INSTRUCTOR
Lindsey Wilkinson, Associate Professor of Sociology, Cramer Hall 217N, 503-725-3975
(Pronouns: He, him, his)
Email: lindsw@pdx.edu (*Please do not email me through D2L*) Email is the best way to reach me. During the week (M-F) I will check my emails frequently and respond to your email within 24 hours.
Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANT
Philip Tostado, Cramer Hall 217; Email: ptostado@pdx.edu; Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Through analysis of course readings and the HBO series *The Wire: The Complete Fourth Season*, this course will examine education in the United States from a sociological perspective. The primary goal of the course is to use sociology to understand the U.S. educational system, including its inputs, outputs, and organization, incorporating an analysis of both individuals (agency) and institutions (structure). This course will investigate such topics as the role of schooling in society, the social structure of schools, social stratification and social reproduction, the dynamics of race, class, and gender in education, student-teacher relationships, school choice, and educational outcomes.

Why is primary school compulsory in the U.S.? Should everyone go to college? Why do some students learn more than others? How do schools perpetuate social inequality? How does the “culture” of a school shape the learning environment and how does the culture differ from one school to the next? How is the institution of education related to other social institutions? How do other societies structure their educational systems differently than the U.S.? These are some of the questions we will consider this term using sociological theories. We will rely heavily on open systems theory, which views the U.S. educational system as a whole, integrated, dynamic entity comprised of parts and processes. *The Wire*, while fictional, is an excellent example of how education in the U.S., like other social institutions, is a complex, integrated, and dynamic entity that is dependent upon processes occurring within other social institutions such as the political and economic systems. *The Wire* also demonstrates how life outcomes are a complex combination of both individual choices and institutional constraints.

****Friendly warning about graphic content: *The Wire* is quite graphic and includes many scenes of violence and adult language (I would consider it R rated). If this is something you are unable to tolerate, you may want to consider dropping the course. However, if you find yourself in this situation, I would strongly encourage you to stick it out and to consider the writers’ and directors’ intent in including the violence and language.****

COURSE MATERIALS (Required)
(1) Readings posted on D2L.
(3) *The Wire: The Complete Fourth Season*. Producer David Simon. HBO, 2006. TV mini-series. DVDs will be available on reserve at the library. However, I would recommend purchasing your own copy. Individual episodes (and the entire season) are available for purchase at amazon.com and itunes. They are relatively inexpensive. You can stream the entire season for free if you have Amazon Prime or HBO GO.
COURSE WEBSITE

THIS IS A COMPLETELY ON-LINE COURSE. In order to succeed, you must have reliable internet access that will allow you to navigate/search the web, stream videos, use email, attach and upload documents, and download and save files.

- All course materials and grades will be available on D2L (https://d2l.pdx.edu). I will also use D2L to communicate with the class, usually through “News” on D2L.
- **PLEASE DO NOT email me through D2L** The best way to get in touch with me is to email me directly at lindsw@pdx.edu.
- If you are having trouble accessing your D2L account or do not have an ODIN account please contact the OIT help desk (Smith Memorial Student Union (SMSU) 18) at 503-725-HELP (4357) or help@pdx.edu.
- It is your responsibility to check D2L regularly for important announcements.

COURSE STRUCTURE

I will post weekly modules on Mondays (10 times during the ten-week term), which will include the following:

- Questions to guide your reading
- When necessary, PowerPoint slides summarizing course material and information not found in the assigned course material
- Links to quizzes and discussions

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Total Points: 500)

- **Bi-Weekly Discussion Participation (100 points):** There will be five online discussions (every other week) under “Discussions” on D2L. You will be required to participate in four of the five discussions. Specific instructions for each discussion will be provided in the bi-weekly instructions. Each discussion will be worth 25 points. Discussions will be based heavily on course readings and The Wire episodes.
- **Quizzes (100 points):** There will be ten quizzes throughout the term to be completed on D2L. There will be links to quizzes in the weekly instructions posted under course content. You can also access quizzes using the “Activities” tab in D2L. Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Quizzes will be based heavily off of reading guides posted each week. If you miss a quiz for a reason other than a university approved reason, you can “make up” the quiz by doing extra credit (see below). You will have 60 minutes to complete each quiz once you begin, and you will have two attempts at each quiz. You will have one week to complete each quiz.
- **Application Papers (300 points):** You will be required to complete any three (3) of the following seven paper options OR to write one (1) educational autobiography as described below. If you choose to write the three papers, each will be worth 100 points. If you choose to write the educational biography, it will be worth 300 points. No late papers will be accepted, so please make sure you understand the options and due dates. I have listed due dates below in the course schedule. I will also post due dates in the calendar on D2L. Please turn in your papers in the appropriate dropboxes on D2L, which can be found under the “Activities” tab.

1. **Inspiring Teaching, DUE 4/17.** Identify a really effective course assignment and teacher you have had at PSU (or other school). Set up an appointment with the instructor and interview her or him about the objectives of the assignment and the instructor’s intent in designing the learning experience (this can be done through a few short questions via phone or email or in person). Then identify one of the boys introduced in The Wire (Namond, Randy, Michael, or Duquan) and consider how he might experience the assignment and whether he would consider it a truly excellent learning experience too. Write a paper (3-5 typed, double-spaced pages) in which you identify why the assignment was helpful to you as a learner, what the instructor had in mind, whether the intent and the outcome matched, and whether (or why) the experience may or may not be effective for the chosen character from The Wire. After reflecting on the
interview, the Roberts (2002) reading covering effective teaching, and what you have observed in *The Wire*, conclude with a discussion of the elements of effective teaching and learning.

**Criteria for evaluation:**
- Ability to identify several key elements and relationships between these elements in effective teaching and learning
- Sophistication of the analysis, including analysis of the teacher and learner roles
- Ability to connect concepts from course readings
- Ability to integrate *The Wire*
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with References using APA format, conclusion)

2. **Were You Pushed or Did You Jump (or both). DUE 5/1.** Consider how you ended up here at PSU and whether you were pushed, pulled, or both pushed and pulled (Gambetta 1987). Also, identify one of *The Wire* characters working within the Stanfield Organization (e.g., Marlo, Chris, Snoop, Bodie) and discuss whether you think this character was pushed or pulled (or both) into their current occupation. Make sure to define pushed and pulled in relation to structure and agency, integrating Gambetta (1987) and Chaddha and Wilson (2011) and to use these terms to explain your current status as a PSU student and the character’s status as a drug dealer.

**Criteria for evaluation:**
- Accuracy in definition and application of concepts
- Sophistication of reflection and comparison and contrast
- Ability to relate concepts and theories from course readings
- Ability to integrate *The Wire*
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

3. **Comparative Analysis of Articles. DUE 5/8.** Find a research article (in a peer-reviewed sociology journal) on a topic covered either in class readings or lecture. This article must reflect a sociological approach to education, so please don’t pick an article that focuses solely on, for example, an educational intervention, that doesn’t take a sociological perspective. Here are some good sociology journals to consider:

   *Sociology of Education*
   *Sociological Quarterly*
   *Sociological Perspectives*
   *American Sociological Review*
   *American Journal of Sociology*
   *Social Science Quarterly*
   *Gender & Society*

Next, find one article, preferably on the same general topic as the academic article selected (above), from a popular newspaper or magazine such as *The New York Times* or *Newsweek*. Both articles must have been published in the last 18 months.

**Using these two articles (the academic journal article and the article from the popular press), write a comparison paper (3 to 5 typed, double-spaced pages) in which you:**
Summarize the articles
Provide a comparison and contrast of how a sociologist and journalist approach the subject (for example, what is considered convincing evidence? What are the differences in the amount of attention given to structural issues and to the larger social context of the problem? What are the differences in the sophistication of the causal reasoning?)
Include copies of (or web links to) the articles as an appendix.

Criteria for evaluation:
- Accuracy of summary
- Relevance to class topics and readings – is it sociological?
- Level of critical analysis as opposed to pure summary
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

4. Educational Capital Reflection, DUE 5/15. Identify and define at least three different types of capital (e.g., human capital, social capital) discussed by Teachman et al., Lareau and Horvat, Bankston, and/or Lee. Write a paper (3-5 typed, double-spaced pages) comparing/contrasting how these different types of capital have helped or hindered your educational success and the success of a character of your choice from The Wire.

Criteria for evaluation:
- Accuracy in identification and definition of capital discussed in articles
- Sophistication of comparison and contrast
- Ability to relate concepts and theories from course readings
- Ability to integrate The Wire
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

5. Middle School Reflection, DUE 5/22. Considering the Lee and Morris readings discussing race, discipline, and symbolic capital, write a paper (3-5 typed, double-spaced pages) reflecting on the making and enforcement of rules in your own middle school and in Tilghman Middle School (from The Wire). Reflect on the manner in which rules were made and enforced in your school and in Tilghman and whether or not the result of these rules was to encourage students and strengthen self-esteem or to lower self-esteem and cause discouragement. In short, do you think the rules and discipline in your middle school were different from what you have seen in Tilghman Middle in The Wire? Why or why not?

Criteria for evaluation:
- Sophistication of reflection on the rules and discipline (and “hidden curriculum”) in your own middle school and in Tilghman Middle
- Ability to recognize how the making and enforcement of rules may vary across schools and effect different groups within the same school differently
- Ability to relate concepts and theories from course readings
- Ability to integrate The Wire
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)
6. Cross-Cultural Comparison. DUE 5/29. Identify several aspects of the U.S. educational system that have been brought to light, either directly or indirectly, through The Wire. Then select a country other than the U.S. and learn about these aspects of this country’s educational system. Write a report (4-6 typed, double-spaced pages) summarizing your findings and offering comparison/contrast between the U.S. and the country you have chosen. Some ideas of things to focus on:

- Goals of educational system
- School segregation
- Intergenerational mobility and what leads to school success
- Who has access to what levels of education
- Curriculum/purpose of curriculum
- Student/teacher roles including formal and informal rules
- Percent of students (males/females) who attain certain levels of education
- Other factors of interest

Criteria for evaluation:
- Clarity and sophistication of thesis
- Indication of careful, thorough research
- Sensitivity to issues explored in this course (social structure, social inequality, formal and hidden curriculum, etc.)
- Sophistication of comparison and contrast
- Integration of The Wire
- Composition and mechanics (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

7. Educational “Problem” and Policy Analysis. DUE 6/8. Identify an educational problem, inequality, or issue that has been brought to your attention, either directly or indirectly, in The Wire. Write a paper (3-5 typed, double-spaced pages) briefly describing the problem, including why you see it as a problem, and suggest how an educational (or non-educational) policy (e.g., charter schools, standardized testing, teacher merit pay, tracking, free community college) would or would not address this problem.

Criteria for evaluation:
- Clear identification of problem
- Adequate discussion of policy and how policy would or would not reduce problem
- Sensitivity to issues explored in this course (social structure, social inequality, formal and hidden curriculum, etc.)
- Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

Educational Biography. DUE 6/8. In lieu of 3 shorter papers, you have the option of completing one educational biography, which should be 10-12 typed, double-spaced pages. You must compare/contrast your own educational career with the hypothetical educational career of one of the characters from The Wire, making sure to use some of the sociological concepts covered in this course. Describe your educational career and your chosen character’s educational career in general, and also include specific examples where relevant. Please make it clear which character you are discussing.

Types of topics to consider:
- School structure and organization
- Impact of your parents, peers, teachers, and neighborhood (including different types of “capital”)
• Type of hidden curriculum that was present in your school
• Types of teachers that had an impact—positively or negatively. Why did they influence you? For the really good teacher, what made them so good?
• Types of tests and other assessments of your learning
• Gender stereotyping or other reinforcement of gender differences
• Socioeconomic reproduction by the schools (tracking; grouping; labeling)
• Predominant educational philosophy of your various schools
• Type of college selected by you and reasons for that selection
• Likely consequence of that selection for your future socioeconomic status
• Impact your education had on shaping your identity and your options in the future

These topics are illustrative only. Make the paper a thoughtful, creative, synthetic, well-written comparison of your own and your chosen character’s potential educational career through the eyes of one now familiar with some basic concepts, principles and research in the sociology of education. You must write this utilizing a sociological perspective, not just personal reminiscences, and you must acknowledge aspects of both individual and institutional (social structural) challenges, successes, and constraints.

Criteria for evaluation:
  o Number of different concepts/issues dealt with
  o Ability to compare/contrast to The Wire character
  o Extent to which paper reflects sociological analysis
  o Extent to which you draw on elementary, secondary, and university experiences
  o Extent to which you interrelate concepts
  o Extent to which you note relevant ideas from course readings
  o Composition and mechanics, including proper essay format (introductory paragraph with thesis, well organized body paragraphs, evidence supporting claims, in-text citations with Reference List using APA format, conclusion)

EXTRA CREDIT
You may earn up to 20 extra credit points by participating in an additional D2L discussion or by completing an additional application paper.

GRADING SCALE

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 100% (Excellent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86 – 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82 – 85% (Good)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76 – 79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72 – 75% (Satisfactory)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66 – 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62-65% (Inferior)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>≤ 59 (Failure, no credit)</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>≥ 70%</td>
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COURSE POLICIES

Net Etiquette: In all of your course communications, whether formal or informal, you are required to observe the rules of netiquette. They include the following:

General Rules from PSU D2L help:
- Avoid using all CAPS as it can give the impression that you are shouting. If you want to emphasize a point, use *asterisks* around a word.
- Avoid personal attacks, otherwise known as "flaming." If you read a message that you suspect might be a personal attack, resist the temptation to fire off a response. Instead, let your response sit before sending or request that your instructor resolve the situation.
- If you disagree with a fellow student, describe your perspective clearly and politely rather than primarily criticizing her/his comments. Avoid any personal criticism or potentially offensive language.

Additional Rules for the Class:
- Be respectful when making a comment or responding to others’ comments. This rule is the same as for face-to-face classroom behavior. However, as there is no body language or tone of voice in our online communications, please use formal English appropriately.
- Be extra polite, careful, and kind about how you express yourself while posting to a discussion board, and emailing me or the TA.
- Avoid those thousand-word lengthy posts, and avoid posting dozens of messages a week. In the interests of time, which I know none of you have enough of, please work on being succinct.
- Avoid the twitter and text message abbreviations. Not everyone knows them.
- Finally, if you run into any netiquette-related problems—if something has offended or hurt your feelings, for instance—please e-mail me directly about it. I would like to be aware of any problems.

Deadlines and Make-ups. No late work will be accepted without a university approved excuse. Please email me (lindsw@pdx.edu) (preferably before the quiz) if you know you will need to make-up a quiz, and please be able to document your excuse.

Requirements for Papers. Papers should be typed using 12-pt font, double-spacing, and 1-inch margins. All papers should include your name and the name of the assignment (e.g., Inspiring Teaching) at the top of the page. All papers should be checked and corrected for spelling and grammar errors. You may be marked down if you have multiple spelling and/or grammar errors.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense than can result in a failing grade and other serious consequences, including expulsion. Plagiarism occurs when you utilize the ideas, expressions, phrases or words of another person without correctly citing that person or source. Make sure you understand how to correctly cite sources, including when and how to paraphrase and quote. I expect you to cite all sources used in all assignments assigned for this course using correct APA format. There are many on-line sources (like the OWL at Purdue) that document proper citation format. In the context of this course, the first incident of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the task. Any further incidents will result in an F for the course.

Academic Accommodations: If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, or learning disability that may impact your ability to carry out assigned course work, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and arrange appropriate academic accommodations that you may require. The DRC is located in 435 Smith and can be contacted at 725-4150 or by email at drc@pdx.edu. Visit their site at http://www.drc.pdx.edu/.
**Recommended Materials for Writing Help**
Here are some helpful online grammar and writing resources:

**The OWL at Purdue University**  
[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/)

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center  
[http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/)

**PSU Writing Center**  
[http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu](http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu)  
One-on-one help with writing, on a drop-in or appointment basis  
188F Cramer Hall, 725.3570

The PSU Writing Center Online Resources:  

**Other Resources to Help You Succeed at PSU**

**Millar Library**  
[http://www.lib.pdx.edu](http://www.lib.pdx.edu)  
Reference desk, phone, IM, email, 24/7 chat:  
[http://library.pdx.edu/askus.html](http://library.pdx.edu/askus.html)

**Advising and Career Services**  
[http://www.pdx.edu/advising/home](http://www.pdx.edu/advising/home)  
Drop-in advising hours are Monday-Friday, 10:30-11:30 and 1-2:30 (subject to change) OR call/email to schedule an appointment: 402 University Services Building, 725.4005,  
[askACS@pdx.edu](mailto:askACS@pdx.edu)

**Student Health and Counseling Center (SHAC)**  
[http://www.pdx.edu/shac/](http://www.pdx.edu/shac/)  
Counseling, psychological evaluation and intervention, testing services, and all health-related concerns  
1880 SW 6th Ave., Health and Counseling: 503.725.2800; Dental: 503.725.2611; Testing: 503.725.5301

**Women’s Resource Center (WRC)**
The Portland State University Women's Resource Center advocates for the best educational and campus experience for all members of our community. The WRC seeks to advance social justice, personal empowerment for all self-identified women, and a safe and healthy campus. The WRC is open Monday through Friday from 9:00-5:00pm, and is located in the basement of the Montgomery Housing Building. The main entrance is located in the Montgomery Courtyard. You can contact the WRC by phone (503-725-5672) or email  
[wrc@pdx.edu](mailto:wrc@pdx.edu).

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources on PSU’s Enrollment Management & Student Affairs: Sexual Prevention & Response website at  
[http://www.pdx.edu/sexualassault/](http://www.pdx.edu/sexualassault/). PSU’s Student Code of Conduct makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are strictly prohibited and offenses are subject to the full realm of sanctions, up to and including suspension and expulsion.
**COURSE SCHEDULE**
(subject to change with reasonable notice)

**D2L**: Desire to Learn (PSU online learning); **W**: The Wire

A note about watching The Wire: the schedule I’ve provided for viewing The Wire is merely a suggested way to break up the episodes evenly across the term. You may prefer to go through the episodes at a different pace.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Course Material</th>
<th>Exams &amp; Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1. How can the sociology of education and The Wire help us understand education?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 2. How might we think about education and its actors?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 3. What is educational equality? Educational inequality?</strong></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Course Material</td>
<td>Exams &amp; Due Dates</td>
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<td><strong>D2L:</strong> Mencimer, S. (2014, June 3). “If you’re born poor, you’ll probably stay that way.” <em>Mother Jones.</em> Retrieved from <a href="http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2014/06/the-long-shadow-poverty-baltimore-poor-children">http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2014/06/the-long-shadow-poverty-baltimore-poor-children</a></td>
<td>Were You Pushed or Did You Jump Assignment due 5/1 by 11:59 pm (if you choose this option -- see “Application Papers” above for more details)</td>
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<td><strong>D2L:</strong> Morris, E. (2005). “‘Tuck in that shirt!’: Race, class, gender, and discipline in an urban school.” <em>Sociological Perspectives,</em> 48(1): 25-48.</td>
<td>Comparative Analysis of Articles Assignment due 5/8 by 11:59 pm (if you choose this option -- see “Application Papers” above for more details)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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| May 9th –  
**Quiz #7 Opens**  
**Quiz #7 closes 5/15 at 11:59 pm**  
**Educational Capital Reflection Assignment due 5/15 by 11:59 pm (if you choose this option -- see “Application Papers” above for more details)** |
| May 16th –  
**Middle School Reflection Assignment due 5/22 by 11:59 pm (if you choose this option -- see “Application Papers” above for more details)** |
| May 23rd –  
**Quiz #9 Opens**  
**Quiz #9 closes 5/29 at 11:59 pm** |
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**Week 10. How can we think about changing schools and what they do?**

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<td>Date</td>
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<td><strong>Finals Week</strong></td>
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<td>June 6th – June 10th</td>
<td><strong>There will be no final exam in this class</strong> HAVE A GREAT SUMMER</td>
<td>Educational Problem and Policy Analysis Assignment due 6/8 at 11:59 pm (if you choose this option -- see “Application Papers” above for more details)</td>
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<td>Educational Biography Assignment due 6/8 at 11:59 pm if you choose this option - -- see “Application Papers” above for more details</td>
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<td>Extra Credit due 6/8 at 11:59 pm</td>
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