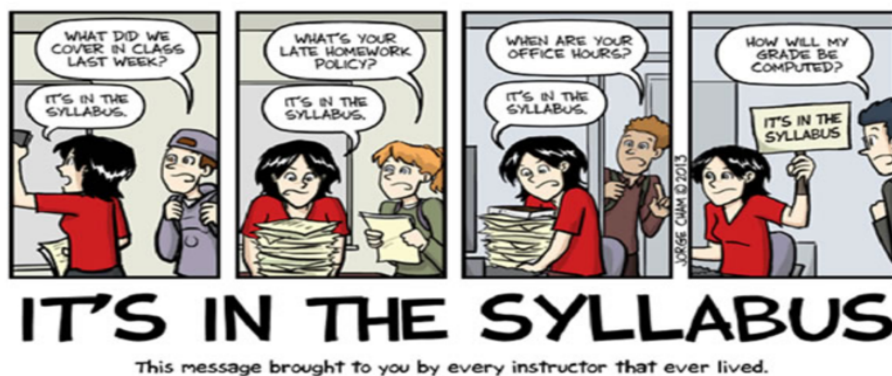


San Jose State University  
Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

SOCIOLOGY (SOCI) 177: SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION  
FALL 2023 Course Syllabus



“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison

### Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and are mindful that San Jose State University sits on the land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people, who trace their ancestry through Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose. We remember their connection to this region and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, learn, and play on their traditional homeland.

### Course and Contact Information

**Professor:** Dr. Yolanda Wiggins (she/her/hers)

**Email:** [yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu](mailto:yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu)

**Class Days/Times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00AM-10:15AM

- Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH) Room 226A

### **Office Hours:**

- **VIRTUALLY:** Mondays 10-11am
- **MODALITY:**
  - You may either attend in person (Come to my office at DMH 211) or online via Zoom [ZOOM LINK](#)
  - If you wish to meet in person, please be sure to send me an email beforehand.

### Course Description

Welcome to Sociology 177! This is an extraordinary moment in history, marked by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the enhanced attention to racial disparities in American life. This course will help you apply a sociological lens to examining what is happening to education in this time. Rather than set aside the external world to focus on college, you'll instead embrace and examine it to build your sociological muscles of reading, critical thinking, analysis, and writing. My hope is that this effort will deepen and expand your life outside of college as well.

In this course, you will use a sociological perspective to investigate the American education system. What this means is that you will study how society and education interact: both how society affects the education system and how the education system affects society.

You will learn about major inequalities in education—primarily those related to race, class, gender, and (dis)ability, and citizenship status. Though this course exposes you to major inequalities in the education system, it is important to recognize that it would be impossible to cover every inequality in a semester. This course focuses on historical and contemporary inequalities within the American education system. Following the introduction to the course, the course is divided into two units. Unit 1 focuses on inequalities in K-12 education (otherwise known as primary and secondary education). Unit 2 focuses on inequalities in higher education (or postsecondary education). Each unit explores racial, class, and gender inequalities as well as differences in the ways in which students within the educational system are treated based on (dis)ability (both hidden and visible) and citizenship status.

Throughout this course we explore the paradox that, although education is conventionally assumed to be a race-blind, meritocratic institution of opportunity and mobility, it is also systematically linked to disparities in the educational achievement and social and occupational attainments of individuals, especially those of different races/ethnicities and social classes.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. Reflect on one's own educational background in relation to course materials.
2. Identify and provide examples of some key concepts from the sociology of education, including: socialization, cultural capital, financial capital, and social capital, stratification, tracking, segregation, and desegregation, discipline, school-to-prison pipeline.
3. Use both macrosociological and microsociological approaches to analyze schooling processes.
4. Develop an understanding of how the classroom environment shapes the teaching-learning process.
5. Think critically about the relationship of individual schooling experiences with larger social relations, institutions, and structures.
6. Demonstrate improved writing, critical thinking, analytical, and presentation skills.

Ultimately, I hope that what you learn in this course is information that you will carry with you into whatever career field you enter. Whether or not you realize it, some forms of educational inequality have impacted your educational experience up to this point and continue to impact your current experience as a student.

### **Required Texts**

There is no textbook for the class. Rather than building this course around a textbook, I have carefully selected readings, podcasts, and media clips that nicely pair with the topics we will be exploring. We all know firsthand that textbooks aren't cheap. As a first-generation college student, myself, I know the hardship that expensive course materials can place on students as they move through college. I want to even the playing field in my course by extending free access to the all course materials. I firmly believe that education is a **universal right for everyone** and should not simply be a privilege for those who come from financially advantaged backgrounds. The readings for each week are uploaded in advance on Canvas (our course's webpage). You should have the readings handy with you during every class session. It is my hope that the selected reading material is both informative and engaging. In order to do well in this course, thorough reading/listening/watching of the assigned material is required.

You will experience readings by diverse authors offering diverse perspectives. Your ideas will be intentionally challenged and you will undoubtedly experience some discomfort as that occurs. That discomfort should be due to the learning process; growth can be painful. Please remember that all you are asked to bring to this course is your commitment to learn. No technical knowledge is assumed; you should read selections for the ideas contained within them—you are not expected to assess their technical merits.

### **What to Expect from me as a Professor this Semester:**

- I believe that you as a student should, at all times, know what you are expected to do in the course and also know where you stand in terms of your grade. This syllabus provides a detailed explanation of the course expectations, and I will regularly update Canvas with your course grades in a timely manner.
- In regard to the format of the course, I recognize that there are many types of learners. Therefore, I will assess your learning in a variety of ways: papers, presentations, discussion forums, etcetera. How will the course be taught? This course is not exclusively lecture-based. Learning will also happen through large group discussion and collaboration with your peers.

- I really enjoy working with and talking to students. If you have concerns or questions regarding the course or your educational/professional goals more generally, I invite you to make an appointment to speak with me. If I learn about external opportunities (i.e., internships, part-time/full-time employment, undergraduate research assistantships, enrichment programs/workshops, interesting talks/presentations, etcetera), I will be sure to share them with you. I believe that learning takes place in a variety of spaces—not simply the classroom—and diversifying your learning experiences and the spaces for which they occur, helps you grow intellectually, professionally, and personally!

***NOTE: I reserve the right to make changes to the course syllabus and will always notify you if that happens.***

### What I expect from you this semester:

- **ATTENDANCE:** Come to class *ready to discuss* the readings. To encourage active participation, please have the day's readings handy. We will also use class time to make connections between course materials and real-world issues and personal experiences. Please ask questions, express confusions, and share understandings! Please participate fully and meaningfully in class. Listen actively to others and respond in ways that reflect what you've heard. **Ask questions. Challenge our thinking. Challenge your own.** If you tend to talk a lot in class, use the opportunity to listen and observe more. If you tend to be quiet in class, push yourself! To facilitate active reading and participation, we will have in-class polls, short video clips, and structured activities based on the assigned reading material.
- Please feel free to email me, but make sure to use proper email etiquette: Put "SOC1 177" in the subject line, address the email to me, Dr. Wiggins, check your spelling, etcetera. Also, if you ask a question that can be answered by referring back to the syllabus, I will probably tell you to reread the syllabus. It is important to become familiar with the syllabus as it contains all of the important course information you will need to know. I will respond to your email within 24-48 hours. If you have not received a response after that time, please send me another email.
- Be respectful in your emails and the classroom. This respect should not only be for me, but for your peers as well. I welcome differing opinions, but rudeness, bigotry, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, etcetera is unacceptable and will **not** be tolerated at any time, both on my part and yours.
- I expect your best effort. As your professor, I will do my best to make the course material understandable and engaging. With that being said, this course will be what you make it. If you put effort into the course, you will learn a great deal, have an enjoyable experience, and also be able to earn a good grade. Please note that I do not 'round up' grades at the end of the semester.

### Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness

Towards the end of the course, you will receive an email from the Office of Institutional Research reminding you to provide feedback on the course. You will receive consistent reminders throughout the period when the evaluation is open.

- The evaluation is completely anonymous. When the results are released, I will not be able to tell which student provided the individual feedback.
- Because it is anonymous and the results are not released to faculty or departments until after grades have been submitted, the feedback will not impact a student's grade.

The feedback is important so that I as a professor can gain insight in to how to improve my teaching and learn how to best shape the curriculum.

### Course Components

- **Reading Memos (25%):** Over the course of the semester, you will engage with material related to contemporary issues in education. **Each Sunday, you are required to submit a short reading memo via Canvas by 11:59PM.** The weekly reflection statements should be no more than 1-2 double-spaced pages in length using 12pt Times New Roman font. No matter how many readings, podcasts, and/or media clips you are assigned for the class, your statement never needs to be more than 1-2 double-spaced pages. Please allow yourself enough time to read the material and write a well-written response paper.

How to structure weekly reading reflection paper:

- In what ways do the materials connect? Please demonstrate that you have read and viewed all materials rather than simply focusing on one reading.
- Next, respond/react to the assigned material/reading. Do you agree with the material? Disagree? Why? Did it remind you of something else you have read or experienced in your life and/or someone you know has experienced? –You can respond to any or all of these questions.
- Finally, how does the assigned material relate to current educational events?

- **Discussion posts (15%)**

- The discussion board is the space where we build community through conversational-style discussion. You are expected to take part in the discussion board through audio or video recorded posts that simulate in class discussion and demonstrate your careful reading/listening/watching of the course material, while also responding to at least one of your peers' posts. Your participation in the discussion board is crucial and designed so that we can engage with each other by reflecting on the course materials in a more informal way than the weekly reflection papers. Both your video or audio post and your response to a peers' posts should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the assigned material and provided prompts, as well as draw connections to course themes.

You are expected to post a video or audio recording of your own. Next, you are expected to respond to at least two of your classmate's entries. These responses will be graded based on thoughtfulness and thoroughness of your post. Discussion forum entries are graded according to the following rubric:

- **3 points:** Audio or video post fully addresses the discussion post topic prompt, poses an original question or critique, makes connections between material, and stimulates substantial follow-up. Author has responded to **two** other students' entries with substantive comment.
- **2 points:** Audio or video post demonstrates partial understanding of material and minimal effort in post, but does not stimulate further class discussion. Responded to only one classmate's entry.
- **1 point:** Audio or video post demonstrates that the author has not read/watched/listened to the assigned material for the week. Author does not respond to any entries by others.

**NOTE: For these discussion threads, you will upload three separate entries.**

**To keep these conversations engaging with the current unit materials, late submissions to the discussion board are not accepted.**

- **Educational Policy Brief(20%)**

- This assignment requires you to write a concise, informative, and compelling report on a particular educational policy-relevant issue, while also detailing a set of policy solutions. Each policy report should strive to convince the reader that policy-based action is necessary. Explicit guidelines will be provided as this assignment date comes closer.

- **Educational Autobiography: Your Personal Playlist (30%)**

- If your educational experience were a musical album, what would it consist of? What would each song or track be? Using themes presented throughout the course, your task is to create a visual and written 8-10 song playlist (with explanations of each track or song that are at least 300-450 words) that represents your educational journal thus far. Your playlist should also include a works cited page as well. Explicit guidelines will be posted on Canvas as the presentation date comes closer.

- **Quotation Blowup (10%)**

- The “Quotation Blowup” assignment is a product of the course’s lectures, materials, and discussions. This assignment is intended to represent your processing of the course’s materials. The assignment takes a quotation from the course’s instructional materials and *blows it up* by challenging it, expanding it, parodying it, historicizing it, remixing it, or otherwise taking the quote as a jumping off point for your thinking. For these purposes, a *quotation* is a relatively small piece of text or (transcribed) video/audio, no more than 100 words or under a minute of audio/video, taken from one of the items of the course’s instructional material. It is the center of the assignment. You can bring in other quotes to support your blowup, but it is not necessary. The format of the Quotation Blowup is totally up to you; you can submit: PowerPoint slides, a one-page written narrative, a carton, a song (or song lyrics), an interview-style audio recording, a photographic montage. This is an opportunity for you to be creative if you want. You have maximum flexibility, or you can just write it up. This is meant to be a short assignment, worth 15%. That means roughly one single-spaced page of writing, or 2-minutes of audio/video, or 3 photographs with a few sentences of caption. You can choose to work in pairs or individually.
- The second component of this project will consist of a final, in class presentation presenting your blown-up quote. The presentation should be between 5-7-minutes long. This is a great opportunity to practice oral communication skills! Please note that this is a graded assignment.
- Grading of this assignment including the in-class presentation is simple:
  - F (0 points) – no submission/no in class presentation
  - C (7 points) – any submission that includes a quote from the course’s instructional materials
  - A (10 points) – actually blows up the quote, even if you are a bit off on the interpretation or the execution

### Important Course Due Dates

- October 15<sup>th</sup> —Education Policy Brief
- December 8<sup>th</sup> —Education Autobiography: Your Playlist
- Nov. 14-16 —Quotation Blowup Group 1 Student Presentations
- Nov. 28-30 —Quotation Blowup Group 2 Student Presentations
- Dec. 5 —Quotation Blowup Group 3 Student Presentations

Final grades will be calculated using the following grading scale:

94-100% = A	80-82% = B-	60-65% = D
90-93% = A-	76-79% = C+	< 60% = F
86-89% = B+	73-75% = C	
83-85% = B	70-72% = C-	

### Our Learning Community

Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form study groups to discuss course material, pool information, and peer edit assignments. I recommend that you exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two other students the first week of class.

San Jose State University is committed to providing an environment consistent with the academic nature and core values of the institution in which students can participate in learning as a humanizing, social activity. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. As such, please:

- behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies.
- refrain from disrupting the ability of fellow student to learn.

Examples of disruption include:

- Technological use that significantly or repeatedly distracts others
- Interrupting class by arriving late or leaving early
- Not allowing others to participate in discussion; cutting people off during discussions

- communicate in a respectful fashion when interacting online.

Feel free to email me and even better, drop by during virtual office hours. If those hours do not work with your schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment. Consider yourself warmly invited to discuss the readings, career possibilities/opportunities, or anything else! There are aspects about college that can be confusing. Professors can appear intimidating or scary. I am here to help. Please utilize me as a resource!

### Student Resources

- **The Writing Center** provides individualized support to assist you in better understanding course material and to aid you on your path to success. Services are free and include one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, interactive writing conferences, and academic skills coaching to discuss effective study strategies. Online tutoring services have been expanded significantly. Please see the [Center's website](#) or call: (408) 924-2308 to schedule an appointment.
- **Accessible Education Center (AEC)** provides comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students. If you are a student in need of academic accommodations, please contact ACE within the first week of class. From there we can discuss your learning needs and appropriate accommodations. For more information, please visit <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> or call: (408) 924-6000.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call (408) 924-5910 for an initial consultation appointment or see their [website](#) for more information.

### Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault

As your professor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on campus and in the classroom. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a SJSU faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on SJSU's campus with the University. For information and resources regarding sexual misconduct or assault visit the [Title IX/Gender Equity Issues website](#) or [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website](#).

### Academic Integrity

All academic work for this course must meet the University's standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on tests, using previous work submitted to a class without the instructor's approval (even if it's your own!), and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the [university's policies on academic integrity](#). **By turning in assignments, you are consenting to the Honor Pledge.**

### Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict.

### Course Outline and Reading Schedule

#### Week 1

Aug. 22-24      **Welcome Week and Introduction to the Sociology of Education**

#### Week 2

Aug. 29-31      **Stratification Between and Within Schools**

#### READINGS

Still Separate, Still Unequal

Public schools are still segregated. But these tools can help.

“The kids are just happier”: Could California’s universal school meal program start a trend?

VIDEO CLIPS

Want kids to learn well? Feed them well

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS (If you want to learn more – These are NOT required)

TED Talk: The “opportunity gap” in U.S. public education – and how to close it

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper Due by Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 3

Sept.5-7

**Forms of Capital**

READINGS

Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth

How Professors Can and Should Combat Linguistic Prejudice in their Classes

VIDEO CLIPS

TED Talk: Help for the kids the system ignores

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper & Discussion Post Due by Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 4

Sept. 12-14

**Peer Groups**

READINGS

Focused: How Students Construct Attentiveness in First Grade Classrooms

“FOB” & “Whitewashed”: Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans

**(\*\*\*\*\* NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> \*\*\*\*\*)**

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper Due by Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 5

Sept. 19-21

**The Desire to Groom Selectivity**

READINGS

Hyper-Selectivity and the Remaking of Culture

Cultivating S-P-E-L-L-E-R-S

Why Indian American Spelling Bee Success is More Than Just an Endearing Story

Zalia Avant-garde –2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee Champ – Stands Where Black Children Were Once Kept Out

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper Due by Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 6

Sept. 26-28

**The Criminalization of Primary and Secondary Education**

READINGS

What 'White Folks Who Teach in the Hood' Get Wrong About Education

Race, Gender, And The School-To-Prison Pipeline

Black Boys Viewed As Older, Less Innocent Than Whites, Research Finds

School Suspensions Don't Just Unfairly Penalize Black Students—They Lead to Lower Grades and 'Black Flight'

Standin' tall: Criminalization and acts of resistance among elementary school boys of color

MEDIA CLIPS/PODCASTS

Why Open a School? To Close a Prison

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper & Discussion Post Due by Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 7

Oct. 3-5

**Approaches to Urban Education: Critical Race Theory**

READINGS

A critical race analysis of Latino/a and African American advanced placement enrollment in public high schools

The White kid can do whatever he wants: The racial socialization of a gifted education program

Teachers, please learn our names! Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom

MEDIA CLIPS/PODCASTS

Key & Peele Skit: "Substitute Teacher"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper Due by Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 8

Oct. 10-12

**Pipelines to Higher Education**

READINGS

Getting In: How Elite Schools Play the College Game

Following Their Every Move: An Investigation of Social Class Differences in College Pathways

Colleges and universities are removing the SAT/ACT. Good riddance.

MEDIA CLIPS/PODCASTS

SNL Skit on College Admissions Scandal, "Cut For Time"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection & Education Policy Brief Due by Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**



Week 9

Oct. 17-19

**The Big Grade Debate**

READINGS

The 'Other' College Scandal: Grade Inflation Has Turned Transcripts into Monopoly Money

Grade Inflation: When A is for Average

Grade Inflation Higher and Higher

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper & Discussion Post Due by Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 10

Oct. 24-26

**Differences In Postsecondary Institution Types**

READINGS

Here's Why Black Californians Should Consider Attending an HBCU

Why Historically Black Colleges and Universities Matter in Today's America

Redefining Success: How Tribal Colleges and Universities Build Nations, Strengthen Sovereignty, and Persevere Through Challenges

Moving Beyond Enrollment: The Future of Hispanic-Serving Institutions Depends More Than Growing Student Numbers

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper Due by Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 11

Oct. 31-Nov. 2

**Challenging the Value of a 4-Year Education: The Student Loan Debt Crisis**

READINGS

Even at Elite Colleges Lauded for their Generosity, Some Students Take On Debt

Overwhelmed by student debt, many low-income students drop out

"Why Wait Years to Become Something?" – Low-Income African American Youth and The Costly Career Search In For-Profit Trade Schools

Lower ed: The troubling rise of for-profit colleges in the new economy

MEDIA CLIPS/PODCASTS

College is Creating Poverty

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS WEEK

**Submit Reading Reflection Paper & Discussion Post Due by Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM**

Week 12

Nov. 7-9

**NO READINGS**

Week 13  
Nov. 14-16

**Quotation Blowup Group 1 Student Presentations**

Week 14  
Nov. 21-23

**NO CLASS THIS WEEK – THANKSGIVING RECESS (OPTIONAL ZOOM CHECK IN)**

Week 15  
Nov. 28-30

**Quotation Blowup Group 2 Student Presentations**

Week 16  
Dec. 5

**Quotation Blowup Group 3 Student Presentations**

Week 17

**FINAL PROJECT DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> BY 11:59PM (NO EXTENSIONS; NO EXCEPTIONS)**