

TE 920 -- Social Analysis of Educational Policy Spring 2010

Thursdays, 4:10 – 7:00 p.m.
107 Erickson Hall

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Office Hours: Thu. 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Fri. 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
By appointment

Course Description

The purpose of TE 920 is to consider some of the ways in which educational researchers and policy makers have identified, examined and sought to address fundamental issues and problems of K-12 public education in the United States. The course readings come from a variety of disciplines including sociology, anthropology, and public policy. Many of the policy problems that we will study in the course revolve around how schools can best educate students from low-income, racial minority groups that traditionally have been poorly served by public schools.

The course is based on the following premises: a) educational policy is an instrument for potentially improving the provision of educational services; and b) educational policy plays a significant role in shaping how we perceive social and educational problems, how we assign social identities, and how social power and resources get established and distributed.

In the course, we will examine research and policy documents in order to address the following questions:

1. How do various policies and reforms construct definitions of educational problems?
2. Who benefits and who loses from these definitions?
3. In what ways do various groups benefit from these definitions? In what ways are they penalized by them?

The course addresses several concepts and theoretical frameworks that have influenced research, policy, and/or practice in education and related fields. These concepts/frameworks include cultural capital (Bourdieu), social capital (Coleman), relational trust (Bryk and Schneider), teacher professional community, instructional program coherence (Newmann), and sensemaking (Weick).

The course will also examine several policy ideas and reforms including multicultural education, high-stakes testing, school restructuring, local school councils, professional development, and mathematics and literacy reforms.

Throughout the course, we will consider a) how researchers have drawn on or modified these concepts/frameworks in examining educational issues and problems and b) the ways in which and extent to which various policies address/are likely to address the ideas underlying these concepts/frameworks as well as related research findings.

Working Assumptions for the Course

1. We will respect one another. Our beliefs, values, and ideas often differ from one another because we draw from different life experiences. In this class, we will discuss, question, and challenge ideas, but we need to be careful not to attack individuals or to create an unsafe, unproductive space.
2. We will challenge our own beliefs, values, and ideas. We need to be open to challenging our own prejudices, assumptions, and interpretations. We also need to expect to discuss things we often do not discuss in public, but still feel strongly about. It is alright to feel uncomfortable when we do so.
3. We are here for a positive educational experience. Please ask questions, share your thoughts, and make this class meaningful for yourself.

Course Assignments

Attendance/Class Participation: You are expected to be present and prepared to participate in class each week. If an extenuating circumstance prevents you from attending class, you should notify me by phone or e-mail and communicate with myself and another student about what happened in the class you missed. Attendance and class participation will count as 10% of your course grade. Note! The 10% is not automatic. If you come to class and do not participate on a regular basis, do not expect to receive the full 10%.

Class Facilitation. Each student is expected to co-lead (with 2 other students) the class's examination of one class reading. This will consist of the following: introducing key topics and issues to the class and leading a discussion centered on questions intended to highlight themes from the reading. Every group is responsible for turning in a typed outline (from their respective reading) that indicates themes, probing questions, and methods designed to engage colleagues. You are encouraged to use creative classroom activities to highlight themes and ideas about the readings. However, your creativity should not overshadow the essence of the readings. I strongly encourage you to think creatively about how to carry out these activities. Class facilitation will constitute 10% of the grade for the course.

Critical Analysis Papers: These are 3-page papers in which you briefly summarize an author's argument and how she supports it and then develop an original thesis in relation to the author's main point(s). You are required to turn in two (2) critical analysis papers during the semester and they should be turned in by Thursday at 12:00 noon (on the same day that the reading in question is assigned). These will count as 15% of your course grade.

Policy Document Analysis/Presentation: You will be required to work with two other students to analyze a policy document. This will involve writing a 5-page analysis of the document and making a presentation to the class based on your analysis. "Policy documents" include a) formal written federal, state, district, school, department and/or classroom statements of particular policies; b) excerpts from government hearings about policies; c) press releases; d) speeches; e) news reports; f) research briefs; and/or g) videos. You will present the document to our class and facilitate an activity or discussion that engages the class in critically examining the policy in light of the ideas/frameworks offered in course readings. The presentation and paper combined will count as 30% of your course grade.

Final Paper: The final paper will be an analysis of a policy in which you use one theoretical concept or framework from the course. You can examine any aspect of the policy that most interests you. This includes research on the process of policy formation, policy implementation, policy outcomes, or historical analyses. An overview and plan for this paper will be due in March. The final paper is due in early-May. The final paper will count as 35% of your course grade.

Note: I wish to fully include persons with disabilities in this course. Please let us know if you need any accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable you to fully participate.

Evaluation

Rubrics will be used to assess written assignments according to the following criteria: consistency with the assignment; development and organization of the argument; clarity of written expression; and use of sources/resources. You will receive the rubrics in class well before the assignments are due.

Class participation will be evaluated on the following criteria: thoughtfulness of contributions (including questions), respectful consideration of and response to others' comments/questions, and demonstrated mastery of the reading.

The assessment of your class facilitation will be based on the comprehensiveness of your presentation, its clarity, and your efforts to invoke student participation when you co-lead the class discussion.

Grades will be based on the following:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Co-leading Discussion (one reading)	10%
Critical Analysis Papers	15%
Policy Document Analysis	30%
Final Paper	35%

Grade Distribution

93-100 = 4.0	77-84 = 3.0
85-92 = 3.5	69-76 = 2.5

Readings

The following book is required reading for the course. You can purchase it from the MSU Bookstore, or buy it on-line. A good website to compare prices is www.bestbookbuys.com.

Bryk, A.S. & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

We will read two chapters each from the following books. You are not required to purchase them for the course. The chapters will be handed out in class/included in the coursepack.

McLaughlin, M. W. & Talbert, J. E. (2001). *Professional communities and the work of high school teaching*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Other course readings will be available in the 5th floor copy center in Erickson Hall (hard copies and CDs) and online as URL links.

Course Schedule

Jan. 14 – Course Introduction and Overview

- Discussion of participants' backgrounds and interests
- Review of syllabus, objectives of course
- Suggestions for analyzing research arguments and policy documents

Jan. 21 – Sociological Research/Cultural Capital

Portes, A. (2000). The hidden abode: Sociology as analysis of the unexpected. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 1-18.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, education and cultural change: Papers in the sociology of education* (pp.71–112). London: Tavistock.

Jan. 28 – Cultural Capital/Multicultural Education/High-Stakes Testing

Olneck, M. (2000). Can multicultural education change what counts as cultural capital? *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(2), 317-348.

Anagnostopoulos, D. (2006). “Real Students” and “True Demotes”: Ending social promotion and the moral ordering of urban high schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(1), 5-42.

Further reading:

Hong, W.P., & Youngs, P. (2008). Does high-stakes testing increase cultural capital among low-income and racial minority students? *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 16(6).

Feb. 4 – Cultural Capital/Research on Family-School Relationships

Lareau, A. & Horvat, E.M. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion: Race, class and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72, 37-53.

Cucchiara, M.B., & Horvat, E.M. (2009). Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(4), 974-1004.

Further reading:

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 747-776.

Maier, K. S., Ford, T. G., & Schneider, B. (2007). Are middle-class families advantaging their children? In L. Weis (Ed.) *The way class works: Readings on school, family, and the economy* (pp. 134-148). London: Routledge.

Feb. 11 – Cultural Capital/Research on Detracking (Restructuring)/Teacher Labor Markets

Wells, A.S., & Serna, I. (1996). The politics of culture: Understanding local political resistance to detracking in racially mixed schools, *Harvard Educational Review*, 66 (1), 93-118.

Cannata, M. (in press). Understanding the teacher job search process: Espoused preferences and preferences in use. *Teachers College Record*.

Further reading:

Oakes, J., Wells, A.S., Jones, M., & Datnow, A. (1997). Detracking: The social construction of ability, cultural politics, and resistance to reform. *Teachers College Record*, 98 (3), 482-510.

Feb. 18 – Introduction to Social Capital

Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, (Supplement 1988): S95-S120.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1-24.

Feb. 25 – Students’ Social Networks

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. (Reading to be assigned)

Conchas, G. Q. (2001), Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement, *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), (p.475-502).

Further reading:

Walker, E.N. (2006). Urban high school students’ academic communities and their effects on mathematics success. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(1), 43-73.

March 4 – Teachers’ Social Networks

Coburn, C.E., & Russell, J. (2008). District policy and teachers' social networks. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 30(3), 203-235.

Achinstein, B., Ogawa, R., & Speiglman, A. (2004). Are we creating separate and unequal tracks of teachers? The impact of state policy, local conditions, and teacher characteristics on new teacher socialization. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 557-603.

Further reading:

Maier, A., & Youngs, P. (2009). Teacher preparation programs and teacher labor markets: How social capital may help explain teachers’ career choices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(4), 393-407.

March 11 No Class – Spring Break

March 18 – Student Presentations

March 25 – Relational Trust

Bryk, A.S, & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. (Reading to be assigned)

Ford, T., & Youngs, P. (under review). How “Success for All” promotes trust: Evidence from a high-performing urban midwestern district.

April 1 – Relational Trust

Bryk, A.S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. (Reading to be assigned)

April 8 – Teacher Professional Community/Restructuring

Louis, K.S., Kruse, S.D., & Marks, H.M. (1996). Schoolwide professional community. In F.M. Newmann & Associates, *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality* (pp.179-203). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McLaughlin, M. W. & Talbert, J. E. (2001). *Professional communities and the work of high school teaching*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Reading to be assigned)

Further reading:

Louis, K.S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S.D. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33, 757-798.

April 15 – Teacher Professional Community and Instructional Program Coherence

Newmann, F.M., King, M.B., & Youngs, P. (2000). Professional development that addresses school capacity: Lessons from urban elementary schools. *American Journal of Education*, 108(4), 259-299.

Newmann, F.M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A.S. (2001). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23i(4), 297-321.

April 22 – Teachers' Sensemaking

Coburn, C.E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(2), 145-170.

Youngs, P., Jones, N., & Low, M. (in press). How beginning special and general education elementary teachers negotiate role expectations and access professional resources. *Teachers College Record*.

April 29 – Student Presentations

May 6 – Final Papers Are Due