

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies

FAIR 336b, Special Topics in Social Issues:  
*Youth in Society*  
Spring 2013, MW 9:00 – 10:50am  
FA 314

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### **Course Objectives**

In this course we will focus on how social structures in society influence the life chances of youth, and how the meanings constructed through youth culture and power co-constitute this process. The following questions will guide our inquiry: 1. What are social structures and how do they afford and constrain the lives of youth in contemporary society? 2. How do youth become empowered to challenge and contest social structures? 3. How do youth assemble meanings through culture to mediate and complicate this process? To examine these questions we will look to classical and contemporary thinkers and researchers from fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, and philosophy. In the process, we will draw upon a variety of forms of evidence, ranging from large-scale statistical studies to in-depth ethnographic research. These works will be situated within a number of different contexts, such as education, culture, art, politics, law, and the economy.

Much of the research on youth cultural studies focuses on how youth navigate the multiple social structures that make up society—economic, political, cultural, etc. Social structures constitute both an imposing and enabling force in the lives of youth. Depending upon one’s position within them (e.g. being the oldest child in the family, or the child of manual laborers within the global economy), social structures suggest a particular set of probable trajectories and/or relational strategies for action. As a concept, though, ‘social structure’ often takes on a vague meaning so that it is never quite clear what social structures actually *are* or what they *do*, if anything. This is due, in part, to the multiple ways in which social thinkers have invoked the term, as well as the different attempts among social scientists to measure the “effects” of social structures. Thus, while the course is primarily concerned with how, where, when, and why social structures matter to the lives of youth (particularly those at the margins), we will spend some time thinking more generally about the concept of social structure and the practical implications this concept offers to our understanding of social life.

### **Class Format**

The main format of the class meetings will be discussions of the readings, which we will pursue through a variety of modes of dialogue. At times the readings will be challenging and will require that we spend some class time interpreting the major claims/findings before delving deeper into our collective critiques and analyses. As the instructor my task is to facilitate the discussion and keep it focused on the main themes and questions guiding the course. Part of this process involves occasional lecturing to contextualize the readings and to motivate the discussion. However, even when lecturing I will often initiate a dialogue by posing questions to individual students at random. Be ready!

## **Modes of Evaluation**

There are four modes of evaluation for this course: participation in class discussions/activities, weekly reading responses, an in-class “interactive exam,” and two extended writing assignments. If there are aspects that you would like me to evaluate other than those described below, do not hesitate to bring this to my attention. You may, for example, have a specific skill or understanding that you are looking to improve upon. I am happy to customize evaluations to the greatest extent possible.

### 1. Participation:

Regular attendance in this course is a must. I recognize that illness and other commitments sometimes get in the way, and that you may have to miss one or two class meetings. However, if you have to miss class more frequently then please bring this to my attention so that we can discuss how to proceed.

Once in class, I am primarily concerned with the substance of your participation, not the frequency. I will pay specific attention to how your participation varies across class formats (e.g. two-way dialogue, whole-class discussion, group work, etc.), and how effectively you participate during these situations. “Effective” participation not only means articulating your own ideas, but also actively listening to others and accepting constructive criticism. I will also be attentive to the extent to which you engage in conceptual problem solving or problem posing, integrating concepts across readings or discussions, creating new ideas or concepts, and, finally, connecting the course material to your own (or others’) experiences.

I realize that at specific times some students prefer to listen and engage internally while others wish to engage in dialogue externally. Such variation is a good thing. However, I *will* challenge you to try and participate outside of your comfort zone. To do so I will randomly call on students and engage in dialogue. Thus, for each class you should come prepared to answer descriptive questions about the readings (e.g., “What does bell hooks mean by ‘postmodern blackness’?”), synthetic questions (e.g., “How might Bourdieu’s work on classification struggles deepen our understanding of Kennelly’s analysis of youth activism in Canada?”), and, finally, reflective questions (e.g., “What do you think of the way Duncan-Andrade characterizes critical literacy?”).

### 2. Weekly Reading Responses

The class will be divided into two groups for the purposes of writing and submitting short reading responses prior to class. In the course outline below you will note that next to the heading for each class meeting I have inserted ‘Group 1’, ‘Group 2’, or ‘Groups 1 & 2’. Each group number has been listed once per week. In some cases both groups are listed for the same day. When your group is listed for a given date that means you are responsible posting your reading response to the course discussion board (on Blackboard) by 10pm on the evening prior to the class meeting. For example, “Group 1” is listed for the April 8<sup>th</sup> class meeting, which means Group 1 must post their responses by 10pm April 7<sup>th</sup>. Additional details for this process will be explained during our first class meeting.

### 3. Interactive Exam

On Wednesday April 17, 2013 we will have an in-class “interactive” exam. The purpose of this interactive exam is to assess your understanding of the first two weeks of material through a combination of writing, reading, and discussion. The exam consists of four stages. In the first stage we will collectively construct a series of questions prior to the day of the exam. Next, on the day of the exam you will have approximately 50 minutes to write your responses to each of the questions. While you are welcome to use your notes and reading materials, please note that the questions will be constructed at a level of depth that assumes you have already read and discussed each reading. Third, upon completing your responses you will exchange your work with a partner. For no more than 30 minutes, you will each take the time to read one another’s responses and then engage in a critical dialogue in an effort to constructively challenge each other’s responses. In the fourth and final stage, you will take the remaining 25 minutes to reflect on your responses and partner’s critiques, and revise your responses to reflect your understanding in light of the critical dialogue. Additional details for this process will be discussed in class.

### 4. Extended Writing Assignments:

There will be two extended writing assignments (the first is due during week 7 and the second is due at the end of the quarter). The intent of the writing assignments is for you to apply concepts from the readings to specific issues facing youth, and to engage in a sustained critical conversation with the readings. The first extended writing assignment will consist of two short analytical essays (~4 pages each), and the second will be a more open-ended paper of approximately 2,000 words (~7-8 double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 12-pt. font.).

### **Texts**

All of the readings for this course are posted on Blackboard. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any problems accessing or downloading the readings.

### **Specific Accommodations**

If any student requires specific accommodations please do not hesitate to speak with me at any point during the quarter. This includes those accommodations related to the curriculum, instruction, assessments, or any other factors that would otherwise prohibit your full participation in this course. Any questions or concerns students have about this matter will be held confidential to the best of my ability. Students with special needs are encouraged to contact disAbility Resources for Students (DRS): Old Main 110, 516 High Street, 360.650.3083, <http://www.wvu.edu/depts/drs/> for information concerning campus related policies and services.

## Course Outline (subject to change)

Please note that the reading(s) listed under the dates below is the assigned reading for that day of class, and not the assigned reading for the next class meeting. For example, on April 8<sup>th</sup> you should arrive to class having read “How stratification works” by Douglas Massey. Also, for the instances in which there are multiple readings assigned, please read in the order listed on the syllabus. Please also note that for some of the readings only a portion of the article is assigned.

### Week 1

4-03-2013 Course overview/Introduction

### Week 2

4-08-2013 A stratification perspective to social structure (Group 1)

1. Massey, Douglas. (2006). How stratification works. In *Categorically unequal: The American stratification system* (pp. 1-27). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

4-10-2013 A critical field-theoretic perspective to social structure (Group 2)

1. Pages 275-278 in:  
Lareau, Annette. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2. Pages 49-60 in:  
Maton, Karl. (2008). Habitus. In Michael Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen Pub Ltd.
3. Pages 67-78 in:  
Thompson, Patricia. (2008). Field. In Michael Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen Pub Ltd.
4. Pages 1-13 in:  
Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

### Week 3

4-15-2013 Postcolonial theories of culture and identity (Groups 1 & 2)

1. Hall, S. (1994). Cultural identity and diaspora. In Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader* (pp. 392-403). New York: Columbia University Press.
2. Hooks, b. (1994). Postmodern blackness. In Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader* (pp. 421-427). New York: Columbia University Press.

4-17-2013     **Interactive exam**

**1. Bring all prior readings to class.**

Week 4

4-22-2013     Social class, race, and childrearing practices (Group 2)

1. Lareau, Annette. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 747-776.
2. Vincent, C., Rollock, N., Ball, S., and Gillborn, D. (2012). Raising middle-class black children: Parenting priorities, actions and strategies. *Sociology*, first published on December 12, 2012, as doi: 10.1177/0038038512454244.

4-24-2013     Within-family inequality (Group 1)

1. Conley, Dalton. (2008). Bringing sibling differences in: Enlarging our understanding of the transmission of advantage in families. In Annette Lareau and Dalton Conley (eds.), *Social class: How does it work?* (pp. 179-200). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Week 5

4-29-2011     Material and psycho-social consequences of child poverty (Groups 1&2)

1. Duncan, Greg and Magnuson, Katherine. (2011). The long reach of early childhood poverty. *Pathways*, winter Issue, 23-27.
2. Shonkoff, Jack. (2010). Building a new biodevelopmental framework to guide the future of early childhood policy. *Child Development*, 81(1), 357-367.
3. Shonkoff, Jack. (2011). Building a foundation for prosperity on the science of early childhood development. *Pathways*, winter issue, 10, 12-15.

5-01-2013     Juvenile justice

1. Viewing of documentary: *Girl Trouble*.

Week 6

5-06-2013     Old-to-new perspectives in youth cultural studies (Group 1)

1. Clarke, John, Hall, Stuart, and Roberts, Brian. (1975/2005). Subcultures, cultures and class. In Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (eds.), *The subcultures reader* (pp. 94-104). New York: Routledge. (NOTE: See reading assign #2 on next page)

2. Pages 23-48 in:  
Dillabough, Jo-Anne and Kennelly, Jacqueline. (2010). *Lost youth in the global city: Class, culture, and the urban imaginary*. New York and London: Routledge.

5-08-2013 Peer rivalries and gender specificities (Group 2)

1. Pages 107-134 in:  
Dillabough, Jo-Anne and Kennelly, Jacqueline. (2010). *Lost youth in the global city: Class, culture, and the urban imaginary* (pp. 107-134). New York and London: Routledge.

### Week 7

5-13-2013 Racial classifications among youth in a global context (Groups 1 & 2)

1. Pages 153-176 in:  
Dillabough, Jo-Anne and Kennelly, Jacqueline. (2010). *Lost youth in the global city: Class, culture, and the urban imaginary*. New York and London: Routledge.

5-15-2013 Appropriating and selling youth culture

1. In-class viewing of *Miss Representation* and *Merchants of Cool*
2. **Paper #1 due at the beginning of class**

### Week 8

5-20-2013 Youth and social media (Group 2)

1. Murthy, D. (2012). Towards a sociological understanding of social media: Theorizing Twitter. *Sociology*, 46(6), 1059-1073.

5-22-2013 Youth activism: Gay-straight alliances (Group 1)

1. Mayberry, M. (2013). Gay-straight alliances: Youth empowerment and working toward reducing stigma of LGBT youth. *Humanity & Society*, 37(1), 35-54.

### Week 9

5-27-2013 NO CLASS MEETING

5-29-2013 Youth activism: Class performance and classification struggles (Groups 1)

1. Kennelly, Jacqueline. (2009). Learning to protest: Youth activist cultures in contemporary urban Canada. *The review of education, pedagogy, and cultural studies*, 31, 293-315.

Week 10

6-3-2013 Youth activism: Sexual health (Group 2)

1. Coe, A-B, Goicolea, I., Hurtig, A-K, San Sebastian, M. (2012). Understanding how young people do activism: Youth strategies on sexual health in Ecuador and Peru. *Youth & Society*, first published on October 31, 2012 as doi: DOI: 10.1177/0044118X12464640.

6-5-2013 Youth counter-narratives

1. Duncan-Andrade, Jeffrey. (2007). Urban youth and the counter-narration of inequality. *Transforming Anthropology*, 15(1), 26-37.
2. In-class viewing of lecture by Jeff Duncan-Andrade: "Note to Educators: Hope Required"

**\*\*\*\*\*Hard copy of final paper due in my mailbox by 5pm on Friday June 7, 2013\*\*\*\*\***