

# SOC 548: SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

## Spring 2022 Syllabus

Portland State University – Tuesdays, 2pm-4:50pm

*Synchronously Remote – Tuesdays, 2p-3:30p* (<https://pdx.zoom.us/j/88600742301>)

### QUESTIONS

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**Instructor.** Dara Shifrer, Associate Professor of Sociology

**Office hours.** Thursdays 1p-2p (<https://pdx.zoom.us/j/86778287773>) or by appointment (dshifrer@pdx.edu)

#### Asking questions outside of class:

- **Step 1:** Check to see if your question has been answered in the syllabus or in the Canvas discussion thread “Student Questions.”
- **Step 2:** Post your question in the Canvas discussion thread “Student Questions.” Your question can be answered by classmates or the Instructor. It is appropriate to post both procedural or theoretical/conceptual questions. Class communication will become more efficient as classmates with the same question benefit from your post.
- **Step 3:** If your question is personal or you do not receive an answer after 24 hours on the Canvas discussion thread, email me at [dshifrer@pdx.edu](mailto:dshifrer@pdx.edu). If you email me through Canvas, I cannot guarantee a response within 24 hours.

### LEARNING GOALS

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This four-credit course is a comprehensive review of classic and contemporary works from the sociology of education literature. Moving beyond simply reading and pontificating, this class is designed to teach you how to comprehend, synthesize, and effectively write about academic readings, and how to write in accordance with academic norms. Practically speaking, this class will begin to prepare you to successfully pass comprehensive/qualifying exams and to write the literature review sections of peer-reviewed manuscripts or books. The readings in this class are a departure from traditional “comps reading lists” or graduate seminar courses. With the various technologies that support research, scholarly output has increased exponentially such that most lists are too narrow in scope. Moreover, while it is important to understand the foundations of a field, traditional reading lists often exclude research from scholars who are under-represented or marginalized in academia. Although predominantly focused on work from sociologists, the readings will also include a few curveballs; sociologists’ patterns of thinking become more clear when you read work from other disciplines, and the future of research is transdisciplinary. Finally, the readings represent a diverse range of approaches or methodologies (e.g., theoretical, quantitative, qualitative).

- Learn sociological perspectives of education
- Read strategically and collaboratively
- Document readings in ways that facilitate comprehension and retention
- Log readings to facilitate future synthesis and citing
- Recognize the normative structure of literature reviews in academia
- Write comprehensively, clearly, and concisely
- Provide constructive criticism on peers’ writings

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### REQUIRED MATERIALS

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**Required Textbook.** None

**Internet.** This course is entirely remote and will require a reliable internet connection. Your connection should enable you to search the web, use email, attach and upload documents, and download and save files. Internet issues will not be a valid excuse for a late assignment – find an alternative source for internet now and do not attempt to complete assignments at the last minute.

**Google Drive.** Most course materials will be stored in a Google Drive folder rather than Canvas.

**Canvas.** Student discussion threads and grades will occur on Canvas (<https://canvas.pdx.edu/>). If you have trouble accessing your Canvas account, contact the OIT help desk (SMSU 18) at 503-725-HELP (4357) or [help@pdx.edu](mailto:help@pdx.edu).

### GUIDELINES

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**Class Activities.** People learn best when they are active, engaged, and even guiding the learning of others. While some class meetings will involve direct instruction on a topic from me, every class meeting will include students' verbal descriptions of the main findings or points of the week's readings (i.e., what they added to the Reading Log); a group discussion of any clarifying questions; a student Mini Synthesis Presentation of the week's readings; and a student-guided class discussion on theoretical, empirical, or policy relevant extensions of the readings. Learning to write academically—comprehensively, clearly, and concisely—takes a lot of practice and, if you're lucky enough to have a source, a lot of feedback. Both writing practice and feedback are interwoven throughout this course. You will not only support your classmates by reviewing their work but will benefit from getting to read others' writings and crafting constructive feedback. Every week, you will complete Reading Outline Summaries for the reading(s) assigned to you, complete the Reading Log for the reading(s) assigned to you, prepare your Mini Synthesis Presentation if it's your assigned week, and edit a classmate's Mini Synthesis of the prior week's readings. By the end of the term, you will have a full set of products to use in the future to facilitate your comprehension and retention of the readings, as well as the ability to efficiently synthesize and cite the readings for different goals. You will also be well prepared to be successful on the Question Response due at the end of the term. Because of the collaborative structure of the course, your completion of course assignments in a timely manner is essential for the progression of the course and the success of your classmates.

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**Class Climate.** Although the focus is usually on public presentations, sharing your writing and ideas is also nerve-wracking and even intimate. This class is founded in a shared understanding that people have access to different quantities and quality of learning opportunities before this point in time, so no judgment. All feedback will be delivered with a gentle tone and constructive phrasing. Providing lots of feedback is a signal that you are engaged in your classmate’s work and eager to support their success. It is also important to learn to receive feedback graciously, and to act on it so that you can actually change and grow. In fact, not engaging with and responding to feedback is one of the few ways you can fail this course. Similarly, in verbal exchanges, students should feel comfortable to acknowledge when something doesn’t make sense to them, to express diverse ideas, and to simply have a voice. Instead of being the student who dominates the class discussion, pose a question to a classmate who hasn’t had a chance to speak. It’s helpful to document and organize readings in multiple ways. In my experience, there are three useful modes: 1) a really concise list (the ‘Reading Log’ in this class), 2) more detailed summaries of individual readings (the ‘Reading Outline Summaries’ in this class), and 3) a document that synthesizes multiple readings on the same topic in an outline format (somewhere between this class’s ‘Question Response Outline’ and ‘Question Response’).

### ASSIGNMENTS

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**1000 total points** available for the term:

Final draft of Question Response	250
Edits to classmate’s Question Response	35
First draft of Question Response	100
Edits to classmate’s Question Response Outline	10
Mini Synthesis Presentation	100
Question Response Outline	100
Question selection	10
10 Reading Outline Summaries at 10 points each	100
10 Reading Log entry completions at 5 points each	50
10 Mini Syntheses at 10 points each	100
9 Mini Synthesis Edits at 5 points each	45
10 Class Participations at 10 points each	100

Grade	%
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	86-89%
B	82-85%
B-	80-81%
C+	76-79%

Grade	%
C	72-75%
C-	70-71%
D+	66-69%
D	62-65%
D-	60-61%
F	≤59%

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This class's **Reading Log** is a spreadsheet that summarizes the readings in a concise and visible way, including columns for a citation, type of reading, main approach/methodology, data source/context, main findings/points, etc. I still use the one I started in graduate school nearly fifteen years later and it now has nearly 8,000 entries. I will start each entry in the class Reading Log and each reading will be assigned one student to complete the entry.

This class's **Reading Outline Summaries** will be longer summaries of articles that use the article's actual headers and subheaders as an organizing outline. In daily practice, this is a strategy I use for really key articles and particularly for books. They are incredibly useful for reminding yourself of the important points in the article, more thorough than the blurbs in the Reading Log but quicker than re-reading the entire article. Each reading for this class will be assigned to two students for a Reading Outline Summary. Classmates will potentially completely rely on these summaries to complete their weekly Mini Syntheses, so strive to strike a balance between being comprehensive but also focused and brief. The template in Google Drive provides a standardized format, including Word Headings for the article headers/subheaders. We tend to not read headers/subheaders in a normal-read; you'll be surprised at how organizing your notes on the reading within the author's own organization clarifies your big-picture view of the reading. These Summaries will also be a tool for building your understanding of normative academic structures for articles and book chapters. Direct quotations (enclosed in quotation marks to avoid plagiarism) may be useful for specific definitions but, in general, it is more helpful to you and your classmates to summarize main points in your own words. Students' comprehension of the readings will be improved by the different viewpoints their two classmates incorporate into their respective Summaries of the same reading. If Reading Outline Summaries for the same reading are not distinct, the students will face penalties related to cheating and plagiarism. Students are, of course, welcome to read all the readings. But, by dividing the labor, we'll be able to progress through approximately 250 pages per week and accomplish a reading list of unprecedented comprehensiveness. Similarly, you'll get a taste of many different books, some of which you might ultimately buy and read in entirety. You are expected to read your classmates' Reading Outline Summaries before the next class meeting, and in support of completing your Mini Synthesis. Readings with one author are referenced "Abbott 1993"; readings with two authors are referenced "Balk & Colbalt 2010"; readers with three or more authors are referenced "Davids et al. 1984".

Every student will submit a **Mini Synthesis** of the week's readings before the start of class. This Synthesis, only one to three paragraphs, will be based on the readings the student completed Reading Outline Summaries for, as well as the readings which were summarized by classmates. These Syntheses are not for expressing your opinion on the readings but rather essential practice in synthesizing multiple studies in a comprehensive, clear, and concise way. You will be asked to evaluate the readings in a separate location each week to

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help me improve the course the next time I teach it. These Syntheses build students' capacity to write a successful Question Response for their final grade. The Mini Synthesis rubric on the course Google Drive transparently outlines this assignment's expectations and the criteria along which grading will occur. Moreover, each week, each student's Mini Synthesis will be edited by a classmate (as assigned by me). This editing will be structured by the rubric and will benefit both the recipient and the student providing the constructive criticism.

Each week, one student will transform their Mini Synthesis into a **Mini Synthesis Presentation**, i.e., a powerpoint addressing all the items in the Mini Synthesis rubric in a tangible and engaging way. In addition, the presenter will incorporate critical questions for their classmates related to what implications the week's reading have for theoretical, empirical, or policy relevant extensions. The questions can be creative and will hopefully press classmates to think critically about the theme.

The coursework culminates in a **Question Response**. Early in the term, students will identify the question they'd like to respond to. I will provide a list of sociology of education comps questions students can select. If students' discipline or educational focus is different or more specific, students can also craft their own question (ideally in concert with a faculty advisor). To build good writing habits, students will first submit a Question Response Outline which will receive feedback. To facilitate success on the final draft, students will also submit a first draft of their Question Response which will also receive feedback. A detailed rubric is provided on the course Google Drive to support student efforts in all of these steps.

**Class Participation.** Because collaboration is such a key component of the class, as it is in academia and the workforce, you will receive 10 points for each class you attend and actively engage in. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 10 minutes before the end of class, you will receive no points for attending class that day.

**Late Assignments.** Because of the collaborative structure of the course, your completion of course assignments in a timely manner is essential for the progression of the course and the success of your classmates. Points received will be reduced by 20% for each day late. For instance, for work due at 5p on a Tuesday, work submitted between 5:01pm on that Tuesday through 5:00pm on Wednesday will be considered one day late—and so on.

**Accommodations.** Any student with a physical, psychiatric/emotional, or learning disability is encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center to arrange academic accommodations to support your success in the course (503-725-4150, [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu)).

**Academic Honesty.** The PSU Student Conduct Code prohibits all forms of academic cheating, fraud, and dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, buying and selling

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of assignments for others, unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information, and other practices understood to academically dishonor. Plagiarism describes the use of another person's words or ideas without giving that person credit. Information on avoiding plagiarism is available at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>. Any assignment found to be academically dishonest will receive no credit and the student will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Student Life. If any additional incidents of academic dishonesty occur, the student will fail the course.

**Harassment and Discrimination.** As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help>.

**Recommendation Letters.** You will likely need professors to write recommendation letters for you in the future (e.g., further education, jobs, internships). Professors are not obligated to write references for any student who asks. Hardworking, collegial, intellectually inquisitive, and honest students make it easy to write outstanding and effective recommendation letters. Consider maintaining relationships over time with professors, so that they know you well enough to write letters for you.

#### **Resources to Support Your Success**

The OWL at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/>)

The Emory Writing Center (<http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/>)

Free tutoring at The Learning Center in Millar Library, NW corner, 2nd floor  
(<https://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/>)

PSU Writing Center (<http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu>)

PSU Research Tools & Collections (<http://library.pdx.edu/research/>)

PSU Academic Advising (<http://www.pdx.edu/veterans/academic-advising>)

PSU Center for Student Health and Counseling (<http://www.pdx.edu/shac/>)



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#### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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Course schedule subject to change with reasonable notice.

#### **Readings:**

**A** – Schools as a Social Institution: What is the Purpose of Education?

**B** – Schools and Students' Social Location: How Do Experiences Within Schools Vary by Gender?

**C** – Schools and Social Reproduction: What are Human, Cultural, and Social Capital?

**D** – The Organization of Schools: What Structural Differences are Evident Across Schools?

**E** – Schools and Students' Social Location: How Do Experiences Within Schools Vary by Race/Ethnicity?

**F** – The Organization of Schools: What Structural Differences are Evident Within Schools?

**G** – Schools as a Social Institution: What is the Purpose of Higher Education and How Has it Changed Over Time?

**H** – The Organization of Schools: How do Schools' Social Climates Shape Students' Social Psyches?

**I** – Schools and Social Reproduction: How do Schools and Families Shape Students' Life Outcomes?

**J** – Schools and Social Reproduction: What Role do Schools Play in Macro-Level Stratification and Social Mobility?

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Week	Due Tuesdays at 2pm			Due Fridays at 5pm				
	Evaluate the week's readings in Google Drive	Email Dr. Shifrer your Mini Synthesis of the readings in folder:	Prepare your Mini Synthesis Presentation if it's your week	Upload the Reading Outline Summaries assigned to you in folder:	Complete the Reading Log for the readings assigned to you in folder:	Email your classmate & Dr. Shifrer your edits to your classmate's Mini Synthesis	Other	
<b>1</b>	March 29			April 1	A	A		
<b>2</b>	April 5	A	A	?	April 8	B	B	A
<b>3</b>	April 12	B	B	?	April 15	C	C	B
<b>4</b>	April 19	C	C	?	April 22	D	D	C
<b>5</b>	April 26	D	D	?	April 29	E	E	D



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Week	Due Tuesdays at 2pm					Due Fridays at 5pm				
			Email Dr. Shifrer your	Prepare your Mini			Upload the Reading Outline	Complete the Reading Log for the readings	Email your classmate & Dr. Shifrer your edits to your classmate's	
			Evaluate the week's readings in Google Drive	Mini Synthesis of the readings in folder:	Presentation if it's your week		Summaries assigned to you in folder:	assigned to you in folder:	Mini Synthesis	Other
<b>6</b>	May 3	E	E	?	May 6	F	F	E	Email Dr. Shifrer the <b>Question</b> you plan to respond to	
<b>7</b>	May 10	F	F	?	May 13	G	G	F	Email Dr. Shifrer your <b>Question Response Outline</b>	
<b>8</b>	May 17	G	G	?	May 20	H	H	G	Email classmate and Dr. Shifrer your <b>edits to your classmate's Question Response Outline</b>	

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<b>9</b>	May 24	H	H	?	May 27	I	I	H	Email Dr. Shifrer the <b>first draft of your Question Response</b>
<b>10</b>	May 31	I	I	?	June 3	J	J	I	Email classmate and Dr. Shifrer your <b>edits to your classmate's Question Response</b>
<b>Finals</b>	June 7	J	J	?	June 10				Email Dr. Shifrer the <b>final draft of your Question Response</b>