

**SOC230H1F: Sociology of Education  
Fall 2025 (September-December)**

**Monday: 11:10AM-1PM Eastern Standard Time**

Lecture Format: **Zoom**

<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/87881194374>

Meeting ID: **878 8119 4374**

Passcode: **educ230**

Course Instructor: **Ikee Gibson**

Contact Information: [ikee.gibson@utoronto.ca](mailto:ikee.gibson@utoronto.ca)

Office Hours: **Tuesdays, 9AM-10AM**

Office Hours Link: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/83409334583>

- Meeting ID: **834 0933 4583**
- Passcode: **educ230**

Course Teaching Assistant:

TA Contact Information:

Office Hours:

## **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite to take this course is SOC100H1. Students without this requirement will be removed from the course without notice.

## **Course Description**

In advanced economies, schooling is a near-universal and highly structured institution. During the most impressionable times in their lives, children and adolescents go nearly every day to sit in the same pattern of classes with the same peers. In theory, students both within and across schools are supposed to learn the same things, at approximately the same time, and engage in similar rituals. And yet, this level of standardization often leads to substantively different outcomes across groups. This course investigates the structure of schools and the achievement hierarchies within and across them.

## **Goals and Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Reflect on your own educational experiences and social positioning, and place them in the broader context of institutional structures and social change.
- Critically evaluate the role of education as a social institution, and consider how it contributes to both the reproduction and transformation of social inequality.
- Identify key arguments for differential educational outcomes based on social status, including factors related to class, race, gender, and institutional design.
- Apply sociological heuristics, such as the origin-education-destination (OED) triangle and the sociological imagination, to make sense of educational experiences/outcomes.
- Critically assess educational policies and public claims, drawing on the evaluative techniques and frameworks discussed in the course.

## Course Evaluation

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Positionality Assignment	20%	Sunday, September 28
Critical Media Analysis	25%	Monday, October 20
Policy Brief	30%	Sunday, November 23
Positionality Revisited	7%	Tuesday, December 2
Final Exam (online)	18%	TBD

### **Positionality Assignment – 20%**

**Due Date: Sunday, September 28, at 11:59PM**

This assignment invites you to reflect on how your lived experiences, including your family background, educational journey, and expected or actual outcomes, influence your understanding of education as a meaningful life path. Your beliefs about what education can or cannot offer are often formed through personal experience. This might include how your family spoke about school, the types of opportunities that were made available or denied to you, and how you were treated by teachers, peers, and institutions. This reflection invites you to examine how those experiences have influenced your engagement with education, your sense of belonging or exclusion within schools, and the ways you navigate the broader educational landscape. It is also an opportunity to think critically about how your story reflects broader patterns of inequality and access that we will explore in the course.

This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade, but it does not require prior knowledge of the course material. A successful submission will show that you are thinking critically and honestly about your own experiences and how they have shaped your understanding of education.

The work you do in this reflection will be revisited at the end of the course. You will have the opportunity to revise or expand on this statement based on what we discuss throughout the course. You are encouraged to treat this as a living document that can grow as your understanding deepens.

Your submission should not exceed **two double-spaced pages** (between **500 & 600 words**).

### **Positionality Revisited – 7%**

**Due Date: Tuesday, December 2 at 11:59 p.m.**

**Format: Written submission or video recorded**

At the beginning of the term, you completed a positionality statement that asked you to reflect on who you are, your social location, and how these shape your perspectives on education and society. Now that you have completed the critical media analysis, the policy brief, and engaged with the majority of course readings, you will revisit and expand on your original statement. The goal is to reflect on how your thinking has evolved over the course and to demonstrate your ability to connect personal reflection to sociological concepts.

### **Critical Media Analysis – 25%**

**Due Date: Monday, October 20 at 11:59 p.m.**

In this assignment, you will conduct a critical media analysis focused on public discourse surrounding the value of education. Your task is to find an easily accessible video online that argues against pursuing post-secondary education. An example will be shown in class, and we

will take time to discuss it together so you have a clear sense of the expectations.

Once you have selected your video, your job is to critically evaluate the arguments being made using course materials, including lectures and readings covered up to that point in the course.

Your submission should include the following:

- A brief introduction summarizing the main arguments or claims made in the video.
- A clear outline of the specific points you agree or disagree with.
- A critical evaluation of these points using relevant course concepts, evidence from readings, and insights from lectures.
- A thoughtful reflection on how the video reflects or challenges broader debates about the purpose and value of education.

This is not just a summary or personal opinion piece. Your grade will be based on your ability to engage critically and substantively with both the video and the course content.

Detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be posted on Quercus.

### **Policy Brief – 30%**

Due Date: **Sunday, November 23, at 11:59 p.m.**

Format: **TBD**

Details to follow

### **Final Exam – 18%**

During the December Final Exam Period – TBD by FAS

## **Course Communication**

To ensure clear and effective communication, please follow the guidelines below when contacting me:

- Include the course code in the subject line of every email. For example:
  - Subject: SOC230 – Question about Assignment 1
- Only use your U of T email account when contacting me. Emails from personal or third-party accounts (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo) may be missed or filtered as spam.
- All course communication must be sent by email. I do not use Quercus messaging for communication.
- Response time:
  - I aim to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays (Monday to Thursday).
  - On weekends (Friday to Sunday), please allow up to 48 hours for a reply.
- It's okay to call me Ikee in your emails.
- Be specific and clear in your message. Include your full name (the one listed in Quercus), student number, and any relevant details to help me respond accurately.
- Check the syllabus, announcements, and course materials first to see if your question has already been answered.
- Maintain a professional tone in all emails (i.e. greetings, full sentences, appropriate tone).

## Accommodations

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services Office](#).

Please reach out to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

You may wish to inform me if you are a student with family responsibilities. If you are a student parent or have family responsibilities, you also may wish to visit the Family Care Office website at [familycare.utoronto.ca](http://familycare.utoronto.ca).

## Late Policy

This course follows an accelerated schedule, which means that falling behind, even briefly, can place you at a significant disadvantage. For that reason, late assignments will be penalized 10 percent per day, including weekends. Assignments submitted more than three days after the deadline will not be accepted unless formal academic accommodations are in place or prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

If you are experiencing serious extenuating circumstances, you are encouraged to reach out before the deadline to discuss possible options. While extensions may be granted in exceptional cases, they are not guaranteed and are more difficult to accommodate given the compressed timeline of the course.

**For practical reasons related to grading deadlines and the November 11 drop date set by the Faculty of Arts and Science, any requests for late submission made after the halfway point of the course (October 13) must be discussed with the instructor in a one-on-one meeting. This is to ensure that we can make realistic arrangements given the limited time remaining in the term.**

**Missed deadlines and tests:** Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN (**can only be used once during the semester**)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request that their College Registrar email the instructor.

## **Grade Review Policy**

If you have concerns about a grade you've received, wait 24 hours after the grade has been posted before contacting your TA. After this period, you may contact your TA to request a review. The TA will re-examine your work and may invite you to discuss it further during their office hours.

Please note that grades may stay the same, increase, or decrease upon review.

If, after meeting with the TA, you still believe further review is necessary, you may escalate the matter to the course instructor. To do so, you must submit a written justification that clearly identifies the specific areas where you believe the grading was inaccurate. Vague concerns or point-form lists will not be considered sufficient. Your justification should be well-reasoned and clearly articulated.

The instructor will then review your request and respond accordingly.

## Course Schedule

All required readings will be made available through Quercus or linked using the University of Toronto Library website. Please check Quercus regularly for weekly readings and updates.

Date	Lecture	Topic(s)	Reading
8-Sep	1	Course Introduction, The Schooled Society	<b>Read:</b> Baker (2014) Introduction: Quiet Revolution <b>Skim:</b> Baker (2014) Chapter 1: ...Schooled Society
15-Sep	2	Origins I: Sociological Imagination, Status Attainment/OED, Positionality	<b>Read:</b> Mills (1959) The Promise <b>Read:</b> Blau & Duncan (1967) The Process of Stratification <b>Skim:</b> MacCallum (2014)
22-Sep	3	Origins II: Families, Class Background, and Early Inequality	<b>Read:</b> Lareau (2002) Invisible Inequality <b>Read:</b> Calarco (2014) Coached for the Classroom <b>Read:</b> Bourdieu (2008:985-989) Habitus
<b>28-Sep</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Due: Positionality Assignment</b>	<b>NA</b>
29-Sep	4	Origins III: Race, Environment, and Schools	<b>Read:</b> Owens & McLanahan (2020) <b>Skim:</b> Legewie & Fagan (2019); Haskins (2016)
6-Oct	5	Education I: Inequality Reducer	<b>Read:</b> Hout (2012) Social and Economic Returns to Education <b>Read:</b> Downey et al. (2004) Are Schools the Great Equalizer?
<b>13-Oct</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>No Lecture - Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	<b>NA</b>
20-Oct	6	Education II: Effectively Maintained Inequality	<b>Read:</b> Lucas (2001) Effectively Maintained Inequality <b>Skim:</b> Porter (1965/1992) Chapter 9
<b>24-Oct</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Due: Critical Media Analysis</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>27-Oct</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>No classes - Fall Reading Week</b>	<b>NA</b>
3-Nov	7	Education IV: Cultural Capital, School Advantage, & the Hidden Curriculum	Jack (2016) (No) Harm in Asking
10-Nov	8	Education V: Access to Education Programs	TYP: <a href="https://typ.utoronto.ca/">https://typ.utoronto.ca/</a> Academic Bridging: <a href="https://wdw.utoronto.ca/academic-bridging">https://wdw.utoronto.ca/academic-bridging</a>
17-Nov	9	Education III: Organizations and Inequality	<b>Read:</b> Avent-Holt and Tomaskovic-Devey (2019) Organizations as the Building... <b>Skim:</b> Acker (1990) Gendered Organizations; Ray (2019) Racialized Organizations
<b>23-Nov</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Due: Policy Brief</b>	<b>NA</b>
24-Nov	10	Destination: Differential Returns	<b>Read:</b> Oreopoulos (2011) Why Do Skilled Immigrants Struggle in the Labor Market <b>Skim:</b> Brewer et al. (2020) Who gets the benefit of the doubt? <b>Skim:</b> Kang (2016) Whiteness Resumes
1-Dec	11	Destination: Thinking Ahead	TBD
<b>2-Dec</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Due: Positionality Revisited</b>	<b>NA</b>

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

### **In papers and assignments:**

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
3. Making up sources or facts;
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

### **On tests and exams:**

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids;
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test;
3. Misrepresenting your identity/pretending to be someone else.

### **In academic work:**

1. Falsifying documents or grades;
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) medical forms.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources.

### ***Turnitin.com***

Sometimes, students will be required to submit their assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

For some of your assignments, we will be using the software Turnitin. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. Turnitin is integrated into Quercus. For the assignments set up to use Turnitin, the software will review your paper when you upload it to Quercus. To learn more about Turnitin's privacy policy please review its [Privacy Policy](#).

Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Turnitin will not be assessed

unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

### ***Artificial Intelligence***

Given the pace of this course, it is crucial that you manage your time well. Failure to do so increases the temptation to use artificial intelligence (AI) to complete assignments. This is not permitted. However, here are the guidelines for its use in this course:

- You may use AI tools for creating an outline for an assignment, but the final submitted assignment must be original work produced by you alone.
- You may not use AI tools for taking tests, writing research papers, or completing major course assignments. However, these tools may be useful when gathering information from across sources and assimilating it for understanding.
- You may not use AI tools for taking tests in this course.
- You can use AI to assist with translation, but you are not permitted to use it to edit your work. There is a fine line between editing, and rewriting your work. If you're unsure about this, please reach out to the course instructor prior to submitting your work.

If you have any question about the use of AI applications for course work, please speak with the instructor.

### **Important Matters for Review**

Click the links below to review the codes of conduct for students, and regarding academic matters.

[Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)