

Sociology of Education

Code: 101158
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Sociology	OB	3

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Prerequisites

Objectives and Contextualisation

Sociology of Education is organized according to three general objectives:

- 1) To offer a panoramic view of the main theories in the field of Sociology of Education as a discipline;
- 2) To present the main authors and explanatory mechanisms to address the relationship between education and society from a theoretical, analytical and conceptual point of view;
- 3) To use the theoretical-analytical concepts of Sociology of Education as a field to analyse contemporary educational inequalities and debates.

The course is structured under four thematic Sections:

The First Section explains the origin of the Sociology of Education as a specific field of study within Sociology, and illustrates its institutionalization process as a discipline. Simultaneously, it discusses the different ontological and epistemological perspectives from which it has been historically organised and it offers to the students a global framework to position and interpret the different authors and theories. Once the main debates

to explain the relationship between education, society and sociology has been explained, this section focuses on the Functionalist approach to Sociology of Education (Durkheim and Parsons) and explains the specificities of the 'Reformist Functionalism' and the 'Human Capital Theory'.

The Second Section focuses on the neo-Marxist critique to the Functionalist approach and it explains the main theories developed in this field. Based on the proposals of authors such as Bowles & Gintis, Baudelot & Establet and Althusser, the mechanisms by which the education system contributes to the reproduction of the social classes and to the legitimization of the social inequalities are addressed. Neo-marxist theories are ontologically opposed to functionalist theories but they maintain a macro focus of study, focusing their analysis in the relationships between education, capitalism and the State.

The Third Section delves into the theory of reproduction, presenting the proposals of two key authors in the sociology of education: Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. It also presents what is known as the New Sociology of Education (NSOE) and the crucial shift it represents for the evolution of the Sociology of Education as a discipline. NSOE maintains a critical understanding on the relationship between education and society but it attributes a crucial importance to the processes by which these inequalities are created, thus mostly developing micro and interpretative analysis. This Section addresses Young and Apple's proposals in the area of the sociology of the school knowledge and the sociology of curriculum, as well as Rist's labelling theory. It also devotes a space to presenting the critiques that are made from the Rational Choice Theory (Boudon) to Bourdieu's theory of reproduction and neo-Marxist theories in education. Overall, this Section makes it possible to identify how schools, their pedagogical models, their curriculum or their teachers contribute with their daily practices to the reproduction of social inequality. It also incorporates a feminist perspective in order to understand the role of gender to explain the processes of educational inequalities. The conceptual proposal of Diane Reay is specially addressed in this regards.

The Forth Section focuses on the Resistance Theories and particularly on Willis' proposals around the creative capacity of social agents to transform their social reality. So, maintaining a critical approach to education, these theories analyse the active role of working class students to resist the dominant school culture and to create a counter culture that provides them with collective identity. Overall, this section also presents feminist theories addressed to explain student's attitudes throughout a gender lens.

Competences

- Analysing the problems arising from the implementation of public policies and conflict situations by recognising the complexity of the social phenomena and political decisions affecting democracy, human rights, social justice and sustainable development.
- Applying the concepts and approaches of the sociological theory, specially the explanations of social inequalities between classes, between genders and between ethnic groups, to the implementation of public policies and to the resolution of conflict situations.
- Assessing the contributions of sociological approaches to the study of culture, education, interaction between society and environment, social policy, and work.
- Demonstrating a comprehension of the analysis of social phenomena presented in English, as well as observing their strengths and weaknesses.
- Demonstrating a comprehension of the approaches of the sociological theory in its different aspects, interpretations and historical context.
- Describing social phenomena in a theoretically relevant way, bearing in mind the complexity of the involved factors, its causes and its effects.
- Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
- Developing self-learning strategies.
- Effectively communicating the basic analysis of social phenomena in an elementary level of English.
- Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
- Searching for documentary sources starting from concepts.

Learning Outcomes

1. Comparing the reading of educational phenomena from several ideologies of the social reality of Spain and Catalonia.
2. Defining the appropriate sociological concepts in order to interpret the educational and school phenomena.
3. Demonstrating a comprehension of the analysis of social phenomena presented in English, as well as observing their strengths and weaknesses.
4. Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
5. Developing self-learning strategies.
6. Distinguishing sociological concepts, as well as the methods and techniques of social investigation commonly used to analyse education.
7. Distinguishing sociological concepts concerning education adopted by the actors involved in the educational system.
8. Distinguishing the explanations of educational inequalities between classes, between genders and between ethnic groups that these actors take for granted.
9. Distinguishing the social interpretations of education according to these approaches.
10. Distinguishing the underlying social phenomena of educational policies and conflicts.
11. Effectively communicating the basic analysis of social phenomena in an elementary level of English.
12. Expressing the debates regarding these approaches, that refer to education.
13. Relating the explanations of educational inequalities with general theoretical and methodological debates.
14. Relating the theoretical approaches with debates about social order, inequality and social strategies.
15. Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
16. Searching for documentary sources starting from concepts.

Content

The thematic organization of Sociology of Education is the following:

SECTION 1: THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION AND THE FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

- 1.1. The relationship between education and sociology
- 1.2. The sociology of education in the 'classics'
- 1.3. Education, socialization and forms of cultural transmission (Durkheim)
- 1.4. Education, social selection and stratification (Parsons)
- 1.5. The Human Capital Theory and the Reformist Functionalism

SECTION 2. NEO-MARXIST THEORIES: EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIAL CLASSES

- 2.1. Criticism to functionalism and human capital theory
- 2.2. Bowles and Gintis and the correspondence theory
- 2.3. Baudelot and Establet and the theory of educational networks
- 2.4. Althusser and education as the ideological apparatus of the State.

SECTION 3. BOURDIEU, BERNSTEIN AND THE NEW SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: OPENING THE BLACK BOX OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES

- 3.1 Bourdieu: cultural education and reproduction

3.2. Gendering Bourdieu: Reay's proposal

3.3 The Rational Choic Theory in Education (Boudon)

3.4. Bernstein: sociolinguistic codes and educational codes

3.5. Young &Apple: sociology of curriculum and school knowledge

3.6. Rist: teachers and labeling processes

SECTION 4. RESISTANCE THEORY: YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOL ATTITUDES

4.1. A new analytical framework to understand educational inequality

4.2. Willis: working class' boys and school counterculture

4.3. Gender and school attitudes: beyond Lads

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Master	23	0.92	1, 2, 6, 10, 9, 12, 14
Seminars	15	0.6	16, 1, 3, 12, 15
Type: Supervised			
Supervised	20	0.8	2, 9, 12, 14
Type: Autonomous			
Autonomous	77	3.08	1, 2, 8, 6, 7, 10, 9, 12, 14

Sociology of Education combines theoretical lessons with reading seminars and case studies/forums that are developed both in the classroom and at home.

- In the theoretical lessons the main theoretical approaches of the discipline are explained and the central concepts of the authors that are contemplated in the program are presented. The theoretical lessons always count with the participation of the students and are carried out in a dynamic way using multiple examples of the contemporary educational reality. The aim is for students to understand the concepts presented throughout the course and to integrate them into their theoretical repertoire in order to be able to think and interpret the educational reality.
- In the reading seminars there are debates based on the defense and critique of the authors of the course and the illustration of their theories based on films, data and other materials that allow to show their applicability for the understanding of contemporary educational phenomena. The seminars allow giving meaning to the theories from their relevance to interpret the educational reality from multiple perspectives. They also help to strengthen the critical and analytical capacity of students, helping them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of the theories of the course from both a theoretical, methodological and empirical point of view, among others. The active participation of students in class is essential to conduct reading seminars.
- In the Case Studies the theoretical contents worked on during the course are used to analyze and interpret different practical problems raised by the teachers. Specifically, Case studies are proposed at the end of each

thematic section from which the students put into operation the theoretical, analytical and conceptual proposals of different theories presented throughout the course to solve practical cases. In each case study, students are asked to mobilize the explanatory mechanisms of each theory to analyze and interpret the case in question, reaching solid conclusions about it. The case studies are designed looking for the diversity of didactic resources, in such a way that they allow the students to recognize, on the one hand, the different types of expression of the educational inequality and, on the other, to experience different types of competences.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Case studies	40%	5	0.2	16, 1, 3, 4, 8, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15
Exam	40%	5	0.2	1, 2, 5, 10, 9, 12, 13
Reading seminar	20%	5	0.2	11, 9, 12, 14

The evaluation of the course Sociology of Education aims to simultaneously fulfill an accrediting or qualifying function with a formative function. To do this, it proposes 3 main assessment activities - the exam, the reading seminars and the case studies - which, in a transversal way, are characterized by the following elements:

- 1) They are applied at different times of the course, to ensure continuous assessment as a constituent element of pedagogical practice.
- 2) They combine individual and group activities, to develop the ability to work in a team and at the same time encourage personal reflection.
- 3) They articulate theoretical and practical elements to ensure the development of complex and meaningful thinking.
- 4) They encourage feedback as a key mechanism for self-regulation of the learning process and as part of learning itself.
- 5) Explain the evaluation criteria, both in terms of performance criteria and result criteria.

The exam

The exam is an individual assessment activity, based on an eminently qualifying function that, far from being oriented to check if the students are able to reproduce the transmitted knowledge, is eminently oriented to ascertain whether the students have integrated this knowledge into their thinking structure and are able to apply it to interpret the educational reality from a sociological perspective. To this end, the exam consists of a more conceptual first part where students are expected to be able to answer in a concise, detailed and theoretically informed way, ensuring that the central concepts of the course have been internalized. And a second part where the theoretical repertoires of the course must be mobilized to solve and / or interpret practical cases linked to the educational reality.

The exam represents 40% of the final grade of the subject and it is essential to achieve a minimum grade of 4.5 so that you can average the rest of the assessment activities. Students who do not pass the exam in the first call can take a compensatory test with the same characteristics that is usually done one or two weeks after

the regular call.

The specific criteria for evaluating the exam will be available at the beginning of the course.

Reading seminars

Reading seminars are a group-type assessment activity, designed with a strong formative function, although they are also aimed at quantifying and qualifying the learning process. Compulsory readings of the course are distributed in groups of approximately 5 people (depending on the total number of students enrolled) who are responsible for:

a) Prepare and deliver a power point presentation (or similar) (details on will be explained at the beginning of the course) which address, on the one hand, the strengths and weaknesses of the theory in question and, on the other hand, to illustrate its main arguments through data, films, graphic material or other textual or visual resources.

b) Present the work in the classroom and generate a debate with the rest of the classmates.

The distribution of the authors of the course between the different work groups will be done on the first day of class. Depending on the number of students enrolled, it may be the case that two groups work on the same text or that the same group works on two different authors. Details will be specified at the beginning of the course and will have specific features in the morning (01) and afternoon (51) groups depending on the volume of students enrolled in each case. In any case, no author of the course can be left without working and presenting.

The weight of the seminars is 40% of the final grade, including the presentation, argumentation and debate. The specific evaluation criteria will be explained at the beginning of the course. As in the case of the exam, it is essential to achieve a minimum grade of 4.5 so that you can average the rest of the assessment activities. Students who do not achieve this mark can recover it during the period of compensatory tests established by the Department of Sociology.

Finally, a compulsory meeting (face-to-face or virtual) will be organized with each working group to address the work related to the reading seminars.

Case studies

At the end of each thematic section, a case study will be organized in the classroom where students will be asked to work on the material that has been provided to them. It is, therefore, an assessment activity that, like reading seminars, has a strong formative function that acts in parallel with its qualifying function.

Mechanisms will be enabled to guarantee the active participation of students in class and at the same time it will be required that each student (individually) deliver in writing (details at the beginning of the course) one of these case studies. Students are free to choose the case study they want to submit, but it is recommended that it does not match the topic selected for the reading seminar. In this way, you can work in depth on the different thematic sections of the Program.

Details on the evaluation of the case studies will be presented at the beginning of the course, but it is important to keep in mind that the individual writings that derive from them must have the capacity to interpret the case study from the theoretical concepts and the arguments of the reference theory worked on in the thematic section in which the case study is framed. They must also be able to go further and expand the collective debates that have been generated in the classroom.

The case studies represent 20% of the final grade of the course which includes the individual delivery and the preparation of the collective debate in the classroom. As with all assessment activities, it is essential to achieve a minimum grade of 4.5 so that they can average the rest of the assessment activities. Students who do not achieve this grade may retake it during the compensatory testing period established by the Department of Sociology.

Summary

Item

Typolgy

Weigh

Exam	Individual	40%
Reading Seminars	Grupal	20%
Case studies	Individual	40%

Transversal aspects.

- It is necessary to deliver the activities in the dates established by the teachers and that will communicate to the students to the start of course.
- Corrections of assessment activities will be returned approximately 15 days after delivery. In the event that someone fails the exam or any of the course deliveries, they will be entitled to recovery during the test clearing period established by the Faculty.
- The minimum grade for the activities to be able to do an average is 4.5, with a lower grade, the suspended activity must be recovered during the recovery period.
- Evaluation marks are not saved from one year to the next.

Assistance

- Class attendance is compulsory and the active participation of students in both theoretical and practical sessions will be taken into account. The criteria will be explained at the beginning of the course.

Single assessment:

- Students in the single assessment regime will also have three assessment items (exam, seminar and case study) that will be given on the day of the exam. Unlike continuous assessment students, the seminar work will be done individually, will not be presented in the classroom and will necessarily have a written-narrative format. Therefore, in these cases, both the seminars and the cases are worth 30% of the grade. Details will be given at the beginning of the course.

Plagiarism and other irregularities

In accordance with academic regulations, if plagiarism is detected, the evaluation activity will be graded with a 0. If multiple irregularities occur in the evaluation processes of the course, the final grade for the course will be 0.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is allowed as an integral part of the work development, provided that the final result reflects a significant contribution from the student in terms of analysis and personal reflection. The student must clearly identify which parts have been generated using this technology, specify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on how they have influenced the process and the final result of the activity. Lack of transparency in the use of AI will be considered academic dishonesty and may result in a penalty on the activity grade, or more severe sanctions in serious cases.

Bibliography

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Other useful resources:

Fundació Jaume Bofill: <https://www.fbofill.cat/>

El Diari de l'Educació: <https://diarieducacio.cat/>

El Diario de la Educación: <https://eldiariodelaeducacion.com/>

Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat: <https://www.rosasensat.org/>

Federació d'Associacions de Pares i Mares d'Alumnes de Catalunya (FAPAC): <https://fapac.cat/>

Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya: <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/inici>

Diputació de Barcelona. Àrea d'Educació: <https://www.diba.cat/es/web/educacio>

UNESCO i educació: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education>

Research Groups from the UAB Sociology Department specialized in education:

Grup de Recerca en Globalització, Educació i Polítiques Socials (GEPS): <https://geps-uab.cat/>

Grup de Recerca en Educació i Treball (GRET): <https://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/gret/>

Software

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(SEM) Seminars	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(SEM) Seminars	51	Catalan	first semester	afternoon
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	51	Catalan	first semester	afternoon