

Sociology 140 - Sociological Issues in Schooling Americans
Charles Varano

Time: M-W-F 11:00 - 11:50am.
Room: Amador-250.

Office Hours: M-W-F 1 - 2pm.
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Course Description

Schooling is one of the most controversial and contested institutions in the United States today. From parental concerns over what their children are taught or what school they will attend, to whether schools in the United States are comparable to those in other countries and are educating students properly for the 21st century, there is much uncertainty about the role and performance of our nation's schools. At the same time, schools have been viewed as the 'great equalizer,' the one institution that promotes equality of opportunity by giving everyone a chance to enjoy social mobility and success in life. Unfortunately, debate on this topic is heated and research findings are mixed. What accounts for unequal success in school and after school? Who is responsible for poor, or for that matter, exceptional performance, students, teachers, or parents? What are the best ways to teach students, and what results should we desire and expect from schooling?

This course will present students with the core theories, research, and debates on schooling. While our focus will be on schooling in the United States, we will also consider formal education systems in other countries for comparative purposes. We will examine how schooling has changed over the past century, the relationship of schooling to social equality, how children learn and what they learn, how the organization of schooling shapes the experience of students, and how schooling is both an agent of social control and liberation. By the end of this course students will be able to think critically about the role of schooling in our society, analyze how students and teachers interact within varied organizational and cultural contexts, and suggest reasonable reforms for improving schooling for a democratic society.

Evaluation

There will be **four** in-class exams (three midterms and a final). Each exam is worth **20%** of your course grade and each will consist of true-false and short answer questions. Students will also be required to write a take-home term paper worth **20%** of your course grade. Make-up exams will be penalized one grade except for students with a doctor-verified medical reason.

Texts

Hurn, Christopher J. *The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*. Third Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993.

Margolin, Leslie. *Goodness Personified: The Emergence of Gifted Children*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1994.

Students will also be responsible for a small collection of assigned readings that are on reserve in the library and any video materials presented in class. If you are having any trouble with the course, readings, or lectures, please see me immediately so we can work things out. I am available during office hours and by appointment, or you can E-mail me at the address noted above.

Course Outline

***denotes reading on reserve.**

Week 1; Aug. 30 - Sept. 3. Introduction to course.
The sociology of schooling.

Read: Hurn, chapter 1.

Week 2; Sept. 8 - 10. Theories of schooling.

Read: Hurn, chapter 2.

Week 3; Sept. 13 - 17. The expansion of schooling in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Read: Hurn, chapter 3.

Week 4; Sept. 20 - 24. Extended schooling, adolescence, and the social construction of self.

Read: *Berger, Bennett "The Identity Myth" from *Looking for America*.
Prentice-Hall: New Jersey, 1971, pp. 87-98.

Midterm exam #1, Friday, Sept. 24.

Week 5; Sept. 27 - Oct. 1. Gifted children and the social construction of difference.

Read: Margolin, Introduction and chapters 1-3, 7.

Week 6; Oct. 4 - 8. From giftedness to adulthood: a leadership class for tomorrow.

Read: Margolin, chapters 4-6.

Week 7; Oct. 11 - 15. Education and power.

Read: Margolin, chapters 6, 8-9.

Week 8; Oct. 18 - 22. Schooling and equality of opportunity.

Read: Hurn, chapter 4.

Midterm exam #2, Friday, Oct. 22.

Week 9; Oct. 25 - 29. Unequal schools, unequal intelligence, or....?

