FALL 2020
SOCIOMETRY 905 - Seminar in Stratification
(Educational Inequalities and Policies in Comparative Perspective)
Fridays, 2:30-5:00pm, hybrid/synchronous (zoom)
Canvas Course Site: https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/94584

Dr. Regina Werum
Oldfather Hall
email: access via Canvas

Skype Office Hours
Mon/Wed/Fri 8:00am to 10:00am CST
or by appointment
Skype: rwerum2

COURSE OVERVIEW
Two main goals shape the structure and content of this course. First, as an integral part of the graduate program in Sociology, I have designed it for students with interests in social stratification/inequality. Many of the readings assigned will help students prepare for the “comprehensive exams” in these areas. More generally, the course will help prepare students to conduct research and teach courses in this field. As such, I expect students interested in taking this course to have solid background training in Sociology (theories and methods), though not necessarily expertise in the area of Sociology of Education. If you already have such expertise, this course will deepen your understanding of the field (and help you focus your own research energies). I cordially welcome students from other departments and academic units. If you have no background in the sociology of education and plan to take the departmental comprehensive exam in inequalities/stratification, please follow the literature suggestions on p. 4 of this syllabus.

Second, this seminar focuses on examining educational inequalities by using an explicitly comparative-historical and an international approach to. In the process, this seminar addresses several questions: (1) How do Sociologists explain the role of education in society? In other words: What are the main theoretical frameworks we employ? (2) What do we know about the determinants of access to educational opportunities? We begin by exploring how students’ ascribed and family background characteristics shape opportunities to learn. Then we examine how these unequal opportunities hold consequences for educational outcomes. (3) Beyond these micro-level dynamics, what do we know about the causes of educational inequalities? In particular, what do we know about the meso-level, organizational dynamics that shape inequalities outside of, within, and between schools and school systems? (4) What consequences have policy reforms had e.g., on educational inequalities and related outcomes? Our primary substantive focus will be on the intended and unintended (or at least unanticipated) consequences of several waves of policy reforms, as well as the changing social and cultural contexts that have shaped these dynamics. This includes the rise of public school alternatives (e.g., charter schools, homeschooling), efforts to address persistent gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes, and the contemporary accountability movement. Depending on the substantive interests of seminar participants, content may focus primarily on the K-12 system, or shift to include current dynamics affecting higher education.

Nota bene: This course reflects my own areas of expertise in the field. This course is not designed for students primarily interested in pedagogy and didactics, curriculum/program evaluation, or those with a primary interest in social psychological causes/consequences of educational outcomes. If this is what you are looking for, I would be happy to direct you to suitable courses and faculty mentors.
The structure of the course reflects the following main questions:

1. **Weeks 1 through 4:** How do Sociologists explain the role of schooling in society? In other words: What are the main **theoretical frameworks** we employ? What methodological and practical implications do these frameworks have for empirical research?

2. **Weeks 5 and 6:** Taking an explicitly comparative perspective, what can we discern about the determinants of **access to education**, across time and space? What role have policies and political conditions played? Who has shaped these policies, their development and implementation? What consequences, intentional and otherwise, have educational policies had on social stratification?

3. **Weeks 7 through 11:** Focusing on the social context of education, what do we know about the causes and consequences of **unequal educational opportunities and outcomes**? In this section, we will explore inequalities outside of, within, and between schools by considering issues that span the micro-macro continuum. We will see how students’ ascribed and family background characteristics shape opportunities to learn, and how these unequal opportunities hold consequences for academic outcomes.

4. **Weeks 12 through 14:** Where do we go from here? This section will focus on the potential strengths and weaknesses of **policy reforms** aimed at improving educational outcomes and/or reducing inequalities.

**GROUND RULES**

**Instructor:**

I reserve the right to change all aspects of the syllabus. This includes assessment dates/formats. I will be available for scheduled virtual office hours at least three days a week and for individual appointments as needed – during regular business hours (8am-5pm CST) unless students have a compelling reason to request meetings outside those hours. I will strive to provide feedback/respond to emails within 48 hours. However, if you have an urgent subject that you need to discuss you should send me an email (please list as subject line “SOCI 905 urgent”). I will monitor Canvas discussion posts but not respond to them or grade them unless they violate course expectations. While I reserve the right to give “pop quizzes” with little/no announcement should class participation flail, I detest them as much as you do.

**Student Feedback and Concerns:**

Your experience with remote learning in this course is important to me. If you have questions, concerns, or positive feedback, please contact me using one of the ways indicated at the top of the syllabus. If I am unable to respond, or you feel I’ve not adequately addressed your concerns, you can contact our department staff (Lori Ratzlaff (lratzlaff1@unl.edu) or Deborah Schaben (sociology@unl.edu)). If your concern is still not resolved, please contact the department chair, Jolene Smyth (j smith2@unl.edu). If all else fails, please contact the College of Arts and Sciences at 402-472-2891.

**Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity:**

*By attending this class you agree to adhere to the academic honor code.* Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The UNL Student Code of Conduct addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision. The UNL Student Code of Conduct applies to all aspects of the course, whether activities are held in person, hybrid, or online, in a synchronous, real-time or asynchronous manner. You can find it at: [https://studentconduct.unl.edu/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20May%20Rev%202014%20a.pdf](https://studentconduct.unl.edu/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20May%20Rev%202014%20a.pdf).

For additional information about plagiarism as a form of academic dishonesty subject to university regulations, please visit [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#plagiarism](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#plagiarism).
I invite all of you to join me in actively creating and contributing to a positive, productive, and respectful class culture. Each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Whether we meet in person or virtually/in cyberspace, in small groups or large ones, rules of engagement are important. For information on basic "netiquette" visit http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html. When in doubt, please remember the Golden Rule. Disruptive behavior or discourteous manners and speech, online or in person, will have consequences for your course grade and may carry further consequences if it violates the Student Code of Conduct.

Moreover, any work and/or communication to which you are privy as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator, and is not to be shared outside the context of this course. Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

Please note that the COVID19 crisis requires a mandatory statement regarding masks/face coverings that is officially part of the syllabus. You can find this statement on Canvas, under the red Syllabus tab (same place you found this document).

FERPA/Privacy and Confidentiality:
Before we begin (and you participate in) any class-related activity, please be aware that others, whether enrolled in our course or otherwise, may be nearby during discussions or break-out group activities and may hear/learn everything you say or write.

Similarly, before we engage in virtual one-on-one conversations (e.g., during office hours), I know there may be others nearby during our discussion that I cannot see. In the course of our conversation, I might reference academic information that is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). In that case, our conversation can only continue provided you feel comfortable with situation. Please alert me in advance if there are there things you’d prefer I not share in such conversations or share only using the chat function.

Visitors are welcome to attend in-person and virtual (real-time or asynchronous) sessions as personal guests of students if they have also been invited by the instructor. Please ask your host to introduce you to me before the start of a class activity you wish to visit/observe. I expect guests to adhere to the same rules that apply to students. For the purpose of this class, the university’s Trespass Policy (Regents’ Policy 6.4.7) also applies to spaces/activities conducted online. It states: “The areas of University academic, research, public service, and administrative buildings of the University used for classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, and the areas of University student residence buildings used for student living quarters are not open to the general public. Any person not authorized to be or remain in any such building area will be deemed to be trespassing on University property, and may be cited and subject to prosecution for criminal trespass in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat., § 28-520 or § 28-521.”

Services for Students with Disabilities:
The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish
reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall; 402-472-3787.

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms: Visit involved.unl.edu/unl-gender-neutral-bathrooms.


COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Grades:
UNL does not recognize a B- as a passing grade for graduate courses. Grading scale:
97 – 100% = A+
93 – 96% = A
90 – 92% = A-
87 – 89% = B+
83 – 86% = B
80 – 82% = B-
77 – 79% = C+
73 – 76% = C
70 – 72% = C-
67 – 69% = D+
63 – 66% = D
60 – 62% = D-
0 – 59% = F

Attendance and Participation: 20% of grade
Regular attendance in class: If you miss more than three classes during the semester, I reserve the right to lower your grade. Punctuality is key. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your fellow students. Irregular (virtual) attendance will affect your course grade negatively, as will sheer screen presence combined with mental absence (see participation, below). 10% of course grade.

Active participation in class: This includes being attentive and participating in class discussions. I expect students to come to class prepared. This includes having read the materials for each class before we meet. 10% of course grade. I encourage you to participate actively and constructively. Should imbalances arise (i.e., some students talking a lot and some students never talking), I will actively seek a wider range of participation. Everyone is expected to complete the required readings; presenters are also expected to complete readings designated as “supplemental” by the instructor (TBD).

Written Assignments: 30% of final grade
This course is designed to provide students with an overview of theoretical and empirical research in the field. The best way to learn new material and retain it is through critical evaluation—i.e., discussion and writing. In the best possible scenario, this course will influence your research interests for years to come. More pragmatically, it should also prepare you for a possible prelim specialty area. For this purpose, students will turn in a total of three critical syntheses of a week’s worth of required readings (mere summaries do not suffice). Varying in length, these short essays are due at the beginning of each class. These reflective essays will comprise 30% of your final grade. I will discuss explicit guidelines in class.

#1 Critical Synthesis - Theory paper: 10% of final grade
The first critical synthesis (CS) is due by start of class on September 18 (WEEK 5). The previous week marked the end of the theory section. The purpose of the paper is to have you compare/contrast/critique elements of 2 theoretical frameworks of your choice with regard to their usefulness in explaining social movement dynamics (n.b: you need to come up with a good question for your paper on your own, or in consultation with me). That CS should be about 5 pages long and will count for 10% of your final grade. More details in class.
#2 and #3 Critical Syntheses - Additional: 20% of final grade
Throughout the rest of the semester, you will do 2 more critical syntheses on topics of your choice. To help you pace yourself, I require that you submit one critical synthesis by October 16 and one by November 20. You pick the specific week within that roughly month-long window. Aim for 5 pages each; each CS is weighted equally, together they comprise 20% of your final grade. Do not let these short papers interfere with research requirements due at the end of the semester. I do not accept late assignments.

To practice your comprehensive exam writing skills, you will reflect on and integrate the readings. This means: relate them to each other (where feasible), to readings from other weeks or even other classes (where feasible) and pay close attention to the theoretical frameworks on which they draw. Use this lens to ascertain how/why arguments complement or contradict each other.

An optimal way to approach all three writing assignments is to start out with a question. You may but do not have to ask a question that encompasses all readings, nor do you need to write several questions (or answers) for different readings. One good question and one comprehensive answer will do. Draw on all relevant materials from this course to answer your question and feel free to draw on related, relevant materials you have encountered in other seminars. Just make sure you stick to the issue you raised in the beginning. As for help if you know or suspect you need it.

**In-Class Presentations: 20% of grade**
In addition, each student will give two oral presentations during the semester. Each presentation is worth 10% of your final grade. We will discuss explicit presentation guidelines in class and in individual consultations. Rather than thinking of this as giving a lecture, the purpose of your presentations should be to lead class discussion that day and to involve your peers in an in-depth debate about the readings and the subject matter. It might make sense to do presentations the same weeks for which you plan to turn in your critical syntheses.

As part of these presentations, you will provide your peers with integrated summaries to the week's readings. (Think comps preparation!) Please make these one-page summaries available to every seminar participant by 1:00PM the day of class. Your summaries should discuss the research question, methodology and findings and explain how it fits into the theoretical and empirical literature at large.

**Research Proposal: 30% of final grade**
The final paper, which will comprise the remaining 30% of your course grade, should be modeled after a grant proposal. Depending on the student’s status, this may be a pre-dissertation, dissertation, or even post-doctoral grant proposal. In selecting your audience/agency for this mock-proposal, you will be able to choose between different funding agencies but use a standard format. Part of your challenge will be to figure out who your audience and thus your potential grantors might be. Examples include e.g., NSF, MacArthur, SSRC, Aspen, Fulbright, or Spencer. More detailed information on different funding agencies and their priorities (as well as the expected format) will be provided in September.

The length of these proposals may vary depending on their purpose, but you should aim for 10 pages, single spaced (Use NSF guidelines even if you are aiming at a different funder – talk to me!). The due date for the final paper/grant proposal is Wednesday, November 25 (at NOON). I will not accept late submissions.
Please discuss your initial research project idea with me by the end of August (8/31). Discuss your revised idea with me individually before the middle of September (9/18).

Evidence that you completed CITI training (Human Subjects/IRB certification) is due in Canvas/email by October 2.

An initial 5-page prospectus of your final paper/proposal is due in Canvas/email by October 16. Please distribute it electronically to all course participants. Use the NSF semi-template posted on Canvas to develop this early draft.

Please provide your peers and me with constructive written comments on their own proposals (in Canvas/email) by the beginning of class on October 23.

Discuss the feedback in individual conversations with me the week of October 26-30.

The final version of your grant proposal (incl. full proposal, biosketch, budget and justification, and abstract) is due by NOON on Wednesday November 25. Not negotiable.

READINGS

1. WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

Electronic readings (articles, chapters, excerpts):

Articles/chapters are placed on e-reserves and will be made available via our Canvas site. So are book excerpts, unless they exceed fair use policies, in which case the book is listed in its entirety below. If you have questions regarding the items placed on reserves, either electronically or otherwise, please contact the librarian, Zachary Eden, at zeden1@unl.edu, or contact me.

All assigned readings are available via Canvas (course readings/ereserves) and could be borrowed from Love Library/ILL. You may also wish to purchase some of the books. This is your choice. The required books should be available at the UNL Bookstore. If not, feel free to order them online with your favorite vendor. Or look for new/used copies online. Readings noted in green are also featured on the Sociology Department’s comprehensive exam list (area of inequalities). Readings noted in purple are also featured in the Grusky reader (a central part of the comprehensive exam reading list in the area of inequalities).

2. GENERAL ADVICE:

If you have no background in the sociology of education, I strongly urge you to read, in advance, at least two introductory sources we typically assign at the undergraduate level:


Required Books: (assigned partially, also available on library reserves; strongly recommended for purchase if you are a Sociology graduate student)


Recommended Classics (especially if you plan to take the Sociology comprehensive exam):

Version 8/11/2020


TECHNOLOGY NEEDS
For this class, you will need steady internet access (to get into Canvas and UNL websites) plus access to several types of software: Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, PDF, Zoom, perhaps Vidgrid, Skype. Ideally, you will access course material via a laptop/tablet and not your phone. Access to audio and a camera are essential.

NAVIGATING CANVAS
Canvas is your life line. You will access everything via the red tabs on the left side of your course site. For example:

- The tab called HOME provides you with a roadmap of where to find what. Make sure you read this first!
- The tab ANNOUNCEMENTS contains announcements/reminders from the instructor.
- The tab SYLLABUS contains the most recent version of – you guessed it!
- The tab ASSIGNMENTS contains the actual assignments that are used to calibrate your course grade and that you need to complete, usually on a weekly basis.
- The tab MODULES contains all the content related to each week/unit (e.g., lectures and handouts, links to audio-visual clips, links to assigned readings via libraryereserves, descriptions of assignments and their grading rubrics, and other course materials).
### WEEKS 1-4: What are the main theoretical frameworks in Sociology of Education?
This section aims to introduce students to the major paradigms in the sociology of education. We will roughly follow the historical trajectory and paradigm changes, though evidence of all approaches persist over time. Main question: How do we explain the persistence of (and changes in) patterns regarding access to education, educational outcomes and stratification?

Please discuss your initial research project idea with me by the end of August (8/31).

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<th>READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<td>9/4/20</td>
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Bourdieu, P. “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction.” Ch. 6 in Arum and Beattie reader.  

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<th>9/11/20</th>
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WEEKS 5 and 6: What determines access to education?
This section is designed to help you see the “big picture.” Questions about inequalities in educational outcomes (attainment, achievement etc.) are based on the assumption that educational opportunities are accessible and affordable. But this premise is questionable. We will spend one day examining how access to education differs across countries, and three days on how it has differed historically in the U.S.

Please remember:
First Critical Synthesis due September 18. Next ones by Oct 16 and Nov 20, respectively. Discuss your revised grant proposal idea with me before September 18.

Access to Education: Comparative International Evidence

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| 6  | 9/25/20 | Access to Education in Historical Perspective: Race and Ethnic Politics  
OR  
Access to Education in Historical Perspective: Gender Politics  
Mettler, S. 2005. “Beyond All Expectations” (ch. 3, p. 41-58) and “Created with Men in Mind” (ch. 9, p. 144-162) in *Soldiers to Citizens.* Oxford UP.  
WEEKS 7-12: What are the causes and consequences of educational stratification?
For the next seven weeks, we will explore inequalities outside of, within, and between schools by considering issues that span the micro-macro continuum.
Please remember:
Evidence of CITI Training (Human Subjects) is due by October 2.
Your initial 5-page prospectus is due by October 16.
Constructive written comments on peers’ proposals are due by October 23.
Discuss your respective proposal with me the week of October 26-30.

7
10/2/20
The “Other” Forms of Capital: Cultural, Social, “Oppositional”?

### YOU CHOOSE THE TOPIC:

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<th>OPTION A: Curriculum Differentiation</th>
<th>OPTION B: Disciplinary Policies/School-to-Prison Pipeline</th>
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**YOU CHOOSE:**  
Donato, R. and J. Hanson. 2017. “In These Towns, Mexicans are Classified as Negroses”. *AERJ* 54:53S-74S. |
| Final project (grant proposal): 5-page prospectus is due by 5pm on October 16.  
Constructive written comments to all your peers due by 1:00pm on October 23.  
Please schedule one-on-one consultation with instructor for October 26-30. |
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**Rothstein, R. 2004. “Introduction” and “Social Class, Student Achievement, and the black-white Achievement Gap” (pp. 1-60) in Class and Schools.**  
Please schedule one-on-one consultation with instructor this week, to discuss feedback from instructor and peers.** |
WEEKS 12-14: Where do we go from here?  
For three weeks, we will place the spotlight on contemporary policy in education, and beyond – with emphasis on the potential and actual, (un)intended consequences they have on social inequalities.  
**Your final grant proposal is due by November 25. Not negotiable.**
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<th>Authors and References</th>
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| 13    | 11/13/20 | School Choice Dynamics in K-12 Education | (RW leads)  
| 14    | 11/20/20 | Systemic Ripple Effects in Higher Education | (RW leads)  
By signing this statement, I acknowledge that I have received and read Dr. Werum’s syllabus. I pledge to follow the rules and norms outlined therein, as well as amplifications explained in class/on Canvas. I understand that breaching the rules may affect my course grade, regardless of my academic performance.

__________________________________                                     ________________
Signature                                                      Date

______________________________
PRINT NAME