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Office hours: M and Thurs 3-5pm

Course Description

The anthropology of education has a rich history of investigating the links between culture, learning, and schooling. Anthropologists studying education have sought to illuminate learning and academic achievement as social processes and cultural products that cannot be understood apart from the socio-cultural contexts in which they occur. In this upper-level seminar, we will explore selected works in the anthropology of education—both classic and contemporary—in order to understand the unique contributions anthropology makes to the study of education, and in particular, to the study of minority groups in education. We will explore topics such as race, gender, class, and language in education and how they have been addressed by anthropologists. Students will have an opportunity to read critically a variety of detailed ethnographic and qualitative studies focusing on formal schooling and informal education in the United States and in other countries. Reviewing these studies, we will explore the central questions: What is a cultural analysis of schooling? What unique insights does ethnography—anthropology’s signature method—offer into key educational problems? And finally, how can a cultural analysis of schooling inform efforts to create a more socially just educational system?

Required Readings:
Available at bookstore in the Ed Studies section:


Additional readings will be made available in class.
Course Requirements

1) Readings and Class Participation

This class will be conducted as a participatory seminar, in which our primary goal is to engage with a body of literature in the anthropology of education. Students will be expected to do the assigned readings and come to class prepared to participate in discussion. Students should always bring readings and notes to class. Your class participation grade will be based on the following:

- Class attendance
- A demonstration that you have read the assigned material, as shown by your posting of discussion questions on Moodle, and your delivery of thoughtful comments about the readings during class.

Each student will be required to facilitate a 15-20 minute discussion on one of the ethnographic readings on the syllabus (Unit III). Discussions should address the methods of the study as well as the findings and issues they raise. Guidelines for facilitators will be distributed in class. Each student will also be required to write two 1-2 page response papers for two different readings on the syllabus. Good response papers provide a concise summary of the author’s main argument(s) and a critique of the author’s work, including your own reflections and reactions to the author’s claims. (See Reading Response Guidelines.) Finally, for classes in which there are no student-led discussions (all classes except Unit III), students will be required to post a discussion question on one of the assigned readings on Moodle by 10:00am on the day of class. I will draw upon these questions during class.

2) Mid-term exam

A mid-term exam of short essay questions covering key concepts from the first half of the class will take place in class on Thursday, Oct. 28. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class if you require any special accommodations.

3) Engaging with the public:

During Unit IV we will examine currently popular understandings of education and poverty, as circulated in the media and school district professional development workshops. This short paper assignment will require students to critique Paul Tough’s New York Times Magazine article from an anthropological perspective. In the form of a letter to the editor, explain which theories of school failure are reflected in Paul Tough’s analysis, and suggest how an anthropologist of education might offer a different perspective. Suggested length is 3-5 pages, double-spaced. Due in class Nov. 23.

4) Final Paper:

Students may select from one of the following two options, but must inform me of their decision by the beginning of the fourth week of class, or Sept. 28.

Option 1: Review essay. Compare and contrast two pieces of scholarly research on a single educational issue, one from the perspective of anthropology (drawing on ethnographic methods), and the other from another discipline (e.g. psychology,
sociology, or political science, drawing on quantitative or a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods). What features make the anthropological perspective distinctive? Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach for understanding the issue at hand. A bibliography of ethnographies in education to choose from will be distributed in class. Suggested length of this paper: 10-12 pages.

**Option 2:** Conduct your own educational ethnography in a local Hartford classroom or community organization. This option requires at least 4 hours of fieldwork per week for a minimum of 9 weeks during the semester. Through detailed fieldnotes, analyze a particular educational issue or problem using the lenses we have studied from the anthropology of education. Suggested length: 15-20 pages.

**Assessment**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-led discussion (facilitator role)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Response papers: 2 X 10 =</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam (short essay answers)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Engaging the public” assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Grading**

I believe that teaching and learning are collective enterprises requiring mutual responsibility, support, and participation. For this reason, your student-led discussion will be graded by your peers (including the instructor). Your final grade for the student-led discussion will be an average of the grades submitted, including my own. Your participation grade will be strongly based on your thoughtful contribution to class discussions, but even strong contributions might be outweighed by multiple absences or other failure to comply with course requirements. Please inform the instructor by e-mail if a major illness or family emergency keeps you away from class. Beyond the first absence, I will require documentation to excuse any further absence on the basis of illness or family emergency. More than two unexcused absences will result in a 5-point (50%) deduction from your participation grade.

**The late assignment penalty** is a 10% reduction for every 12-hour period beyond the deadline, with exceptions granted only for documented medical & family emergencies.

Students are expected to engage in **academic honesty** in all forms of work for this course. If this is unclear to you, ask for clarification.
Class sessions

**Tues Sep 7** Introduction to the course; overview of the syllabus.

**I. Education and culture**

**Thurs Sep 9** Cultural transmission


**Tues Sep 14** Approaches to educational ethnography


**Thurs Sep 16** The use and mis-use of culture


Reviewers: ______________________, ______________________

**Tues Sep 21:** “Insider” research


Reviewers: ______________________, ______________________

**II. Explaining school failure and under-achievement**

**Thurs Sep 23:** Cultural deprivation and deficit theories


Reviewers: __________________________. __________________________. __________________________

**Tues Sep 28:** Cultural difference/mismatch theories


Reviewers: __________________________. __________________________

**Thurs Sep 30:** Cultural-ecological explanations: John Ogbu


Reviewers: __________________________. __________________________

**Tues Oct 5:** Social reproduction and resistance theories


Reviewers: __________________________. __________________________

**Thurs Oct 7:** Failure as a social construct


Reviewers: ______________________, ______________________

Tues Oct 12 – NO CLASS Trinity Days

III. Ethnographic Studies

Thurs Oct 14: Class and education: Learning to Labor


Reviewers: ___Brooke_____, ___Marianne_____
Facilitators:__Dan_____, ___Cyemone_________

Tues Oct 19: Learning to Labor, continued

Paul Willis, Learning to Labor, Chapters 5 and 8

Reviewers: ___Amanda____, ___Nate________
Facilitators:__Begaeta____________, ___Rachel R________

Thurs Oct 21: Ethnographies of language


Reviewers: ___Kate Meissner______, ___Orsi____________
Facilitators:__Hannah___________, __Alicia__

Tues Oct 26: Ethnographies of language, cont.’d.


Reviewers: ___Rachel R____, ___Hannah________
Facilitators:__Samantha__________, __Stacey__________

Thurs Oct 28: Mid-term exam
**Tues Nov 2:** Ethnographies of race: Colormute


Reviewers: ___Katie C.__________, ___Rachel R.____________
Facilitators:__Stephanie__________, _Brooke_, _William (Ch. 3)___

**Thurs Nov 4:** Colormute, cont.’d


Reviewers: ___Alicia______________, _______________________
Facilitators:___Kate Meissner______, __Orsi__________

**Tues Nov 9:** Ethnic identity and nationalism

Rival, Laura, “Formal Schooling and the Production of Modern Citizens in the Ecuadorian Amazon,” and

Reviewers: ___Hannah M__________, __Cyemone______________
Facilitators:__Katie C.__________, __Nate________________

**Thurs Nov 11:** Ethnographies of gender


Reviewers: __Katie C______________, __Samantha__________
Facilitators:__Marianne__________, __Karina______________
Tues Nov 16: Ethnography challenging stereotypes

Stack, Carol, “Black Urban Poor” and “Swapping,” in *All Our Kin*, Basic Books, 1974, pp. 22-44. And

Stack, Carol, “Writing Ethnography Against Public Reasoning” (talk given at Yale University, May 2010)


Reviewers: _____Cyemone__________, ___Karina__________, Will
Facilitators:_____Jennifer______, __José__________
___Amanda__


IV. Currently popular understandings of education and poverty: A long way to full circle

Tues Nov 23: Media portraits of the achievement gap


Video excerpt in class: *Making Schools Work*

“Engaging the public” paper due in class.

Thurs Nov 25: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving holiday

Tues Nov 30: The Professional Development Industry


V. Using anthropological research to create change: activist and applied anthropology

**Thurs Dec 2:** Applied Research with Youth: The Institute for Community Research

Berg, M. J., & Schensul, J. J., (Guest Editors). Practicing Anthropology. Special Issue: Approaches to Conducting Action Research with Youth. 26(2).
http://www.sfaa.net/pa/pa26-2.html

Guest speaker: Jean Schensul and ICR staff

Reviewers: __Jennifer J._______, __José____________

**Tues Dec 7:** What can academics do? Models of activist research


Council on Anthropology & Education Mission Statement
(Current By-Laws can be found at http://aaanet.org/cae/ByLaws.html)

Reviewers: __Will__________, ____Amanda____

**Thurs Dec 9:** Last Class  Reflections, wrap-up, and evaluations.

**Thurs Dec 16:** Final Paper DUE by 12:00noon