

Sociology of Education Syllabus

SOCI 385 – Fall 2025

Educational systems themselves are thus, in a sense, ideologies. They rationalize in modern terms and remove from sacred and primordial explanations the nature and organization of personnel and knowledge in modern society.

- Meyer (1977: 66)

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Class time: TR 9:45-11 am

Class location: Mills 307

Student hours: TR 8:30-9:30 am, W 1-2pm, or by appointment

Course Description

Education shapes our opportunities, identities, and everyday lives—and it's one of the most powerful institutions in society. In this course, we use sociology to examine how education works, who it benefits, and how it could work differently, with a special focus on schools in Arkansas. We'll move through six major units:

1. Sociology of education foundations: Key theories and the history of schooling
2. Arkansas and school choice: Analyzing growth, achievement, and inequality using state data
3. Education dynamics: Exploring how schools are evaluated, as well as the sociological forces that shape learning and student outcomes
4. The college experience: Investigating stratification, belonging, and identity in higher education
5. Contemporary policy discussions: Topics like school choice, affirmative action, and financing
6. Final project preparation: Supporting students' independent, data-driven research

This course emphasizes data literacy and quantitative reasoning. Early in the semester, we'll work together to replicate a published analysis comparing Arkansas charter and traditional public schools. Later, students will design and complete their own small-group research projects using state education data and tools like Excel or R.

Throughout the course, we'll critically examine both K–12 and higher education systems, combining hands-on analysis with sociological theory and research. No prior data experience is required, just curiosity and a willingness to learn.

This course meets in person two times a week (see above for specific details). Throughout the semester, students are expected to submit reading notes, complete course assignments, complete a midterm and a final exam, and develop a group research project, which will include a paper and presentation. Course materials will be available via Microsoft Teams. The syllabus is subject to change; any changes would be announced during class and on Teams.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain core sociological theories of education and inequality, and apply them to current issues in K–12 and higher education.
- Interpret and critique research findings, including statistical patterns and qualitative narratives, in visual and written formats.
- Use publicly available education data to replicate and extend empirical analyses, including calculating summary statistics and comparing school types or populations using Excel or R.
- Design and conduct a group-based research project using Arkansas school-level data, including question development, data analysis, and interpretation of results.
- Reflect on your own educational experiences in relation to broader structural forces such as race, class, gender, and geography.

Classroom Etiquette

Please support each other and the instructor by giving your full attention and participation during class, and avoid engaging in distracting behaviors. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions. For productive discussions, it is essential that both students and the professor come prepared by completing the assigned readings. Differing points of view should be treated with respect. Disagreements are expected, and expressing different viewpoints is encouraged, provided it is done respectfully. Hostile or derogatory comments or behaviors will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to ban technology (laptops, tablets, cell phones) if they serve as a distraction.

Required Materials and/or Technologies

- Please bring a laptop to class. If you lack a laptop that you can bring to class, please let me know so I can plan accordingly.
- All other materials (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) will be posted on Teams.

[Course Schedule](#) [click link to see, subject to change]

Grading and Faculty Response

Grades in this course will follow a specifications grading model, with assignments assessed on a pass/fail basis based on clearly defined criteria. Your final grade will be determined by the **bundle** of assignments you successfully complete. Students must meet all criteria within a bundle to earn that grade.

A (Mastery):

- Complete 90% or more of reading notes at the satisfactory level
- Complete 90% or more of course assignments
- Meet expectations on both midterm and final exams
- Submit a final group project (paper + presentation) that meets all core specifications and demonstrates analytical depth

B (Proficiency):

- Complete 80–89% of reading notes at the satisfactory level
- Complete 80–89% of course assignments
- Meet expectations on both midterm and final exams
- Submit a final group project that meets all core specifications

C (Basic):

- Complete 70–79% of reading notes
- Complete 70–79% of course assignments
- Meet expectations on both midterm and final exams
- Submit a final group project that meets minimum specifications

D (Needs Improvement):

- Fails to meet one of the four major specifications (e.g., does not complete exams or final project)

F (Unsatisfactory):

- Fails to meet two or more of the four major specifications

Attendance Policy: Students with three or more unexcused absences will be ineligible for grades above a “C” due to the importance of class participation in this course. Excused absences include illness, religious observances, or college-related activities, with prior notice required when possible.

Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

Reading notes: On days when a reading is assigned, students must submit their reading notes. These notes should include definitions of key terms, questions about themes that are unclear, and at least one discussion question. Reading notes are due by 9:00 AM on class days.

Course assignments: Assignments will vary from analyses of data to infographics on a topic. Please refer to the course schedule for due dates.

Midterm and final exams: The midterm and final exams will be taken during class time. The exams will consist of prompts to which you will respond. The exams may also include a limited number of multiple-choice questions. You will be allowed to bring in a sheet of paper (8.5 x 11 inches) with hand-written notes to reference during the exams. The exam dates are listed on the course schedule. Students who fail to meet the specifications on an exam will have an opportunity to earn credit through a verbal make-up exam.

Final Project (paper and presentation): You will conduct an analysis on the Arkansas education system (K-12) and present your results as a paper and presentation. Final projects will be completed in small groups (2-3 students). Papers and presentations will be submitted on December 9th at 8:30 am. Additional details will be distributed during class on October 2nd.

Late Assignments: To encourage consistent progress and timely feedback, assignments must be submitted by the due date.

- Revisions: If an assignment does not meet specifications, you may revise and resubmit within one week of receiving feedback. Revisions must address all identified issues.
- Late Submissions: Late assignments must still meet all specifications to pass. Extensions may be granted at the instructor's discretion if requested in advance.

Instructor Feedback and Response Time:

- Preferred contact method: If you have a general question about the course, please use our course's discussion board Q & A on Teams. Otherwise, please email my Hendrix email address (axxe@hendrix.edu). I will reply to the discussion board and emails within 48 hours on days when class is in session at the college.
- Class announcements: I will send all important class-wide messages through the General tab on Teams.
- Grading and feedback: For assignments submitted before the due date, I will try to provide feedback and grades within **four days**. Assignments submitted after the due date may have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

Hendrix Resources

Academic integrity: Our academic integrity policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.c.Academic Integrity](#). Assignments must reflect your original work. Properly cite any sources used. The use of AI to compose your papers for this class is considered academic dishonesty and will be reported to the Committee on Academic Integrity. Do not use ChatGPT or other interfaces to write a first draft of a paper and then edit it. Do not write a draft and then check an online source for ideas about your structure. These assignments are designed to bring your thoughts and ideas into the course and to develop your writing skills. Using AI to write a paper undermines both goals of the assignments. Oftentimes, students use AI because they feel stress and time pressures. If you're in such a situation, rather than use AI, contact me and ask for an extension.

Statement on diversity: Hendrix College values a diverse learning environment as outlined in the College's Statement on Diversity. All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, please contact the Dean of Students Office (Donna Eddleman, Eddleman@hendrix.edu or the submit a [Title IX report](#). If you have ideas for improving the inclusivity of the classroom experience please feel free to contact Dr. Axxe. For more information on Hendrix non-discrimination policies visit Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination.

[Title IX Reports of Discrimination Based on Sex, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, or Gender-Based Harassment.](#) (Follow link to see details.)

Health and wellbeing: Hendrix recognizes that many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. If you would like to implement academic accommodations, contact Julie Brown in the office of Academic Success (brownj@hendrix.edu). To maintain optimal health, please utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important.

Class attendance: Our attendance policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.e. Class Attendance](#). **If students must be absent from class, they are expected to email Dr. Axxe before class.** Without prior notification, absences are unexcused (barring true emergencies). Students will be excused for absences resulting from observance of religious holidays, cases of illness, and athletic competition, as well as any additional reasons as determined by the classroom teacher (e.g., conference travel, Model UN). Students do not need to present third-party documentation for absences related to physical or mental illness. Misrepresenting reasons for an absence to a classroom teacher is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance, or you can just drop in at our office in Bailey Library. Virtual appointments are available for medical reasons or by special arrangement. To book appointments and for more information, visit www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/ or contact pruneda@hendrix.edu. We look forward to working with you!

Hendrix Bailey Library: Bailey Library's mission is to collaborate and empower all members of our community so that they become their best selves, cherish the scope of human knowledge, and positively contribute to the world. Whether face-to-face or remote, librarians are happy to help locate quality resources supporting research and classroom work and to assist with the critical evaluation of academic information. Librarians provide individual research assistance by appointment. The library building is

open seven days a week, and access to the library's online resources is available 24/7. You can visit the library's website at <https://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/> for more information, to book an appointment, and to access the library's Discovery search, Class Guides, and full-text article databases.

ADA accommodations: As your instructor, it is my legal obligation to ensure that all students have equal access to course materials and equal opportunity to perform well in the course. In addition, "It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact Mr. Blake Draper in the Office of Advising & Academic Success (AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course."

Technology: I ask that you please bring a laptop or tablet to class. All readings will be distributed digitally, so this will also allow you to have the materials in class. Much of the technology we interact with is made to be addictive. I suggest you find and use resources that will help you resist distractions. Here's a website with a list of website blockers. Similar software exists for apps on phones and tablets.

Additional Resources

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

- **Local housing shelters and women's shelters:** Research indicates that a number of low-income college students face homelessness or transient/insecure housing accommodations. Affordable Colleges Online's website provides statistics about college homelessness as well a way to locate local services.
- **Food Pantries:** Here's a list of local food pantries.
- **Zotero:** Zotero is a free citation management software.
- **Grammarly:** Grammarly is a free software that checks and suggests fixes to grammatical errors.
- An [inclusive data resource hub](#).