

Sociology of Education
SOCL 4431, Section 2
Department of Sociology
Louisiana State University
Fall, 2007

Classroom and Instructor Information:

Classroom: 112 Audubon Hall
Meeting Days/Times: MWF 9:40 – 10:30
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Course Description:

Welcome to Sociology of Education! Sociologists use sociological imagination and a wide range of sociological theories to examine a variety of topics related to education, learning, schools, school processes, and educational systems. In this course, we will critically examine these theoretical perspectives, and relate them to our concrete service experiences in public schools.

Course Designation

This section of Sociology of Education will be taught as a service-learning course. Service-Learning courses focus learning through service. In this course, we (including me) will work with a community partner and local schools to provide a critical service, reading with students identified as being below grade level.

Course Justification and Approach

Service-learning courses

- Are credit-bearing educational experiences
- Encourage student engagement in community through
 - participation in an organized service activity that meets an identified community need
 - reflection upon service activity in a way that furthers both academic and civic learning
- Strive to present a broader perspective on, and appreciation for, the connection between discipline-based intellectual frameworks and real-world practice

- Strive to endow students with an enhanced sense of civic responsibility

For me, a value of service-learning is that it forces students out of the “predictable” classroom environment and into the “unpredictable”, “muddy” real world. This is an ideal format for a course like Sociology of Education, because it offers us an outstanding opportunity to connect theories about education and society to actual practice.

Community Partners

- Our Community Partners are Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) and three East Baton Rouge Parish public schools.
- We will provide tutoring services to first, second, and third grade students identified as being below reading level for their grade. In VIPS terminology, we will volunteer to be “Reading Friends”; we will all be assigned one student to tutor throughout the semester
- We will work with school administrators and teachers to coordinate our tutoring schedules.
 - We will regularly schedule time to go to the school and read to our reading friends
- We will receive training from VIPS and work with our friends’ teachers to assess their progress over the course of the semester

Course Objectives

All courses have learning objectives, Service-learning objectives can be classified as academic learning objectives and civic learning objectives:

Academic Learning Objectives

- Define and discuss central topics studied by sociologists with specializations in education. Explain theories, describe research procedures, and discuss major empirical findings for each topic.
- Demonstrate your ability to connect concepts covered in this course to
 1. Your own educational experiences
 2. The educational experiences of second and third graders in East Baton Rouge public schools
- Discuss in some detail major components that impact education policy in the United States, particularly the 2001 No Child Left Behind.

Civic Learning Objectives

- Develop an appreciation for practical challenges facing teachers and students in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools and, by extension, public schools across the nation.
- Develop cross-cultural communications skills
- Develop capacity to examine organizational strengths, and capacity to build upon strengths.

- Develop self-reflection skills by examining the extent to which your perspectives on public education have persisted or changed as a result of your participation in this course.
- Compare and contrast the benefits of service-learning versus “typical” college course.

Overall Approach

Weeks 1-3

- Learn about reading to first, second, and third graders. Specialized training for “Reading Friends” will be provided by VIPS
- Discuss an overview of topics within the subfield of Sociology of Education
- Develop a list of topics, along with readings for each selected topic
- Gather information about our Community Partners, and discuss challenges
- Perform self-assessment of our expectations before we begin our service of tutoring
- To maximize student involvement in this course, we will collectively design a schedule of topics, and develop a list of readings during the first two weeks of the course
- We will use other syllabi and textbooks to select from a variety of potential topics. We will select from a range of available readings, and determining an overall amount of weekly readings feasible given our service responsibilities

Weeks 4-8

- Initiate service in schools
- Record reflections weekly in service-learning journal. Each week questions will be developed to structure reflections about the service so that they relate to weekly topics and readings
- At week 8, critically review topics and reflections for the first 4 weeks of service

Weeks 9-12

- Continue to provide weekly service, and record reflections in service-learning journal
- At Week 12, begin discussions and readings about ethnographic studies of schools in preparation for final presentations to community partner

Week 13-16

- Self-assessment of your own academic and civic learning through service as Reading Friend
- Prepare community partner reports and presentations for VIPS
- In addition to reporting how your involvement in VIPS Everybody Reads program influenced you, the community partner report will examine strengths of the Reading Friend program, as well as making suggestions relating course topics to potential improvements in the program.
- The content will draw upon the Sociology of Education topics discussed over the semester and your own concrete experiences as Reading Friends
- Review topics discussed in last part of course, and prepare for final paper.

Opportunities for Continued Service-Learning

- VIPS encourages all their volunteers commit to one full academic year of service. Of course, this cannot be required of college students, but you may wish to consider extending your service with VIPS in the Spring 2008.
- Opportunities may also be available to analyze our collective ethnographic summaries, and to prepare manuscripts for submission to academic journals
- Opportunities may also be available to work with community partners in fund-raising for libraries with appropriate books for young readers.

Weekly Plan

In addition to performing service, you will demonstrate your own learning through your service as VIPS Reading Friends. To accomplish this, we will all keep service-learning journals within which we will write specified reflective entries. Each Monday will be devoted to classroom wide, collective reflection on our service as it relates to the assigned readings and subject matter in the course syllabus.

On Wednesdays and Fridays, we will discuss readings covering topics in Sociology of Education. We will use a discussion format, rather than lecture format. Therefore, please prepare for each class by completing assigned readings before we meet.

Assessment

The following chart presents a comparison between a hypothetical, “typical” Sociology of Education Course and this course.

Course Element	Typical Format	Service-Learning Format
In Class Activities	Three Hours Per Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Large Group Discussion • Small Group Discussion • Videos and Guest Speakers 	Three Hours Per Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection • Collective Reflection • Large Group Discussion • Small Group Discussion • Videos and Guest Speakers • Lecture
Out of Class Activities	About Six Hours Per Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Homework • Essays • Study for tests • Preparation for Classroom discussion 	About Six Hours Per Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform Service • Service-Learning Journal Reflection • Reading • Preparation for classroom discussion
Assessment	Midterm and Final Exam Quizzes and Homework Assignments Short Paper Participation	Service-Learning Journal Reflections Mid-Term and Final Essay-papers Community Partner Report Community Partner Presentation
Total Time Commitment	9 hours	9 hours

- Like all service-learning courses our course will strive to meet or exceed the level of academic rigor as the standard 4000-level sociology course. Service-learning is not equivalent to volunteering. Both involve community service, but service-learning requires students to demonstrate learning through their service.
- We will have to communicate well and manage our time effectively to complete service requirements in the specified time-frame.
- Rigor with respect to learning through service will substitute for some of the rigor in terms of reading load. Experiential learning will enhance academic learning.

Required Readings:

The reader for the course is required. I have pre-selected a few seminal articles for the first few weeks of class, and we will collectively develop the remainder of the course reader.

Course Topics: This list represents some possible weekly topics in the course

Sociology's unique perspective on schools
 History and Theories of Mass Education
 Schools as Organizations
 Education and Stratification Processes
 Race, Class, and Gender: Equality of Educational Opportunity?
 Families and Schools
 Peer Influences, Peer pressure, and friendship
 Students with disabilities in public and private schools
 Gender trends in schooling, Gender in the classroom, Gender relations
 Informal System and "the hidden curriculum" in schools
 Comparisons between US and other school systems around the world
 Tracking and Ability grouping: Pros and Cons
 Financing Schools
 Higher Education
 Educational Movements and Reform
 Change and Planning
 The teaching Profession
 The Future of Schooling in the United States
 No Child Left Behind: School Policy and Educational Improvement

We will have the opportunity to rename topics, combine or separate topics, or expand this list in multiple ways.

Course Assessment Strategies

- I. Service-learning journal **15%**
The service-learning journal will contain your weekly written reflections
- Each week I will spot-check journals and provide feedback to help students improve their service reflections
 - I will collect and grade the service-learning journal three times during the semester, after the third, sixth, and ninth collective reflection
 - Grades will be based on your
 1. Description your service-learning experiences
 2. Ability to connect your service-learning experiences to readings
-Each week we will develop reflection questions as guidelines to journal entrees
 3. Demonstrate changes or consistencies in your own perspectives resulting
-your journal should discuss how your service-learning experiences have influenced your perspectives
 4. Provide ethnographic notes and “thick” descriptions for academic research
 5. Compare and contrast your school experiences to those of your Reading Friend
- II. Collective reflections **15%**
This grade will be based upon my assessment of your contributions to classroom discussions and collective reflections.
- III. Mid-term reflective essay. **20%**
- IV. Final reflective essay. **20%**
- VI. Community Partner Report and Presentation **30%**
Report: 15% Presentation: 15%

Professionalism

I expect all students enrolled in Sociology of Education to uphold the highest professional standards in both their roles as university-level undergraduate students and as volunteers in East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools.

Professionalism In the classroom:

- I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Fortunately, the vast majority of LSU students uphold the highest standards of conduct. Unfortunately, there is a small minority that engages in dishonest academic behavior (i.e., cheating). When it comes to writing, some students have been misinformed about what constitutes plagiarism. The LSU library system now has an online plagiarism tutorial at <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism.html>
- Students may also see me any questions or concerns about these topics. Information can also be found in the Student Handbook.

Professionalism in Service

- I expect all students who tutor in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools to respect the school systems code of standards for teachers, teaching aids, staff, and volunteers.
- As you will be working with children, maintaining standards of dress and language are critical for setting a positive example, and establishing a relationship conducive to learning.
- Most importantly, students must respect confidentiality when it comes to children, teachers, and schools. We will discuss this in more detail during the first weeks of the semester.

Service-Learning Options

- All students will be required to
- Perform at least 10 tutoring sessions, one per week over 9 weeks, plus once during either Fall Holiday or Thanksgiving Week.
- Read Required Readings.
- Participate in classroom discussions and activities
- Beyond this students may choose between two options, both involving equivalent levels of scholarly rigor, but one emphasizing service and the other reading:

Option 1: Tutoring Intensive Track.

Students choosing the Tutoring Intensive Track will

1. Tutor twice a week, at least 20 tutoring sessions
2. Read Required Readings
3. Discussions about both Required and Supplementary Readings.
4. Read and review summaries of Supplementary Readings
5. Participate in reflections on service
6. Participate in discussions of Required and Supplementary Readings.

Option 2: The Reading Intensive Track

Students who choose the Reading Intensive Track will

1. Tutor once a week, minimum of 10 sessions
2. Read Required Readings.
3. Read Supplementary Readings and prepare written summaries
4. In addition, students in this track will prepare written summaries of Supplementary Readings in preparation for classroom discussions.

Students in both tracks will

1. Demonstrate learning-through service
2. Demonstrate learning through essays. Both tracks involve equivalent levels

Tentative Weekly Schedule (Note: Subject to Change)

Week 1:	Course Introduction
08-27	Course Overview: Service, Engagement, and Learning
08-29	Syllabus Review: Topics—Service and Other
08-31	Community Partner Introduction, Diversity Training
Week 2:	Self-Assessment, Service Ethics, Service Training
09-03	Labor Day
09-05	Students Self-Assessment, Service Ethics
09-07	VIPS Training
Week 3:	First Service Week: First Topic, Reflection, Research
09-10	First Topic and Reflection Questions,
09-12	Discuss Readings: Ethnographic Research Methods
09-14	Research Questions, Guiding Theory
Week 4:	Second Service Week: Second Topic
09-17	First Collective Reflection
09-19	Discuss Readings
09-21	Discuss Readings (video if appropriate)
Week 5:	Third Service Week: Third Topic
09-24	Second Collective Reflection
09-26	Discuss Readings
09-28	Discuss Readings (video if appropriate),
Week 6:	Fourth Service Week: Fourth Topic
10-01	Third Collective Reflection, SL journal review 1
10-03	Discuss Readings
10-05	Discuss Readings (video if appropriate),
Week 7:	Fifth Service Week: Fifth Topic
10-08	Fourth Collective Reflection
10-10	Discuss Readings, Mid-Term Essay Assigned
10-12	Fall Holiday, No Class
Week 8:	Sixth Service Week: (No New Topic This Week)
10-15	Fifth Collective Reflection
10-17	Mid-Term Essay Due
10-19	Video if appropriate
Week 9:	Seventh Service Week: Sixth Topic
10-22	Planning for Community Partner Report and Presentation1
0-24	Discuss Readings
10-26	Discuss Readings (video if appropriate),

- Week 10: Eighth Service Week: Seventh Topic
 10-29 Sixth Collective Reflection, SL journal review 2
 10-31 Discuss Readings
 11-02 Discuss Readings
- Week 11: Ninth Service Week: Eighth Topic
 11-05 Seventh Collective Reflection
 11-07 Discuss Readings
 11-09 Discuss Readings (video if appropriate)
- Week 12: Tenth Service Week: Ninth Topic
 11-12 Eighth Collective Reflection
 11-14 Discuss Readings
 11-16 Discuss Readings
- Week 13: Community Partner Report Preparation Week (No Service)
 11-19 Ninth Collective Reflection, SL Review 3
 11-21 Community Partner Report Preparation
 11-23 Thanksgiving Holiday
- Week 14: Supplementary Service Week, Tenth Topic (for reflection only, no new readings)
 11-26 Community Partner Report Due
 11-28 Community Partner Presentation
 11-30 Final
- Week 15: Supplementary Service Week, Final Reflections
 12-03 Supplementary Collective Reflection,
 12-05 Final Reflective Essay assigned, Continuing service
 12-07 Student Evaluation of Service-learning
- Week 16 Finals Week

Thursday, 12-13: 10:00 – 12:00pm: **Final Reflective Essay Due**
Supplementary SL journal due
End of Semester Party!