

Tim Clydesdale, Ph.D.  
Professor of Sociology  
Social Science Building 339  
E-mail: clydesda@tcnj.edu  
Office Hours: T/F 12:30-1:50p  
& by appointment

## **SOC380: EDUCATION AND AMERICAN CULTURE**

*VERSION DATE: AUGUST 23, 2024*

Fall 2024: SSB225

Tuesdays & Fridays, 2:00–3:20p

**Course Purpose and Description:** To perpetuate itself, a culture must thoroughly socialize its young. Complex societies, like the U.S., rely upon families, religion, and schools to provide primary socialization -- but only schools are under the control of elected officials and their representative communities. Hence, schooling is a primary nexus of American cultural contestation -- that is, it is a critical arena in which competing visions of who America is (or should be) clash. Examining education and its related social processes, then, provides much insight into American culture, its cultural processes, and its macro-institutional relationships. Knowledge of these issues will be of value to any U.S. resident, but particularly to those who wish to deepen their understanding of the cultural foundations and social patterns of U.S. education.

This course “provides an overview of the cultural significance of, and complexities involved in, educational processes and institutions today. Special attention given to opportunity, equality, and mobility issues” (*from the TCNJ catalog*). To achieve these goals, we will explore questions like these: 1) what does education in the U.S. reveal about American culture (past, present, and future)? 2) who succeeds in the U.S. educational system, who doesn’t, and why? 3) how does U.S. schooling compare? 4) how ought we direct our attention and resources if we are to make U.S. schools the pathways to opportunity we want them to be? 5) how similar is education to other enterprises, like corporations?, and 6) is higher education a game, a credential, a life-transforming experience, a business, or a religion?.

### **Learning Goals:**

*Students who successfully complete this capstone will be able to:*

- Use key concepts (e.g., culture, socialization, opportunity structure, credentialism, social capital, mobility, formal organization) to analyze American education.
- Apply key concepts and theories to observation and analysis of schools.
- Critique functionalist (e.g., meritocracy, human capital) models of American education, using empirical evidence and social reproduction theories.
- Critique social reproduction (or critical) models of American education, using empirical evidence and functionalist theories.
- Articulate the complex web of relationships among American schooling, power/politics, race/ethnicity, religion, social stratification, and economic opportunity.
- Or, to put it more formally, this course furthers core components of the college’s, school’s, and department’s student learning outcomes – including written & oral communication, scientific reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, intercultural competence, ethical reasoning and compassion, respect for diversity, preparation for participation in civic life, sociological knowledge, and application of sociological knowledge.

### **College Core Learning Outcomes**

The College Core is designed to “provide you with the skills, knowledge, and experiences that will ensure you are successful during and after college, in your professional and personal life.” Regardless of major or career goals, this course will help students develop skills to be life-long learners, enhancing their ability to participate

in their communities as educated citizens, and deepen their understanding of human experience. College Core learning outcomes associated with the course appear below (and match the objectives above); you can read more about them on the [College Core website](#).

- *Behavioral, Social, or Cultural Perspectives*: Evaluate critically how human thought, emotion, and behavior affect and are affected by relationships or institutions at the level of the individual, culture, or society.

### Required Texts:

Jay MacLeod. *Ain't No Makin' It*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge, 2008

Denise Clark Pope. *Doing School*. Yale University Press, 2008

*Students must also read articles posted as pdfs to Canvas, including:*

Dalton Conley, "Chapter 13: Education," from *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Sociology*. 2019

Sara Weissman, "Bursting the Idea of the 'Campus Bubble:' A Q&A with Anthony Abraham Jack, author of *Class Dismissed*," *Inside Higher Education*, August 14, 2024.

*Plus additional articles and documentaries on topics to be co-selected with students during the first month of class*

### Course Policies:

1. Attendance and participation: Learning requires active engagement. Students demonstrate their commitment to learning by:

- attending all scheduled classes,
- arriving on time and staying for the full class session,
- contributing to each class discussion,
- fostering an atmosphere of respectful and serious learning,
- and completing all reading assignments *in advance* of class meetings.

You will be expected to so express your commitment in this class and will receive a tentative participation grade at several points during the semester. Please note, this is a *participation* grade: attendance, even if perfect, without any class participation, earns a participation grade of D.

2. *Writing Expectations*: Students demonstrate that learning is a top priority by submitting assignments on time, and by writing with excellence. This includes:

- spelling,
- grammar,
- style (i.e., as widely deployed in nonfiction writing and involves the use the active voice, avoiding wordiness/clutter, and writing for clarity – see the Zinsser pdf),
- documentation,
- page format (submitted assignments should use 1 inch margins and a 12 point serif typeface), and
- limiting use of artificial intelligence to permitted types only (see discussion below).

Dedicated students can find help in doing these things with the college's writing tutors. I also encourage students to schedule appointments during my weekly office hours as they work on their assignments. *I am happy to provide a "free pre-review" of paper excerpts during these hours.*

3. *Late policy*. Late assignments are automatically assigned in Canvas as follows:

- 10% deduction for assignments submitted 3 minutes to 23 hours and 59 minutes late,
- 20% deduction for 24h:00m-47h:59m late,
- 30% deduction for 48h:00m-71h:59m late,
- 40% deduction for 72h:00m-95h:59m late,
- 50% deduction for 96h:00m (5 days) or more late.

I reduce or waive the above penalties when justified by a health issue or family emergency. The best odds of receiving a waiver or penalty reduction go to those who notify me *in advance* (email or student hour appointment are best), explain their situation, and request a specific number of additional hours needed.

4. *Plagiarism/Cheating* will not be tolerated, and I will follow college policy by reporting suspected infractions to the academic integrity officer and committee. I have respect for the student who accepts the consequences

of poor preparation (e.g., late penalty) and nonetheless turns in their *own* work. *See also the next section on Artificial Intelligence.*

5. *Use of Artificial Intelligence.* “You can’t un-invent something.” AI is here, and like calculators were to math instruction a half-century ago, it is a tool that we need to understand and use wisely. Presently, its weaknesses are obvious: it will generate fake citations if asked to produce a bibliography, it combines both false and true claims, and it writes with overwhelming certainty. Its strengths are also sizable: it can generate essay topics and theses on various topics that can help you get started writing, it can generate helpful boilerplate communications (like thank you notes), and it can polish your writing – removing grammar and style errors.

In this course, you may use AI to help you generate essay and annotation ideas, and to polish your writing, but you must 1) include an “AI usage note” at the top of any assignment describing how you used AI, and 2) forward or attach a copy of the prompt/input and the AI output generated. If you have questions about what is/is not allowed, please communicate *early and often* with your instructor.

At the same time, AI use is *not required* and you may complete your assignments without any use of Artificial Intelligence.

6. *Grading:* Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Classroom Engagement (participation, facilitation, presentation)	35
Perusall Annotations	35
Part 1 Synthesizing Essay	15
Part 2 Synthesizing Essay or Topic Research Paper	<u>15</u>
TOTAL	100

Grade distribution is as follows: 93-100=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, 77-79=C+, 73-76=C, 70-72=C-, 60-69=D, less than 60=F. And yes, I round up: for example, 92.5=A.

### Course Assignments:

- Perusall Annotations:* To encourage students to read consistently and thoughtfully as we prepare for class, we will be using an online annotation program called Perusall for our readings (linked via Canvas). Using this innovative tool, students will annotate assigned readings with questions and comments.
  - Annotations are assessed based on comprehensiveness (Do they address the entire reading?), thoughtfulness (Do they represent thoughtful reading and processing of the important elements and concepts in the material?), and engagement (Do they respond to or inspire response from others’ annotations?).
  - The mean number of points earned for Perusall annotations will be used to calculate the grade earned for this course requirement. For credit, annotations must be submitted by 9:30am on the day the reading assignment will be discussed. This will give us a chance to review annotations before class.
- Classroom Engagement:* This includes three elements – prepared participation each class period, discussion facilitation approximately three times across the semester, and Part 2 topic presentation.
- Synthesizing Essays:* There will be two 2000 word essays assigned, the first at the end of Part 1, the second at the end of Part 2. There is also an option to focus on a single topic and write a research paper as your final assessment in lieu of the Part 2 essay.
- Course Schedule:* This course has a fluid structure, especially in Part 2. During Part 1, we will co-identify topics worth further examination and co-recommend readings and/or documentaries to facilitate our learning. Thus, the schedule for the class will be worked out collaboratively, and students will have significant influence on structure of the second part of the class.

### College-wide Statements and Resources:

*COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS AND BELONGING:*

The TCNJ community is composed of people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and the college is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, access and belonging. See also: [Campus Diversity Statement](#).

*CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING:*

The TCNJ community is dedicated to the success, safety and well-being of each student. TCNJ strictly follows key policies that govern all TCNJ community members' rights and responsibilities in and out of the classroom. In addition, TCNJ has established several student support offices that can provide the support and resources to help students achieve their personal and professional goals and to promote health and well-being. You can find more information about these policies and resources at the "[TCNJ Student Support Resources and Classroom Policies](#)" webpage. Students who anticipate and/or experience barriers in this course are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible. [The Accessibility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) is available to facilitate the removal of barriers and to ensure reasonable accommodations.

*E-mail and voice-mail:* I check e-mail and voice mail each weekday, and occasionally check my e-mail over the weekends, at night, or during breaks. I never check voice-mail from home. I usually reply within 1 business days to all e-mail messages.

*Fourth hour equivalency statement:* Although this class meets for three hours each week, it is a 4-credit (1 unit) course that offers a depth of learning with additional learning tasks unfolding in the equivalent of a fourth hour. Students will engage in group or individual learning projects outside of class and/or additional learning experiences occurring multiple times during the semester on or off-campus, including community-engaged learning activities and/or campus-wide events.

**Course Schedule:** (tentative; the professor reserves the right to adjust)

<b>Date:</b>	<b>What's happening:</b>	<b>What's due:</b>
Aug 27	Course welcome & part 1 orientation	Annotate the syllabus! (Practice use of Perusall)
Aug 30	Education in sociological perspective, part 1	Annotate: Conley, Ch 13, part 1, & Pope, preface, Ch 1
<i>Sept 3</i>	<i>No class meeting, follow Monday schedule</i>	
Sept 6	Education in sociological perspective, part 2	Annotate: Conley, Ch 13, part 2, & MacLeod preface, Ch 1
Sept 10	Student strategies, part 1	Annotate: Pope, Ch 2-3
Sept 13	Social reproduction in theoretical perspective	Annotate: MacLeod, Ch 2
Sept 17	Student strategies, part 2	Annotate: MacLeod, Ch 3 & Pope Ch 4
Sept 20	Role of family, work in social reproduction	Annotate: MacLeod, Ch 4-5
Sept 24	Student strategies, part 3	Annotate: Pope, Ch 5 & MacLeod Ch 6
Sept 27	Student strategies, part 4	Annotate: Pope, Ch 6 & MacLeod Ch 7
Oct 1	Social reproduction revisited	Annotate: Pope, Ch 7, epilogue, & MacLeod 8
Oct 4	Longitudinal research, part 1	Annotate: MacLeod, Ch 9/10 & 11 (groups to be assigned)
<i>Oct 8</i>	<i>No class meeting, Fall Break</i>	<i>Get some rest!</i>
Oct 11	Longitudinal research, part 2	Annotate: MacLeod, Ch 12/13, 14, & Freddie's final say (groups to be assigned)

<b>Date:</b>	<b>What's happening:</b>	<b>What's due:</b>
Oct 15	Finalizing Part 2	<b>Part 1 Synthesizing Essay Due</b>
Oct 18	<a href="#"><i>Pink Time I</i></a>	Self-graded
Oct 22	Topic 1: Higher Education(?)	Annotate: Weissman (& ...)
Oct 25	continued	TBD
Oct 29	continued	TBD
Nov 1	Topic 2	TBD
Nov 5	continued	TBD
Nov 8	<i>Pink Time II</i>	Self-graded
Nov 12	continued	TBD
Nov 15	Topic 3	TBD
Nov 19	continued	TBD
Nov 22	continued	TBD
Nov 26	Topic 4	TBD
<i>Nov 27-29</i>	<i>***Thanksgiving Break***</i>	<i>Get some rest!</i>
Dec 3	continued	TBD
Dec 6	Wrapping up & integrating	TBD
<i>Final Exam Week</i>	<i>See date and time posted on Canvas</i>	<b>Part 2 Synthesizing Essay or Topic Research Paper Due</b>