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### **EDUC 250 Sociological Perspectives on K-12 Education**

**Course description:** Education has served many roles in American society. It is the place where the common person meets the elite. It is the hope of equality of opportunity. It is the social arbiter for society's ills. And it is the ongoing experiment that sets the stage for the future successes or failures of America's children. Because of education's role in preparing citizens in this democracy, it is necessary to consider the sociological perspective on K-12 education. In this course, we will focus on five main sociological aspects of education: 1) sociological theories of education, 2) issues concerning diversity, 3) school choice, 4) court rulings on education, and 5) professional ethics.

Course content: Generally, we will discuss sociological theories such as human, cultural and social capital, social reproduction (conflict theory) and functionalism; we will consider the social factors of class status as it relates to and affects the educational opportunities of women, ethnic minorities, GLBTs and those with disabilities; we will explore the variety of public schooling options available to parents; we will examine court decisions that have altered and changed school practices; and we will investigate the behaviors and social practices that pose ethical questions for teachers in today's schools.

This course will involve discussion and in-depth reading on both historical and contemporary issues. Students will be introduced to and engage in use of U.S. Census and NCES tools, as well as, qualitative research methods. We will pursue activities and research that will help us uncover the reasons schools look and function the way they do today.

**Overall course objectives:** This course strives to offer a sociological perspective on the realities, policies and practices that have helped and continue to shape United States public schools. Students will begin to connect theory to policymaking, social change to school practice, student/parent actions to court decisions, etc.

**Specific goals of this course:** Students will gain knowledge of sociological theories that have helped educators understand the complexities of American public education. In order for students to understand educational inequality in American schools, students will explore specific instances of minority inequality. Students will come to understand the reasons parents have chosen educational options outside the public school and why school choice has become part of our educational system by examining such school choice options as alternative schools, charter schools and homeschooling. Students will make connections between parent, student and school administration choices and court

decisions by reading and debating those decisions that have altered or changed public schools. Students will recognize the ethical behaviors and decisions within education that may shape their personal views of what it means to be a public employee. And, in order for students to connect social change to the factors that influence school policies and practices in a practical sense, we will use demographic and statistical tools such as those offered through the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Educational Statistics.

**Readings:**

Readings will be drawn from among these social scientists:

Durkheim—On Education and Society

Weber-----excerpts from Economy & Society: Status Groups and Classes and The Types of Legitimate Domination

Marx-----excerpts from Capital: Volume I—Simple Reproduction and Machinery and Large-Scale Industry

Bourdieu—excerpts from Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture

Coleman—Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital

Bowles & Gintis—excerpts from Schooling in Capitalist America, recent articles

Bills—excerpts from The Sociology of Education and Work

Collins—excerpts from The Credentialist Society

Parsons—excerpts from The School Class as a Social System

Portes—articles including: Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology; The Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants; book: Immigrant America: A Portrait

Bell—excerpts from The Coming of Post-Industrial Society

Lareau—excerpts from Unequal Childhoods: Race, Class and Family Life

Lee & Burkham—excerpts from Inequality at the Starting Gate

Thorne—excerpts from Gender Play

Rosenbaum—excerpts from Beyond College for All

Schneider—excerpts from The Ambitious Generation

Dreeban—articles: Race, Instruction and Learning; How Schools Work

Dewey—excerpts from Democracy and Education, Experience and Nature, Freedom and Culture

Apple—excerpts from Education and Power, Ideology and Curriculum

Hodson—excerpts from Dignity in the Workplace

Arum—excerpts from Judging School Discipline

Knowles & Mayberry--Homeschooling

Stevens—excerpts from Kingdom of Children

Fuller—excerpts from Inside Charter Schools

Goffman—excerpts from The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life