

Office Hours: Tu and Th 3:30-4:30 CREATE (SSRB 164); Tu & Th; 1:00-2:00 *by appointment*

We examine current theories and research about differential educational achievement in US schools, including: (1) theories that focus on the characteristics of people (e. g., their biological makeup, their psychological characteristics, their human nature, their essential qualities), (2) theories that focus on the characteristics of groups and settings, (e. g., ethnic group culture, school culture) and (3) theories that examine how cultural processes mediate political-economic constraints and human action. The educational consequences of these positions, especially for low income and ethnic and linguistic minority students in the US, are discussed.

REQUIRED READINGS: A xerox packet is on sale at Cal Copy

STUDENT EVALUATION: There will be 8 one-page reflections, 1 take-home midterm exam, and a take-home final. The first 4 reflections will be due before the first midterm; the second 4 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 at 3:00 on December 10th. The exams will ask you to analyze course materials, construct a sociological argument and defend it against competing interpretations. The 8 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 FOR MIDTERM, FINAL AND SOME REFLECTIONS:

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

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

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

Level 4 The argument has a claim with data or warrant with a clearly defined rebuttal.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONE PAGE REFLECTIONS: I will assign you to groups of 4 on the first day of class. You will meet and prepare a group response to questions that I ask you each week. Each member of the group will be responsible for assembling and reporting one of the reflections.

(Sept 24 & Sep 29) Introduction: The Problem of Inequality in American Education

Booth et al, "Making Good Arguments: An Overview"

Mehan, "Understanding Inequality" (gives overview of the course)

Mehan, "Demographic Information and Evidence of Inequality"-on website

(Oct 1 & Oct 6) Cultural Mediation

Eastman, "Language and Culture"

Mehan, "The Discourse of the Illegal Immigration Debate"

Lakoff, "Don't Think of an Elephant," pp. 17, then 7-13

(Oct 8 & 13) The "Cultural Deprivation" Account and Its Educational Implications

Bereiter & Englemann, "Cultural Deprivation as Linguistic Deprivation"

More, "Native American Learning Styles: A Review . . ."

Valenzuela, pp 127-133 from Subtractive Schooling

Payne, A Framework for Understanding Poverty, pp. 42-49 and 123-124

Bomer, "Miseducating Teachers about the Poor: A Critical Analysis of Ruby Payne's Claims about Poverty"

(Oct 15 & 20) A Critique of the Cultural Deprivation Account

Labov, "Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence"

Rogoff, "Beyond Ethnocentrism and Deficit Models" (p.15 only)

Schweinhart et al, "Consequences of 3 Preschool Curriculum Models "

(Oct 22 & 27) The "Cultural Discontinuity" Account of Inequality

MacLeod, "Bourdieu's Cultural Capital and *Habitus*"

Mehan, "What Time is it Denise?"

Heath, "Questions at Home and School"

(Oct 29 & Nov 3) Educational Recommendations from Cultural Discontinuity Research

Au & Jordan, "Teaching Reading to Hawaiian Children"

McCarty et al, "Classroom Inquiry and Navajo Learning Styles"

Lee, "A Culturally-Based Cognitive Apprenticeship Model"

Delpit. , "The Silenced Dialogue"

Burns, "Transcript of Ratio and Proportion Lesson"

(Nov 5 & 10) Widening the Context to Include Social Structural Constraints:

The Minority Status Thesis, A Critique, and Educational Implications

Ogbu, "Black-American Students and the Academic Achievement Gap"

Gibson, "Complicating the Typology"

Kasinitz et al., "The Second Generation Advantage"

**(Nov 12, 17, & 19) Towards A Comprehensive Sociological Account of Inequality:
Cultural Practices Mediating Structure and Agency in the Production of Inequality**

MacLeod, "Teenagers in Clarendon Heights"

Lareau, "Social Class and Family-School Relations"

Lareau, "Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life"

(Nov 24 & Dec 1) Towards A Comprehensive Sociological Account of Inequality:

The Role of the School in Producing Inequality and Equality

Oakes, "Critical Conditions in College Equity and Access"

Mehan, "Understanding Inequality" (from Week #1)

Alvarez & Mehan, "Whole School Detracking, A Strategy For Excellence and Equity"

(Dec 3) Summary and Conclusion

Sociology/EDS 117
Fall 2009

Assigned Readings

Language, Culture & Education
Hugh Mehan

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