

SOCY 58/EDUC 24 - Education and Inequality

Spring Quarter 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:10–12:00 (10A) in Thornton 106

Professor Janice McCabe

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm and Fridays 1-2pm in Blunt 301A, or by appointment. My office hours are open times for you to come by and go over course material and larger course aims as well as to talk about sociology, your academic interests, my research, how this course relates to larger issues, etc. I don't take appointments during office hours (just stop by!). If these times don't work for you, email me to set up an appointment.

Course Description:

How are schools organized and how do they organize society? What effects do schools have on individuals and what effects do they have on society? Using sociological theories and methods, we will examine the structure of schools and their effects on individuals and society. We will explore both formal and informal education. This course will focus on inequalities, specifically how social class, race, gender, and sexuality both organize and are organized by educational environments.

Course Goals and Objectives:

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

1. Explain how schools prevent and perpetuate social inequalities in our society.
2. Describe and compare key sociological theories of education.
3. Apply these theories to the inequalities discussed in this course (e.g., social class, race, gender and sexuality).
4. Read, understand, and evaluate scholarly articles and books on the sociology of education using a range of sociological research methods, including interviews and ethnography.
5. Investigate educational inequality using sociological research methods based on hands-on experience.
6. Effectively communicate what you learned about sociology of education both orally and in writing.
7. Explain how inequality within and between schools impacted your own educational experiences.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

READINGS: Required readings are posted on our course Canvas site. As you complete the required readings, I encourage you to consult the "Reading Guide for Academic Work" posted on Canvas. This contains a list of questions to answer as you read sociological work, and it will help you make the most out of the time you spend reading.

PARTICIPATION: Your attendance and active participation are crucial to this seminar. Participation will help you better process and understand the material we cover while also increasing our collective understanding. Active class participation has many dimensions,

including enthusiastic and intellectually rigorous discussion (talking and listening), coming to class prepared by having completed and thought about the readings, work on in-class assignments, and regular class attendance (including arriving on time and staying for the duration of each session). Please note that regularly attending class is necessary but not sufficient for an A in class participation. Missing classes or showing up late or leaving early will negatively impact your participation grade. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available; but I will post slides and handouts from class on our course Canvas site. After you review these materials, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about the material or answer questions about anything that is unclear.

ASSIGNMENTS: You will be completing five assignments throughout the term. Most of these assignments (2-5) are part of your group project for the class. In the first couple weeks of the term, I will place you in groups based on your expressed interests in topics related to education. You will then complete a series of assignments around your shared topic. Some assignments involve a group component; others are based on only individual work. More details about each assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas at least one week before it's due.

In Assignment 1, you will use social science data to investigate the schools you have attended, examining questions about who attends these schools and their academic outcomes compared to others in your state and nationally. This is based on only individual work, and it is not related to your group project.

In Assignment 2, you will work with a group to facilitate a seminar discussion (50-60 minutes of class time, split between your project and one assigned class reading). To prepare, your group will construct a research question on your topic of interest, start a literature review on this topic, and design a small-scale study to investigate this research question; this part of your presentation should include a presentation of this information and ways to engage in class in your topic (through small or large group discussion or activities). The other half of your time should be spent on the reading (choose one assigned that day from the syllabus), presenting main ideas and engaging your classmates with them (through discussion or activities). Your group's seminar facilitation will be scheduled on the day that it best corresponds to the topics in the syllabus.

In Assignment 3, you will try out two research methods – an interview and ethnographic observation – and reflect on the process. This is based on only individual work. You may choose to—but are not required to—relate it to your group project.

In Assignment 4, you will collect data for your group's project and post it in a shared space for your group. For example, you might interview 2-3 students from your high school, transcribe the interviews and write notes, and post these; or you might conduct 5 hours of observation at Baker lobby, take jottings in the field, flesh them out into full fieldnotes, and post these.

In Assignment 5, you will again work with your group to present to the class on your topic of interest. This time, you will be presenting the results of your study. This assignment builds on the design you proposed and received feedback on in Assignment 2, and the data you collected and posted in Assignment 4. These presentations will be during the last week of class.

Our x-hours (Fridays 3:30-4:20) are a great time to meet with your group members since you all should have this time available. You may use our classroom for your group meetings (or choose another time or place, of course).

FINAL PAPER: Your final paper for this course will be approximately 10 pages in length and will include information about the design and findings of your group project, detail your contribution to the research, and reflect on the process. In other words, this final paper is written individually and ties together the experiential learning that you've been doing all term. A detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas.

Percentage of Final Grade		Final Course Grade	
Participation	10%	A = 94.0-100	C+ = 77.0-79.99
Assignments (12% each)	60%	A- = 90.0-93.99	C = 74.0-76.99
Final Paper	30%	B+ = 87.0-89.99	C- = 70.0-73.99
		B = 84.0-86.99	D = 60.0-69.99
		B- = 80.0-83.99	E < 60.0

Course Guidelines and Policies:

Honor Principle: Assignments will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses. I encourage you to discuss ideas from class with your classmates. However, unless otherwise noted, assignments should be completed independently, and all work turned in should be your own. If your topic for the group project is one that you're exploring in another class, independent study, or other academic work, you must let me and the other professor(s) know. Your work in assignments should include citations to ideas and direct quotes from course readings as well as outside sources. ChatGPT and other AI tools are treated similarly to other resources you use and should be cited, noting which one you used and how you used it, including the prompt(s) you used and the date(s). Failure to fully and accurately disclose this usage is a form of academic dishonesty. You also must personally verify the accuracy of any content included in your work, including references and citations; in other words, you should access and review all sources cited rather than relying on an AI-generated summary. In addition, I encourage you to critically think about any ways you use AI to generate writing so you do not cheat yourself from academic growth and learning; writing is thinking and takes work and revision to formulate and articulate an argument. If you have questions about what is permissible, I urge you to consult the [academic honor principle](#), the [statement on sources and citations](#), and talk with me.

Religious Observances: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

Student Mental Health and Wellness: The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: the [Counseling Center](#) which allows you to book triage appointments online, the [Student Wellness Center](#) which offers

wellness check-ins, and your [undergraduate dean](#). The student-led [Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union](#) and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. I encourage you to use these resources, to communicate with me, and to take care of yourself throughout the term.

Student Accessibility and Accommodations: Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](#); student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Socioeconomic Differences and Financial Difficulty: Our community is composed of students from a variety of financial backgrounds. Socioeconomic diversity can be invisible, and you may be experiencing financial difficulties related to the cost of textbooks, materials, or other necessities for our class of which I am not aware. If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, there may be sources of support for you. If you feel comfortable sharing your experience with me, you may. You may also consider meeting with a financial aid officer to discuss options, reaching out to the First-Generation Office if you are a first-generation student, browsing the [Funding Resources](#) page, or, for unexpected expenses, applying to the 4E Fund through the Financial Aid tile in [DartHub](#).

Letters of Recommendation: I get many requests for letters, and I have a handout describing the materials I need at least two weeks prior to your deadline. If you expect to need a letter from me after the term ends, please let me know while you're still in the class so that I can have more detailed notes to write a stronger letter on your behalf. I enjoy writing letters for students who have stood out in some way, and I take writing these letters quite seriously.

Late Submissions: The submission of assignments is expected on the indicated "due date" during that day's class meeting (unless otherwise stated). Requests for extensions should be made prior to the due date. Please note that grades on non-approved late submissions will be penalized. Any work turned in more than 10 minutes after it is due will be considered late and the grade will be reduced by one step (for example, from a B to a B-). The grade will be reduced by an additional step for each day it is late.

Grade Disputes: Any student who wishes to dispute a grade earned on any assignment, paper, or exam may do so by submitting a written memo detailing specifically why the assignment should receive a different grade. The memo should explain how the assignment met the requirements or how the answer as written (and not based on what could be inferred from what was written) addressed the question. The memo should be submitted within one week of receiving the grade. Your graded assignment and rubric should also be attached.

Class Schedule:

All readings are posted on Canvas.

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF EDUCATION: WHY EDUCATION MATTERS			
3/31	Introduction	Course syllabus SS, Ballantine & Hammack-R1, "Sociology of Education: A Unique Perspective for Understanding Schools"	Find an article that relates to at least 1 idea from SS Reading 1
4/2	Functional and Conflict Theories of Education	SS, Ballantine & Spade-R2, "Understanding Education Through Sociological Theory" SS, Durkheim-R3, "Moral Education" SS, Collins-R4, "Conflict Theory of Educational Stratification"	
4/7	Theories of Capital: Human Capital, Cultural Capital and Social Capital	SS, Swartz-R5, "Social Reproduction" SS, Lareau, Evans & Yee-R28, "The Rules of the Game..." Rendón, Hernandez & Schaefer, "Social Reproduction at a Minority Serving Institution"	
4/9	Schools as Organizations	SS, Gracey-R15, "Learning the Student Role" Diaz & Rivera, "Essentializing Merit: Disability and Exclusion..."	Assignment #1
4/14	Theories of Culture and Resistance Guest: Kourtney Kawano '18 (11:00)	Kawano, "Interweaving the Past, Present, and Future to Call Forth a Critical Race Wahine 'Ōiwi Epistemology" Drake & Guhin, "The Achievement Narrative and Alienation in School"	
STRATIFICATION BETWEEN AND WITHIN SCHOOLS			
4/16	Educational Opportunity and Mobility	Binder et al, "Career Funneling" Gorski, "Exceptional Spaces: Diverse Learning Environments in a Public High School"	
4/21	Teachers and Students	Stockstill, Chapter 5 in <i>False Starts: The Segregated Lives of Preschoolers</i> Kaul, "The Logics of Teaching" CNN, "What if I told you this school has no teachers?"	Assignment #3
4/23		<i>Time to meet with your group during class</i>	

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
4/28	Adolescent Subcultures and Peer Relations	Holland, "Only Here for a Day" McCabe, "Friends with Academic Benefits"	
4/30	School Choice and Admissions	Bastedo et al, "Dodging the Competency Trap?" Brooks, "How the Ivy League Broke America"	
CLASS, GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SEXUALITY			
5/5	Class	Harvey, "Everyone Thinks They're Special" Jack, "(No) Harm in Asking..."	
5/7	Gender Guest: Jennifer Lee '17 (11:00)	Pyne & Musto, "A Gendered and Racialized Educational Hierarchy: Disparities in..." Lee & McCabe, "Revisiting the Chilly Climate in College Classrooms"	
5/12	Race and Ethnicity	Lee & Zhou, "Comparing Success Frames" Agyepong, "Africans Do Not Fail: Examining the Model Minority Stereotype"	
5/14	Race and Ethnicity II	Ferguson & Lareau, "Hostile Ignorance" Nelson, Graham, & Rudin, "Saving Face While (Not) Talking about Race"	
5/19	Sexuality	Hirsch & Khan, Chapter 2 from <i>Sexual Citizens</i> Adelman et al., "Gen Z GSAs: Trans-Affirming..."	Assignment #4
EDUCATION POLICY AND SCHOOL REFORM			
5/21	What should and do we expect from schools?	TBD	
5/26		<i>No Readings – in class work on presentations</i>	
PRESENTATIONS			
5/28	Presentations	<i>No Readings</i>	Assignment #5
6/2	Presentations	<i>No Readings</i>	Assignment #5
6/5 (Friday), 8am - FINAL PAPER DUE on Canvas			

Great Resources for Further Learning:

[Education Week](#), [National Education Policy Center](#), [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [American Educational Research Association](#), [Sociology of Education Journal](#), and the readers [The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of Education](#) and [Schools and Society](#).