

EDS/Soc 126
 Syllabus Spring 2010
 Sociology/EDS 126
 Mehan
 Spring 2010

Bud

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION

We consider the role that education plays in US society in relationship to the political economy in different historical time periods. In Part I, we examine the democratic view of schooling: schooling functions to prepare citizens for participation in a diverse society, the technical view of schooling: schools prepare students to participate in the capitalist economy and the critique of that position, i. e., schools wittingly or unwittingly reproduce the existing divisions in society. In Part II, we examine current school reform efforts: modifications of school structure, curriculum & instruction, and proposals to privatize schooling. In Part III, we discuss the future of education in society in the era of “global capitalism.”

Readings: A Cal Copy xerox packet Lecture Outlines are posted on <http://create.ucsd.edu>
Sections: Thursday 1:00-1:50; Thursday 3:30-4:20. Pepper Canyon Hall 304.

Evaluation of Student Work: There will be 4 one-two page reflections on assigned readings and lectures, a take-home midterm exam, and a take-home final. The first 2 reflections will be due before the first midterm; the second 2 will be due by the 10th week. The midterm exam will *probably* be assigned on Thursday of the 5th week and will be due on Tuesday of the 6th week. The final will be due during the assigned time for the class exam. The exams will ask you to analyze course materials, construct a sociological argument and defend it against competing interpretations. The 4 reflections will be worth 25%, the midterm will be worth 25%, and the final will be worth 50% of your grade.

Course Expectations: Students who make no effort to master course materials can expect an F. Students who show a minimal mastery of assigned readings, recommended readings, lectures, participate in a minimal way in discussions can expect a D. Students who have assimilated the basic ideas of lecture but who do not integrate the readings in exams can expect to receive a C. Students who integrate readings and lecture material and construct a well reasoned argument in exams can expect a B. Students who integrate readings and lecture material and construct a thorough and creative argument can expect an A.

Features of Good Arguments:

Level 1 The argument consists of a simple claim *without* discussing a counterclaim or without juxtaposing one claim against an other claim; presents some evidence; does not contain rebuttals.

Level 2 The argument consists of a claim *with* a discussion of a counterclaim or pits one claim against an other claim; presents some data, but does not contain any rebuttals.

Level 3 The argument contains a claim or a series of claims or counterclaims *and* presents data but presents weak rebuttals

Level 4 The argument has a claim supported by data *and* a clearly defined rebuttal supported by data and a resolution of the two claims.

Office Hours: 3:30-4:30 Tu/Th in CREATE, which is in the Social Science Research Building, Thurgood Marshall College, and Tu/Th 12:30-1:45 *by appointment*; email: bmehan@ucsd.edu

COURSE SYLLABUS

Part I: The School in Historical Context

Week #1 (Mar 30 Introduction; (Apr 1): The Role of Schooling in a Democracy: Preparation for Citizenship

Jefferson, "On Democracy and Education"

Oakes, et al., "The Dual Commitment to Civic Virtue and Freedom"

Week #2 (Apr 6 & 8) The Development of the Common School

Cremin, "Horace Mann's Legacy"

Spring, "The Ideology and Politics of the Common School"

Week #3 (Apr 13 & 15) The Shift to the Technical Function of Schooling:

The School as a Vehicle to Prepare People for Capitalism

Davis & Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification"

Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility"

Parsons, "The School Class as a Social System"

Week #4 (Apr 20 & 22): The Critique of The Technical View:

Schooling Reproduces Inequality

Anyon, "Urban Schooling"

Bowles and Gintis, "The Correspondence Principle"

Anyon, "Tracking"

Oakes, "The Distribution of Knowledge" from *Keeping Track*

Wilcox, "Differential Socialization in Classrooms"

Cicourel & Mehan, ". . . Stratifying Practices and Status Attainment"

Part II. The School in Contemporary Perspective

Week #5 (Apr 27 & 29) Structural Reform: Redesigning the Organization of Schools

National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk"

Week #6 (May 4 & 6) Curricular Reform: Basic Skills or Higher Order Thinking?

Massaro, "The Modern Call for a National Core Curriculum"

Nash & Cheney, A Transcript of a Debate on the McNeil/Lehrer News Hour

Week #7 (May 11 & 13): The Standards & Accountability Movement

NCLB, "Introduction"

McNeill, "Creating New Inequalities: Contradictions of Reform"

Ravitch, "NCLB: measure and Punish"

"The Obama & Biden Education Plan of 2010"

Week #8 (May 18 & 20): Privatizing Public Schooling:

For-Profit Public Schools & Vouchers

Freidman, "Public Schools: Make Them Private"

Chubb & Moe, "Better Schools Through New Institutions"

Saltman, "No Contest: Edison's Takeover of the Philadelphia Schools . . ."

Bryk et al., "Classroom Life" from *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*

Week #9 (May 25 & 27): The Charter School Response to the Move to Privatize Schools

Ed Source, "California's Charter Schools"

Wells, "Charter School Reform in California"

Alvarez & Mehan, "Providing Educational Opportunities for Underrepresented Students"

Part III. The Future

Week #10 (June 1 & 3): Global Capitalism and School Reform:

A New Reproduction of Inequality? Or: A New Schooling for Democracy?

Freire, Chapter 3 from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Beane & Apple, "The Case for Democratic Schools"

Meier & Schwartz, "Central Park East Secondary School"

Zinn, "Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress"

Manzo, ". . . the Controversy over Social-Justice Teaching"

Week #11: Student Presentations—during exam period: Tuesday June 8th, 3:00-6:00

Possible Final Paper Topics

With my permission, a project that investigates an aspect of the educational process can be substituted for the second batch of reflections and the final. (All students take the midterm) If this option is approved, the work due in lieu of the second batch of reflections would be an outline, a literature review and some indication of how the issue ties into our course topics and readings. The work in lieu of the final would be a 20-25 page paper or an oral presentation to the class. The student presentation will occur during the time scheduled for the final exam. These topics are only suggestions; students' are encouraged to suggest other topics.

1. Education and the Media. Students only spend about 12% of their time in school. They also learn from other sources. Select a media source (e. g., children's television programs, commercials, comic books, fairy tales, computer software, arcade, games, after-school activities). How does the media source you choose represent learning, social class, gender, ethnicity? What do you think children learn from these messages? (The recent arguments about the effect of cigarette ads, video games, tv violence, displays of explicit sex on children's behavior are examples). This topic might lend itself to a class presentation.

2. Comparative Education. Compare the structure and function of education in the US with published reports of education in another country (e. g., Russia, Cuba, China, Japan, Mexico).

This topic lends itself well to an examination of what counts as learning, issues of mobility, equity, reproduction and moral education.

3. Education and Equity. America prides itself on the meritocratic basis of its society. Yet many critics (Bowles & Gintis, Anyon, Wilcox, etc) show long-standing discrimination and unequal treatment. Discuss the debate over affirmative action, the English Only Initiative, or the “standards movement” in light of our discussion about meritocracy and educational reproduction.

4. The Crisis in Education. Choose one of the proposals to improve education we have not discussed in class (e. g., home schooling, school-career programs, small-schools) and examine it in light of our discussions of the goals of excellence and equity in a democracy.

5. The Representation of Schooling in Popular Culture. Schools, teachers and adolescent life have always been the focus of movies. Blackboard Jungle, Dead Poets’ Society, Stand and Deliver, Dangerous Minds, Lean on Me, Finding Forrester, Precious, and The Blind Side are just some examples. Choose at least two films from the list on pages 5 and 6 and examine the way in which education, the possibility of social mobility, or students’ ideology are represented.

Likewise schools and education are often represented in popular music, now and in previous periods, in comics and cartoons. Compare representations to those we have discussed in class. This topic lends itself to a group project and a presentation to the class.

6. The Preparation of Students for the World of Work. The Educational Reform movement of the '80s and '90s is predicated on the assumption that US students are not well prepared for the world of work. Interview a company manager or personnel director about the skills required to perform jobs in today's corporations. Compare their account to that in A Nation at Risk.

8. Moral Messages in Instruction. Mosier, in *The Making of the American Mind* suggests that *McGuffey’s Readers* taught moral messages that reinforced capitalism. Examine current elementary or high school textbooks. Do they contain similar moral messages? Or, has the overt connection between religious values and industry been removed?

9. Historical Narratives in Comparative Perspective. Our analysis of the history curriculum taught in US public schools reveals a “narrative of progress” in which the contributions of heroic immigrants, primarily from Europe contribute to an ever-improving US society. Determine the historical narrative present in the history textbooks of another country and compare it to the US narrative of progress.

10. Charter Schools: Are they Innovative? Charter Schools have been touted as innovative alternatives to stodgy and overly bureaucratic public schools as well as contributing to diversity. Investigate some of these claims. If you choose to look at the diversity of student populations, the state DOE website is helpful.

11. International Comparisons. Using TIMSS or SIMSS data bases, locate US students’ placement in relation to students from other countries. Construct an explanation of the US scores compared to those of students in other countries;

12. The Current State of Education in San Diego. To illustrate the point about educational inequality, I use data gathered from the SDUSD in 1997. Has the condition of education improved in the past 10 years?

13. President Obama's Education Plan. Describe President Obama's educational plan. Compare it to former President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* plan. Discuss similarities and differences.

Appendix: Feature Films and Documentaries about Schooling

List assembled by Paula Levin

Blackboard Jungle (1955). Inner-city high school teacher Richard Dadier (Glenn Ford) struggles to maintain his idealism in this gritty drama set in the 1950s. The students drink, smoke, steal and cause mayhem, and two of Dadier's delinquents (Sidney Poitier and Vic Morrow) duke it out to be crowned leader of their classroom turf. This film was the first major motion picture with a rock 'n' roll soundtrack, which includes "Rock Around the Clock." Anne Francis costars.

To Sir with Love (1966). Sidney Poitier stars as Mark Thackeray, an engineer by training who reluctantly takes a teaching job in a working-class London high school. His unruly students (played by an impressive group of unknowns) assume they'll easily gain the upper hand. Poitier, of course, has other ideas. Eventually he wins the students over, changing their lives -- and his -- in the process.

Stand and Deliver (1987). Anyone who's ever been in a classroom will be touched by this moving, mostly-true story of famed East L.A. math teacher Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos), who finds himself in a classroom of rebellious remedial-math students. He stuns fellow faculty members with his plans to teach AP Calculus, and even more when the mostly Hispanic teens (including Lou Diamond Phillips as Angel Guzman) overcome the odds and eventually go the distance.

Dead Poets Society (1989). John Keating (Robin Williams) is an unconventional English teacher who lives by a simple motto: Seize the day! Neil Perry (Robert Sean Leonard) is a prep school student who dreams of being an actor but lives in fear of his imperious father, who wants to see him matriculated into Harvard's medical school. Can Keating -- and his infectious love of poetry -- inspire Neil to reach for his dreams? The screenplay won an Oscar.

Lean on Me (1989). When principal Joe Clark (Morgan Freeman) takes over decaying Eastside High School, he's faced with students wearing gang colors and graffiti-covered walls. Determined to do anything he must to turn the school around, he expels suspected drug dealers,

padlocks doors and demands effort and results from students, staff and parents. Autocratic to a fault, this real-life educator put it all on the line to give kids a chance.

Kindergarten Cop (1990). Hard-bitten cop John Kimble (Arnold Schwarzenegger) gets more than he bargained for when he goes undercover as a kindergarten teacher to pursue murderous drug dealer Cullen Crisp (Richard Tyson) while at the same time protecting the man's young son. Pitted against a classroom full of rowdy, 6-year-old moppets whose monkeyshines try his patience and test his mettle, Kimble may have finally met his match ... in more ways than one.

Mr. Holland's Opus (1995) In 1965, passionate musician Glenn Holland (Richard Dreyfuss) takes a day job as a high school music teacher, convinced it's just a small obstacle on the road to his true calling: writing a historic opus. As the decades roll by with the composition unwritten but generations of students inspired through his teaching, Holland must redefine his life's purpose. Dreyfuss earned an Oscar nomination for his outstanding work in this emotional drama.

Small Wonders (1995). This Oscar-nominated documentary (which inspired the 1999 film *Music of the Heart*) follows the struggles of Roberta Guaspari-Tzavaras as she teaches violin to youngsters in East Harlem, N.Y. After budget cuts slash her school's music program, she creates a nonprofit organization to train children selected by lottery, and her disciplinarian style pays off as her charges reap the rewards. Fiddlers Itzhak Perlman and Isaac Stern make appearances.

Dangerous Minds (1995). In this blackboard-jungle drama, Michelle Pfeiffer plays Louanne Johnson, an erstwhile lady leatherneck turned teacher who squares off against a classroom of impudent, inner-city teens. The students' bullying tactics nearly drive Johnson out the first day, but she radically changes her lesson plan to include bribery and browbeating (despite objections from the prissy principal) in an effort to teach the class that learning is its own reward.

Good Will Hunting (1997). Matt Damon and Ben Affleck won an Oscar for their script about friendship and risk for this film directed by Gus Van Sant. With an abuse-filled past and a janitorial job, Will Hunting (Damon) spends his days hanging out with best friend Chuckie Sullivan (Affleck). But the aimless young man's also a mathematical genius, and when his talents are discovered, a therapist (Robin Williams) helps Will confront the demons that have been holding him back.

Music of the Heart (1999). In director Wes Craven's inspiring Oscar-nominated drama -- which is based on a true story -- violinist and single mother Roberta Guaspari (Meryl Streep) struggles to convince the administration at an East Harlem high school to let her establish a music program. Having won that battle, Roberta nonetheless continues to face an uphill climb as budget cuts threaten her determined and deeply felt efforts to bring the arts to underprivileged kids.

Spellbound (2002). This documentary presents the intense, real-life experience of the National Spelling Bee as seen through the eyes of eight young spellers. We share in their private lives as

they train for and compete in this ultimate intellectual showdown. Within these stories, we discover not only their idiosyncrasies, their obsessive study habits and their sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes inspiring family dynamics, but also the story of America itself.

Mad Hot Ballroom (2005). Ballroom dancing goes from lame to cool for a group of New York City public school kids in this insightful documentary. The film follows a group of 11-year-olds as they learn to dance old-school styles including the merengue, rumba, tango, foxtrot and swing. Candid interviews capture the kids' initial reluctance at learning ballroom dance and their transformation into serious competitors determined to win a citywide competition.

Akeelah and the Bee (2006). With an aptitude for words, 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson (Keke Palmer) is determined to spell her way out of South Los Angeles, entering scores of local contests and eventually landing a chance to win the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. Despite discouragement from her mother (Angela Bassett), Akeelah gets support from her bookish tutor (Laurence Fishburne), her principal (Curtis Armstrong) and proud members of her community.

The History Boys (2006). Nicholas Hytner, Richard Griffiths and Frances de la Tour reprise their Tony-winning roles in this engaging film version of Alan Bennett's play chronicling a rowdy group of boys on their way to higher education. On a quest to attend either Oxford or Cambridge, the teens grapple with the intricacies of university entrance exams and admissions, ultimately learning as much about the education system as they do about academics.

Freedom Writers (2007). Hilary Swank stars as a young teacher who inspires her at-risk students in this moving drama based on true events. Erin Gruwell (Swank) assigns her class an ambitious project: While studying works such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the kids keep journals about their troubled lives, applying history's lessons to break the cycle of violence and despair that threatens their futures. Scott Glenn, Imelda Staunton and Patrick Dempsey co-star.

Others:

Animal House

School Daze

The Breakfast Club

Fast Times at Ridgemont High

Grease

Finding Forrester

Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit

Precious

The Blind Side

Spring 2010

Assigned Readings

Jefferson, "On Democracy and Education"
Oakes, et al., "The Dual Commitment to Civic Virtue and Freedom"
Cremin, "Horace Mann's Legacy"
Spring, "The Ideology and Politics of the Common School"
Davis & Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification"
Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility"
Parsons, "The School Class as a Social System"
Bowles and Gintis, "The Correspondence Principle"
Hallinan, "Tracking"
Oakes, "The Distribution of Knowledge" from *Keeping Track*
Wilcox, "Differential Socialization in Classrooms"
Cicourel & Mehan, ". . . Stratifying Practices and Status Attainment"
National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk"
Massaro, "The Modern Call for a National Core Curriculum"
Nash & Cheney, A Transcript of a Debate on the McNeil/Lehrer News Hour
Zinn, "Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress"
NCLB, "Introduction"
McNeill, "Creating New Inequalities: Contradictions of Reform"
Ravitch, "NCLB: Measure and Punish"
"The Obama & Biden Education Plan of 2010"
Freidman, "Public Schools: Make Them Private"
Chubb & Moe, "Better Schools Through New Institutions"
Saltman, "No Contest: Edison's Takeover of the Philadelphia Schools . . ."
Bryk et al., "Classroom Life" from *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*
Ed Source, "California's Charter Schools"
Wells, "Charter School Reform in California"
Alvarez & Mehan, "Providing Educational Opportunities for Underrepresented Students"
Freire, Chapter 3 from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
Beane & Apple, "The Case for Democratic Schools"
Meier & Schwartz, "Central Park East Secondary School"
Manzo, ". . . the Controversy over Social-Justice Teaching"