The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 4450F-001
Education and Society
Fall 2023
Delivery Method: In-person

Instructor: Professor Wolfgang Lehmann
Office Hours: by appointment

Email:wlehmann@uwo.ca

Course Description: This seminar will look at classical and contemporary theories as well as recent empirical research in the sociology of education. Emphasis will be placed on examining: the relationship between educational institutions and processes and the reproduction of social inequality; and the competing visions of educational reform offered in recent years.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above in any Department of Sociology module, or fourth year in any module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Anti-requisite(s): Sociology 3383F/G

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Challenge common-sense assumptions about school success and failure.
- Compare and contrast different sociological and theoretical perspectives regarding the schooling experiences and outcomes of different social groups.
- Analyze the relationships between educational institutions and wider social structures.
- Evaluate critically different reasons for educational reform.
- Research and write an effective scholarly paper in the area of sociology of education.
- Assess educational policy issues and programs.
- Effectively lead a seminar.
- Prepare an oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Course Material:

No textbook is used. All readings will be made available through our OWL course site.

DRAFT OUTLINE: Minor changes may still occur. Final outline provided in class

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (http://owl.uwo.ca) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

- In person: by appointment in SSC 5430
- By telephone: 519-661-2111 x85385
- By email: wlehmann@uwo.ca

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

- Description of an educational issue worth studying, *September 28, 2023*   10%
- A research proposal for a study of the issue identified above, *October 19, 2023*   20%
- Literature Review of the issue identified above, *December 7, 2023*   40%
- Participation   10%
- Presentation   10%
- Weekly Quizzes (best 5)   10%

Evaluation Breakdown and Detailed Information

Participation (10%)

This assesses your overall participation in seminar discussion, both in terms of quantity and quality of your contributions. It also takes into consideration attendance.

Presentation (10%)

Each week includes a presentation topic. In first class, students sign up for a topic. Presentations will be two to three students per topic. The presentation should give an overview of the assigned topic. Highlight its importance for our understanding of education. Present to the class evidence from both academic and non-academic sources and provide a balanced perspective on the topic (e.g., where applicable, present to the class arguments for and against something). After the formal presentation, there will be a question-and-answer period. If you wish, you can prepare discussion questions to facilitate this part of the presentation. The presentation itself should be no longer than 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Use PowerPoint.

Weekly Quizzes (Best 5) (10%)

We will begin each week with a short quiz testing whether you read the assigned readings. These quizzes will be no longer than 10 minutes and use a short-answer format. Each quiz is worth 2% of the overall mark. The best five of these quizzes will be used to determine the mark. There will be no make-up quizzes.

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Describe an educational problem worth studying (10%); Due September 28, 2023

From a scan of news media, identify a current educational problem or issue you think is worthy of sociological analysis. Describe the problem and why you think it is important and why it is sociological.

The assignment shouldn't be longer than **2-3 pages** (double spaced, normal size font). Upload your assignment in OWL by the due date.

Develop a research proposal for the issue you identified above (20%), Due October 19, 2023

Expand on the issue you identified above by developing a research proposal on how you would study the issue. The research proposal should include: 1) a statement of the problem and its significance; 2) a description of your research methodology, including data collection strategy, sampling strategy, and recruitment strategy, 3) a brief discussion of the challenges, benefits and limitations of the proposed study, and 4) a bibliography of 10 articles you found that inform your research. These articles need to be different from any listed on the course outline. Only the bibliography is needed. You do not need to discuss or describe these articles at this stage.

The proposal should be 5-10 pages. Upload the assignment in OWL by the due date.

A literature review for the issue you identified above (40%), Due December 7, 2023

Expand on the issue you identified above by using the articles you found in the previous step to write a literature review. You can use additional articles for this literature review. The literature review should discuss already existing scholarship on the issue. What research has already been conducted on the issue? How was this research conducted? What were the key findings? Are there any contradictions and gaps in the existing literature? What questions remain unanswered, thus making your own proposed research important and relevant?

The literature review should be 10-15 pages. Upload the assignment in OWL by the due date.

Flexible Deadlines and Student Absences:

This seminar uses a flexible deadline policy. What does that mean?

1) Each deadline given above comes with an automatic 48-hour grace period. You can submit any time within 48 hours of the deadline without penalty and without having to ask for permission.

2) In addition to the 48-hour grace period, you are given 6 Flex Days you can use for the take-home assignments (problem statement, research proposal and literature review). This is a total of six days, not six days per assignment. You could use two days for each assignment, or all six for one assignment, or any combination thereof.

3) The details of how you can use your Flex Days will be explained in class.

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If neither the grace period nor the Flex Days are enough, and you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible.

2023-2024

<h1 style="text-align:center">Course Schedule and Readings:</h1>

NOTE: THIS IS A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE THAT IS STILL SUBJECT TO SOME CHANGES

As an estimate, expect 2-3 academic articles per week, for a total of 40-60 pages to read per week.

1. Introduction and overview. September 7, 2023
- Discussing seminar structure, expectations, and assigning presentations

2. Education: what is it good for? September 14, 2023
- *Presentation topic: Effects of COVID disruption on schooling and COVID recovery initiatives*
- Socialization
- Societal benefits

3. What and how we learn: curriculum and pedagogy issues. September 21, 2023
- *Presentation topic: Ontario sex ed curriculum controversy*
- Sex/gender education and its challengers
- Decolonizing curriculum and making learning anti-racist

4. What and how we learn: what schools expect; what students bring. September 28, 2023
- *Presentation topic: dress codes, and school uniforms*
- Bullying and school safety
- School discipline and anti-Black bias
- LGBTQ experiences and pushback

5. What and how we learn: the central importance of Bourdieu. October 5, 2023
- *Presentation topic: what can universities do to ease transitions of so-called non-traditional students?*
- Bourdieu and forms of capital
- Applying Bourdieu's ideas to educational research

6. What and how we learn: inclusion vs segregation. October 12, 2023
- *Presentation topic: universal design, what it is, how can it work?*
- Destreaming
- Integration vs segregation: students with disability and universal design
- Does segregation ever make sense? Africentric schooling in Toronto as an example

7. Transitions and Decisions: educational choices. October 19, 2023
- *Presentation topic: the pros and cons of affirmative action*
- The effect of SES on educational choices
- Gender-atypical educational choices
- Affirmative action

8. Transitions and decisions: what is your degree worth? October 26, 2023
- *Presentation topic: credential inflation: what is it and is it a problem?*
- The principle of social closure
- Credential and extra-credential inflation
- International experience as a valuable form of capital?

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Fall Study Break: November 2, 2023

9. Transitions and decisions: getting that job: November 9, 2023
- *Presentation topic: hiring: is it what you know or who you know or something else altogether?*
- What does research tell us about the role of education and hiring biases?
- Education and labour market outcomes

10. Big Issues: climate change. November 16, 2023
- *Presentation topic: just transition: what is it and why does it matter?*
- What do kids learn about climate change?
- Role of university in contributing to or fighting climate change
- Just transitions

11. Big Issues: is school making us sick? November 23, 2023
- *Presentation topic: how to explain the decline in student mental health?*
- Children and ADHD and medication
- University students and mental health problems/stress
- The dark side of merit

12. Big Issues: technology and the future of education. November 30, 2023
- *Presentation topic: distrust of expert knowledge; why is this happening?*
- Online learning and equity issues
- Is AI a threat to what educational institutions do?
- Social media and distrust of expertise

13. Last day, Review and Wrap-Up: December 7, 2023
- No readings, wrap up

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Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology "[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)" document https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health

A Note on the Use of Artificial Intelligence:

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments.