Elements of a Culture</i> (from <i>Learning to Labour</i>) Paul Willis

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

PART II: LABELING THEORY

Feb 25	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 27	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

Mar 4	How do parents influence their children's educational success?	Required: <i>Unequal Childhoods</i> Ch. 8, and Ch 10. Annette Lareau
Mar 6	How do elite colleges fail disadvantaged students	Required: "Introduction", "Come with me to Italy" Anthony Abraham Jack.

PART IV: EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY

Mar 11	How to think sociologically about "race" ethnicity and nationality?	
	Documentary: IQ testing: the great deceit	
Mar 13	Does Increasing School Resources help ethnic minorities? The Coleman Report.	
Mar 18	Why are Asian Americans so successful in their studies?	Required: <i>From Unassimilable to Exceptionable: The Rise of Asian Americans</i> and "Stereotype Promise" Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou

Mar 20 **MIDTERM EXAMINATION. Attendance is required.**

PART V: GENDER AND EDUCATION

Mar 25	Thinking sociologically about gender	
Mar 27	Why are boys performing so poorly at school?	<p>Required: <i>The gendered classroom</i> Michael Kimmel</p> <p>Supplementary: <i>The War Against Boys</i>. Christine Hoff Sommers</p>

PART VI: ISSUES IN HONG KONG EDUCATION

Apr 1	What explains the current state of Hong Kong's high-stress education? Colonial and globalizing forces	<p>Required: <i>A critical evaluation of Education Reforms in Hong Kong: Counting our Losses to Economic Globalization</i>. Choy Po King</p> <p>Supplementary: "The best students will learn English": <i>Ultra-utilitarianism and Linguistic Imperialism in Education in post-1997 Hong Kong</i>. Choy Po King.</p>
Apr 3-8	Mid-term break. No class	
April 10	What problems do ethnic minorities face in Hong Kong's educational system?	<p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Required: <i>Envisioned Belonging: Cultural Differences and Ethnicities in Hong Kong Schooling</i>. Wai-Chi Chee.</p> <p>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.</p>

PART VII: ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

April 15	<p>Are academic standards falling at universities?</p> <p>Why is university education becoming so expensive? Movie: <i>Ivy League</i>.</p>	<p>Required: <i>College Cultures and Student Learning</i>. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa.</p>
Apr 17	<p>Are universities indoctrinating students? Is academic freedom in danger?</p>	<p>Required: <i>The Coddling of the American Mind</i>. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt</p> <p>Required: <i>The Death of American Universities</i>. Noam Chomsky</p>
Apr 22	<p>Culture Wars: what does it mean to de-colonize a university?</p> <p>Required: <i>What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation?</i> Maisha Johnson</p>	<p>Required: <i>Oberlin Students Take Culture War to Dining Hall</i>. The New York Times</p> <p>Required: <i>What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation?</i> Maisha Johnson</p>

PART VIII: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

April 24	<p>What if students managed their own education? Progressive Education and The Ideas of John Dewey</p> <p>What is the place of the Humanities and arts in the education system?</p> <p>The ideas of Ken Robinson</p>	<p>Required: <i>Summerhill</i>. AS Niel. pp1-45</p> <p>Required <i>Is Hong Kong dumbing down its education system?</i> Regina Yip.</p>
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April 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?	Required reading: Learning from the Fins. Required readings: <i>What other countries can learn from the Singapore schools.</i> The Economist
May 1	Labor Day. No Class	
May 6	AI and Education Guest speaker from HKUST Centre for Educational Innovation	
May 8	Catch up and review	

**FINAL EXAMINATION TO BE SCHEUDELED ACCORDING TO THE
UNIVERSITY TIMEABLE: 16-29 May**

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, 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.

Electronic devices

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 schedule for March 20th.** The Final Examination will be scheduled by the University (May 16-29th). **International students** should not book trips home during this period, since no make-up examinations can be given for those not present.

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.