SOCIOLGY OF EDUCATION

This paper provides students with an introduction to key themes in the sociology of education through a focus on two topics: Education, democracy and global social justice, and Education and social justice in Britain. The first section examines the changing role of education in relation to democracy and nation-building, changing forms of global governance, and the global politics of knowledge and social change. The second section brings issues within these global debates to bear on a more in-depth study of the relationships between education and social justice in Britain. This section puts particular emphasis on the interplay between social and educational research, the application of social policy, and the role of the school in the implementation of policy. The lectures will examine the intersectional politics of difference, and the spatial and family dimensions of educational inequalities. Students taking this paper will gain an informed sociological understanding of national and international developments in key areas of educational politics, policy and public debate.

Lectures will take place on Mondays 2-4pm in room Mab G08/9 TBC

Examination: The course is examined by a 3 hour paper. Students have to answer 3 questions, 1 from section A of the course, 1 from section B and a third from either section.

Supervisions: We recommend that you write a minimum of 4 essays and have 4-6 supervisions during the course. As students like to write on the topics that particularly interest them, students need to contact the supervisor for each lecture directly, to arrange a supervision. The supervisor for each lecture is indicated on the course guide/reading list.

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LECTURES

Block 1: Education and nation-building

1. Education and democracy
9th October 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Susan Robertson, slr69@cam.ac.uk

This lecture explores the shifting place of education in the modern social contract and as a basis for democratic participation in societies. The idea of the social contract and how it has shaped the relation to the state and citizen in modern societies is broadly elaborated. We focus particularly on the reconfiguration of the modern social contract as a result of changes in the nation state, the changing relationship between the citizen and the economy, and cultural claims to identity. A new emergent form of economic citizenship is becoming more visible with major implications for education as an entitlement to political and social participation.

Core Readings


Additional readings and resources:


Podcast

Steve Smith, Yale, *Democracy and Participation: Rousseau’s Social Contract* accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPwx8-mFvUs

Supervision question

How has neoliberalism as a political project changed the place of education in the social contract, and what are the implications of this for democracy?
2. Changing narratives of nation and citizenship in modern Britain
16th October 2-4pm
Lecture and Supervisions: John Beck (jb267@cam.ac.uk)

This session will examine some aspects of efforts to project and promote particular narratives of
nationhood and citizenship in Britain in four key periods since the 1940s. These comprise a)
accounts of social democratic citizenship and welfarism up to the mid-1970s; b) the rise of neo-
liberalism and narratives of entrepreneurial and consumer citizenship between 1979 and 1997;
c) The New Labour years, the 'Third Way', and a conception of citizenship that included
statutory citizenship education; and d) The post-2010 years of Coalition Government and
Conservative Government. Certain key continuities across periods (b) to (d) will be examined –
notably the intensification of neoliberal modes of restructuring the State and of governing
public-sector institutions, co-existing with rhetorics of promoting 'active' citizenship. The
session will conclude by examining the increasing salience in discussions concerning the nation
and citizenship, of growing pluralism in values, culture, ethnicity and faith - and the promotion
of 'British' values as one response to such diversity.

Core readings
Beck J. (2008) Meritocracy, Citizenship and Education, Ch. 3 'New Labour's Citizenship Agenda',
(London: Continuum) 29-50.

Additional readings and resources
(London: Sage), Ch. 1 'Changing Times: Perspectives on the Citizen Consumer' and Ch. 8:
'Beyond the Citizen-Consumer'.

Supervision question
Critically discuss some of the key ways in which governments have sought to project and
promote particular narratives of nationhood and citizenship in Britain since the 1940s.
The session will examine the origins of the concept of meritocracy, explicitly in the seminal work of Michael Young in 'The Rise of the Meritocracy' but also briefly tracing similar ideas back at least as far as Emile Durkheim. The view that meritocratic principles should underpin the distribution of wealth and income in contemporary economically advanced societies will be examined and critiqued. The enduring salience of a meritocratic vision of society in the policy rhetoric both centre-left and centre-right politicians will be examined, with particular reference to New Labour in office and certain more recent Conservative politicians. Key tensions between claims to be promoting a more meritocratic Britain, alongside growing evidence of widening social inequality, ‘stalled’ social mobility, and the increasing role of ascriptive factors in accessing elite positions will be examined.

Core Readings


Additional readings and resources:


Supervision question

‘The goal of creating a meritocratic society has been repeatedly promoted by politicians and sociologists, while meritocratic access to educational and occupational advancement has been steadily eroded.’ Discuss

Block 2: From Government to Governance

4. Globalisation and Education
30th October 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Susan Robertson, slr69@cam.ac.uk

This lecture examines the ways in which education as a sector has been radically transformed in many countries as a result of processes broadly conceived of as globalisation. We focus particularly on the globalisation of neoliberalism, and the ways in which education is no longer primarily activity that is contained within the boundaries of the national state, but where governing is increasingly located at the global and regional scale, and that the nature of that project is tied to making the new competitive student, teacher, school and nation. These raises important questions for the education-citizen relation, for learning as a form of freedom, and for democratic accountability.

Core Readings


Podcast


Additional Reading and Resources


Podcast
Supervision question

How, why, by whom and with what outcomes, is the governing of education systems, on the one hand, and the life chances of learners, on the other, being changed as a result of global processes?

5. New Actors in Education
6th November 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Susan Robertson, slr69

For much of the twentieth century, education systems have dominated by the state, as largely funder and provider. Since the 1990s, however, shifts in the governance of education has resulted in governing now being vertically and horizontally organised with many more new actors in the sector engaged in the delivery of education. In this lecture we examine how this shift came about, and what this means for who gets taught what, with what outcome, and the social justice implications of these developments.

Core Readings


Additional Reading and Resources


Podcast

Tedtalk: OECD  Director of Indicators and Analysis Division, Andreas Schleicher
https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools?language=en

Supervision question
What are the arguments for and against opening up education systems to for-profit actors to deliver core educational activity?

6. Technologies of Governing Education
13th November 2-4 pm
Lecture and supervisions: Susan Robertson, slr69@cam.ac.uk

In this lecture we explore the social and cultural work that is the object and outcome of new governing technologies which are driving the shape and form of many education systems around the world. We explore specifically what it means to learn in the context of education policies that promote and are governed by market ideology. The concepts ‘ordinalization’ and ‘ubercapital’ are introduced to help explore the consequences of using hierarchical spatial tools and big data to make new pedagogical subjects. We examine how this leads to new moral and value judgements about value and worth, new forms of social stratification, and new systems of class/ification that more beyond old forms of class identity.

Core

Extra Reading

Podcast
Professor Stephen Ball Neoliberal Education Policy and Neoliberalism - at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Wx9sKr20ek

Supervision Question:
How and in what ways has the governance of modern education systems changed and how do these technologies produce new social class situations, the distribution of education experiences, and learning outcomes?

Block 3: Knowledge, democracy and social change

7. Knowledge, curriculum and global social justice
20th November 2-4pm
Lecturer: Arathi Sriprakash  Supervisor: Peter Sutoris  ps623@cam.ac.uk

This lecture examines theories of powerful knowledge and critiques of the coloniality knowledge in schooling and higher education. We consider the significance of these epistemological debates with respect to broader political questions about the democratic potential of education and its role for promoting global social justice. We bring these concerns to recent debates about curriculum reform and identity politics in higher education vis a vis transnational movements for ‘decolonising’ universities.

Core readings


Additional readings and resources:


Reading: [http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall)

Video: Why is my curriculum white [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2l-Pk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2l-Pk)

Kehinde Andrews on Black Studies in UK Universities:
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/20/black-studies-university-course-long-overdue


On Identity politics:
Bhambra, Gurminder K., Margree, Victoria. 2010. Identity politics and the need for a 'tomorrow'.
Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.45 (No.15), pp. 59-66

Supervision question

At the centre of a socially just education system is an equal entitlement to 'powerful knowledge'. Discuss in relation to recent movements to 'decolonise' the curriculum in universities.

8. Global elites and the contested ‘good’ of elite education
28th November 2-4pm
Lecturer: Arathi Sriprakash  Supervisor: Peter Sutoris  ps623@cam.ac.uk

In this lecture we discuss the nature of contemporary ‘elite schooling’ as a case study of transnational processes and effects of class-making. We critically discuss the ‘new’ constitutions of the elite vis a vis globalisation, as well as ‘old’ configurations of elite privilege and boundary-maintenance. We explore how notions of meritocracy and benefaction circulate through elite school spaces and use this analysis to trace possible imaginations for social change. Our driving question is, what is the ‘good’ of elite education?

Core Readings


Additional readings and resources

Sutton Trust Report: Leading People, on elite schooling and the professions:

TWO SPECIAL ISSUES ON ELITE SCHOOLING: (see ToC for case-studies relevant to your research)


**Supervision question**

‘Elites have changed. They are now more open and meritocratic. They are also the engines of inequality’ [KHAN, 2012]. Discuss this statement with respect to the social role of elite schooling.

**Block 4: The Politics of Difference**

**9. Race and ethnicity**
22nd January 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath ([nch21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:nch21@cam.ac.uk))

This session will consider the British education system in relation to ethnic/racial inequalities. It will consider relationships between ethnicity, social class and gender and will explore inequalities in relation to ethnicity both within and outside of the school.

**Core Readings**

Archer, L and Francis, B (2005) ‘They never go off the rails like other ethnic groups’: teachers’ constructions of British Chinese pupils’ gender identities and approaches to learning *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 26:2


Keddie, A (2015) ‘We haven’t done enough for White working-class children’: issues of distributive justice and ethnic identity politics, *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 18.4

**Additional readings and resources**

Byfield, C (2008) *Black Boys can make it*, Stoke-on Trent: Trentham Books

Law, I, Finney, S and Swann, S (2014) 'Searching for autonomy: young black men, schooling and aspirations, Race Ethnicity and Education 17:4


**Supervision question**

Why are there inequalities in educational attainment between ethnic groups in Britain?

**10. Gender**

29th January 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)

This session provides a brief history of gender inequalities in the UK and then explores the ways in which popular debate focusses on differences in academic attainment between boys and girls. We look at differences in GCSE results by gender, how the media portrays this and how gender is mediated by social class and ethnicity as well as questioning the use of this problematic binary.

**Core Readings**


**Additional readings and resources**


Supervision question

Boys continually perform less well than girls at GCSE level. Critically consider the challenges facing boys in education today.

11. Social Mobility in Practice
5th February 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)

This session explores the concepts of social class and social mobility, considering particularly current policy emphases on social mobility. Recent measures and patterns of social mobility, and their implications for education will be explored.

Core Readings

Sutton Trust (2017) The State of Social Mobility in the UK

Sutton Trust (2017) Social Mobility and Economic Success

Policies focused on educational reforms as a means of encouraging social mobility and addressing class inequalities have considerable limitations in the face of the growing economic and social inequalities witnessed in recent decades' [SAVAGE, 2015]. Discuss
This session examines the notions of social capital and social exclusion. We will consider the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam to explore the ways in which the concept of social capital has been used to understand social and educational inequalities.

Core Readings


Bagley, C (2011) From Sure Start to Children's Centres: capturing the erosion of social capital, Journal of Education Policy 26:1


Additional readings and resources


Supervision question

Does raising the level of individual and community social capital constitute an
effective antidote to social exclusion?

Block 5: Families, Geographies, Inequalities

13. Why Place Matters: Area based versus national policy initiatives to address inequalities
19th February 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)

This session explores the lived realities of schooling in relation to different geographical contexts. It will explore the different challenges and inequalities experienced in different parts of Britain and will consider approaches to addressing social exclusion and educational inequality. Area based policy initiatives will be compared with national initiatives.

Core Readings


Mills, C and Gale, T (2011) Re-asserting the place of context in explaining student (under-) achievement British Journal of Sociology of Education, 32.2.


Additional readings and resources


Lupton, R. (2004) *Do Poor Neighbourhoods Mean Poor Schools?* CASE Paper LSE All CASE papers can be downloaded from: 
http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/publications/casepapers.asp

http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cp/CASEpaper76.pdf


Supervision question

‘Too often a child’s life chances are shaped by where in the country they went to school and where they’re growing up, and we shouldn’t accept that’ [Justine GREENING 2017]

Critically consider the strengths and weaknesses of area based approaches in tackling aspects of social exclusion and educational inequalities.

14 Family poverty and engagement with education
26th February 2-4pm

Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)

In this session we use social and cultural capital to unpack the ways in which poverty is experienced by families, and how this relates to school experiences and to children’s and parents’ attitudes towards school. We will also consider family poverty from the perspectives of schools and teachers.

Core Readings


Additional readings and resources


Vincent, C, Ball, S and Braun, A, (2010) Between the estate and the state: struggling to be a ‘good’ mother British Journal of Sociology of Education 31.2


Supervision question

What effects does family poverty have on children’s educational attainment?

15. Young people and schooling
5th March 2-4pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)
This session considers the ways in which the category of ‘youth’ has been constructed through a combination of professional agencies, government policies and economic forces. It considers the significance of social and economic change in terms of how youth is thought about and experienced. Further, we consider the role of education in relation to including or excluding young people and explore the ways in which young people may experience social and educational exclusions.

**Core Readings**


Stahl, G. (2016) White working-class male narratives of ‘loyalty to self’ in discourses of aspiration BJSE 37.5 663-68

**Additional readings and resources**


Supervision question

‘Those young people who will not or cannot accommodate the prevailing practice are removed or disempowered, most commonly not through deliberate explicit exclusion but by subtle signals of their perceived outlier nature’ [LUMBY, 2012].

Critically consider the above quotation in relation to the challenges that young people, at risk of exclusion, may face in education.

16. School Choice and education markets: policies and practice
12th March 2-4 pm
Lecture and supervisions: Natalie Heath (nch21@cam.ac.uk)

This session explores the role of school choice and education markets as adopted and developed by successive British governments. It looks at the practices and processes associated with school choice and a neo-liberal agenda and the ways in which school choice may perpetuate social inequalities.

Core Readings


Additional readings and resources


**Supervision question**

School Choice is an illusion. Discuss