Higher Ed. 553 / Sociology 553 / Ed. Theory & Policy 553/ Comparative Ed 553
Fall Semester 2011

Educational Attainment and Social Mobility
in Comparative Perspective

Thurdays 9 – Noon
303 Rackely
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Office is 404E Rackely. Drop-in hours are Fridays, 11-Noon, Thursday 8-9, and Tuesdays 1- 2:30

The study of educational attainment and social mobility lends itself to comparative and international perspectives. This graduate seminar is designed for students with some foundation in stratification and attainment research in the United States or in their home countries, and who have had some experience with comparative education research and quantitative data analysis. After reviewing the theoretical roles of schooling in mobility, we consider classic and recent empirical comparative work using qualitative, quantitative, and historical methods. Although our emphasis will be on descriptive and analytical study, planning and policy issues will also arise. The seminar could serve as a bridge to further research in one of the regions covered, or to further study of educational institutions as they structure individual opportunity. We will pay special attention to the topics of social capital, linguistic coding and cultural capital. We will review but not study methods for cross-national and historical research. Class requirements include regular attendance and participation in all discussions. In addition, members of the seminar are expected to write three essay compositions, of about 3500-4000 words. The first paper is due October 2 and should respond to or critique any two of the readings of the first few weeks of class. Prior to writing this assignment, you should send me a short paragraph telling me what you propose to write about. I might offer suggestions, before you write your paper. I recommend Howard Becker’s Writing for Social Scientists as a guide. The second assignment, due November 6, will be a film review. You should discuss 28-Up and 49-Up and you should integrate ideas from the seminar and our readings into your discussion. The third assignment is due December 11. This last assignment will be in the form of a short essay exam on the topics covered in this seminar. Each of these three assignments makes up 1/3 of the course grade. All readings for this seminar will be posted on its ANGEL site except, 1) Choosing Colleges, and 2) Class Matters. You should order these two from an on-line book seller like Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com.

1st Meeting: August 25

Introduction to principles of mobility and stratification. Evolution and variation in role of education. Review of basic statistics needed for the seminar. Screening of Michael Apted, “28-Up.” Try to watch as much as you can of this documentary before coming to class:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTlQLLBfwbs

Michael Young. 1959. The Rise of the Meritocracy, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. On ANGEL
2nd Meeting: Sept. 1
Selections from Herbert Spencer and Lester Ward distributed in class.
Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility* (4 reading selections on ANGEL)


3rd Meeting: Sept. 8


Gary Becker, “Human Capital” (ANGEL article, not book)

4th Meeting: Sept. 15


5th Meeting: Sept. 22


6th Meeting: Sept. 29


Jutta von Maurice, Michaela Sixt & Hans-Peter Blossfeld. *The National Educational Panel Study: Surveying a Cohort of 9th Graders in Germany*


First writing assignment is due in Angel drop-box by Noon, October 2.

7th Meeting: Oct. 7


8th Meeting: Oct. 14


Read NY Times “Prequel” from 1993 on ANGEL


9th Meeting: Oct. 21

Pierre Bourdieu, Introduction to "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.”

Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital”.

10th meeting: Oct. 28


Note: on November 3 I will not be in class, but you should watch and discuss 49 UP! Your film review will be due in the drop box by NOON SUNDAY NOVEMBER 6th

11th Meeting: Nov. 10

Max Weber, Bureaucracy, and the Protestant Ethic


12th Meeting: Nov. 17


Malcolm Gladwell, read two New Yorker articles: “Getting In” and also “The Examined Life.”

13th Meeting: Dec. 1

Read first half of Patricia McDonough, Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity.

14th Meeting: Dec. 8


FINAL PAPER DUE IN ANGEL DROP-BOX BY NOON SUNDAY DEC. 11

15th Meeting: Make-Up-Class (to be arranged at some point in semester)


