



Sociology & Education Program Program Study Guide



Teachers College Major Code: SOCL
Degree and minimum point requirements: M.A. (33 points)

The sociological inquiry of education began at Teachers College in the first decade of the twentieth century. Over this century-long period, the Sociology and Education program has applied research findings to education and has examined basic issues in education from a sociological perspective. Although the program's theory and research have emphasized schools and colleges, attention has also been given to education in other contexts.

The program faculty for Sociology and Education Program includes sociologists from several other programs at the College. Faculty strengths are in sociology of education generally, but also in organizational studies, the sociology of teachers and teaching, stratification, racial inequality, critical race theory and urban sociology. The program provides training and hands-on experience in evaluation methods and both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The curriculum of the Sociology and Education Program emphasizes issues in urban education, including the social organization of urban schools and school systems, and the success or failure of urban schools in meeting the educational needs of the diverse populations they serve. The program faculty are actively engaged in the analysis and evaluation of educational policies and programs designed to serve educationally disadvantaged populations.

The program in Sociology and Education also offers a specialization in Educational Policy for students in the M.A. and Ed.M. programs. Two versions of the M.A. in Sociology and Education are available. The first is the M.A. in Sociology and Education *without* a concentration in Educational Policy. The second is the M.A. in Sociology and Education *with* a concentration in Educational Policy.

Both versions of the M.A. degree have a common structure: (a) core coursework in sociology of education (a minimum of 15 points); (b) research methods (a minimum of 9 points); (c) elective coursework; and (d) a culminating experience (0 or 3 points, depending on the option selected). A minimum of 33 points is required for the M.A. degree in Sociology and Education.

All students are assigned an academic advisor upon entry into the program. Decisions about the course of study and assuring all degree requirements are completed are made in consultation with your advisor. If an advisor is unavailable due to leave of absence or sabbatical, another faculty member will serve as the temporary academic advisor. If you are not sure who your academic advisor is, consult the Program Manager.

The period of candidacy for the degrees of Master of Arts is limited to five years. Every candidate for the Master of Arts must complete at least 16 points through Teachers College during the final five-year period

prior to the award of the degree so as to meet recency requirements. A candidate may petition the Registrar for an extension of time for adequate reasons if the student has been in attendance in the degree program within the last five years. In such cases, an extension must be recommended by the major advisor and approved by the Registrar. Upon approval, all current degree requirements including the departmental integrative project and at least 16 points to satisfy the recency requirement must be completed. Petitions for extension may be obtained through the Office of the Registrar.

At least 20 points of the minimum of 33 points required for the M.A. degree must be earned in Teachers College courses. The remaining coursework, through Teachers College registration, may be completed in Teachers College or other graduate divisions of the University, but no more than 12 points of graduate credit from other faculties of the University will be credited toward the minimum point requirement. Graduate level courses in the University are numbered from 4000 and above.

Transfer Credit

No transfer credit is granted towards the M.A. degree for work completed at other universities. With appropriate documentation (e.g., transcript and syllabus), graduate coursework completed at other universities may, at the discretion of the advisor, satisfy a curricular requirement. For example, documentation of successful completion of a graduate-level statistics or policy course might satisfy the coursework requirements for probability and statistics or education policy. But coursework taken at another institution does not reduce the minimum of 33 points required for the M.A. degree.

Breadth Requirement

In order to broaden the student's background in education, three Teachers College courses outside the Teachers College major program (in this case, a course is defined as one for which at least 2 points are earned) must be completed. EPSA courses which do not have an EDPS prefix count as out-of-department courses. Core courses offered through other departments (e.g. ITSF 5023) also count as out-of-department courses, even if they are listed as core courses in a program plan of study. Courses taken in other Faculties of Columbia University do not count towards the breadth requirement.

Continuous Enrollment

Beginning in the Fall 2018 term, all students who enroll in a degree program must register for courses beginning with their initial term of entry and continuing each fall/spring term until their degree requirements have been met. For more information, please read [here](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/associate-provost-enrollment-services/continuous-enrollment/)
<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/associate-provost-enrollment-services/continuous-enrollment/>

Culminating Experience

Option 1: Comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination for the M.A. degree in Sociology and Education is designed to give students an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned during the master's program. The exam is a take-home exam, administered on an individual basis. It has two parts.

Part A will be based on the student's particular interests. The student will draft 4-6 essay questions related to areas of sociology of education, as well as education policy, that you have become most interested in during your time at TC. The questions should not be too broad in scope and should be answerable in 4-5 double-spaced pages.

For each essay question the student drafts for Part A, he or she will also develop a short bibliography of approximately 6-8 relevant readings that they foresee using to answer each of the essay questions. These

mini-bibliographies should include books, journal articles, and policy reports drawn from readings in courses they have taken that are of special interest to them and that will enable them to formulate their answer to each question they submit.

Both the bibliography and the sample questions should be submitted to the student's advisor for initial approval at least six weeks before the student wants to start writing the exam. Submitted questions and bibliographies may go through two or three revisions based on the advisor's review. From this list of questions, the program faculty will then select two questions for the student to answer as part of their take home exam.

Part B of the exam will be a set of questions, developed by the faculty, that cover core themes in the sociology of education, including: foundations of sociology and education, education policy, stratification and inequality, and the sociology of organizations in education.

To prepare for this part of the exam, students should develop a 20-30 citation bibliography that includes books and journal articles drawn from courses they have taken in their core Sociology and Education Program courses that represent major themes in the field. Some overlap between this bibliography and the shorter bibliographies developed for each individual question submitted for Part A is natural and expected. For Part B of the exam, students will be given two possible faculty-written questions and will be asked to respond to one question of their choice. All questions should be answered in 4 to 5 double-spaced page essays.

The student and advisor will agree on a start date for the take-home exam period, which lasts two weeks. On that date, before 5 pm, students will be e-mailed their exam, which will consist of two questions selected for Part A and the set of possible questions for Part B. During the two-week (14 day) exam period, students may make use of any academic resources they deem appropriate as they write their responses. Students may also consult with other students taking the exam, but each answer should be written by the student and should be original and unique.

Students will submit the completed examination by e-mail to their advisor, at the end of the two-week period. You are welcome to copy the Program Manager. A return email from any of these individuals serves as confirmation that the exam has been submitted.

All examinations are graded on a Pass/Fail basis; they are assessed on whether the responses fully answer the questions asked; utilize central ideas and evidence from readings and courses to make a coherent argument; and are written in a clear and compelling manner. If a student should fail one or more questions, he or she will have an opportunity to retake that portion of the exam. Only one retake is permitted.

Note: Students may complete the culminating exam during a semester in which they are not registered for classes, but they must still follow the policy for continuous enrollment and register as a Master's candidate, which requires paying the College fee.

Timeline for the Master's Exam:

1. Contact your advisor no less than two months before you plan to take the exam to go over the requirements and timeframe
2. Turn in your first draft of sample questions and bibliography to your advisor for approval no less than 6 weeks before the exam
3. Schedule the start date for your exam with your advisor at least two weeks before taking the exam. You are welcome to include the Program Manager in your correspondences.
4. Make sure to pay attention to the graduation deadlines to determine when the exam needs to be

completed and graded – e.g., early January for February graduation and end of April for May graduation. The exam period must end in time for your advisor to grade it before the grade is due to the TC Registrar for the graduation deadline for that particular term. The exact dates and deadlines for master's degree completion are published for each fall and spring semester in the TC Academic Calendar. The necessary duration of the grading period is determined by your advisor's schedule at the end of the semester. Please discuss this with your advisor when scheduling your exam.

Sample Questions from Prior Exams:

1. Many racial and ethnic minority students do not succeed in school. Consider some of the most compelling explanations for this vexing problem within the sociology of education literature. Based on your analysis of this literature, what school reform strategies would you propose to improve the academic achievement of minority students?
2. What forces increase or reduce the likelihood that a social/educational concern will be elevated to a policy problem?
3. David Labaree has described three major goals of American education. Do these three educational goals—democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility—take on different meanings for different groups? If so, in what ways, and why?
4. Discuss the various ways of defining and measuring equality of educational opportunity. In your view, which of these approaches is most compelling and why?
5. Does school choice contradict or support the concept of meritocracy within schools? Why or why not?
6. Forms of capital – human, economic, social, and cultural – have received much recent attention in research and theorizing about the determinants of educational success. Define cultural capital, and consider how it may contribute to our understanding of the schooling experiences of a particular group, such as African-Americans.

Option 2: Master's integrative project. With special permission, students in the M.A. program in Sociology and Education may satisfy the culminating experience requirement by preparing a master's integrative project. Master's students who opt to complete the integrative project are required to enroll in EDPS 6021 Master's Integrative Project in Sociology and Education for 1 point in the Fall and 2 points in the Spring semester of the year in which they plan to graduate. The class meets every other week in the Fall semester and more frequently in the Spring semester until the middle of April.

This 8-month class is specifically designed for second- or third-year master's students who want to graduate in May. First-year Master's students are not eligible. *Students who do not participate in the class during Fall semester will not be allowed to enroll in the Spring semester.*

Master's Integrative Project Requirements:

The Master's Integrative Project can range in size and scope from a full-blown thesis to a research paper that is equivalent to two term papers. Average length of the project will be 40-70 pages plus references.

Integrative Projects will either entail original data collection and analysis, a new analysis of an existing data base, or a sophisticated and theoretical review of existing research. The first two options are considered “empirical integrative projects” and the third option is considered “theoretical integrative projects.”

Empirical integrative projects will include several chapters/sections, including an introduction that frames the project and speaks to its significance, a review of relevant literature and a conceptual framework, an explanation of methodology, discussion of the findings and analysis, and implications and recommendations for policy, practice and/or further research. You can employ either quantitative or qualitative methods, but you need to make sure your methods are appropriate given the research question you are trying to answer. Similarly, you can collect your own data or analyze an existing data base. If you are collecting your own data, you need to be realistic in terms of the scope of the study and your timeframe.

Theoretical integrative projects will include more extensive reviews of literature on a particular topic or issue. They should also include an introduction that frames the project and its contribution and several chapters or sections framed around different areas of the literature. These projects should have a solid conceptual framework that tells the reader something new and important about this body of literature – e.g. what is missing from that literature? What new insights can we glean from this literature? Why is this particular body of literature important?

Timeline for the Master’s Integrative Project:

Students must enroll in EDPS 6021 for 1 point in the Fall semester

Reviews of literature and methodology sections of the integrative projects are drafted by early December

Data collection occurs from late November/early December through January or early February

Final Drafts of entire integrative projects are due in mid- to late-March

Final Integrative Projects are due the third week of April for May graduation

If a student’s master’s integrative project is judged unsatisfactory by the instructor of EDPS 6021 and/or his or her advisor, the student will be required to take the M.A. comprehensive examination under the terms described in Option 1 above.

Satisfactory Progress Statement

Students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward the completion of degree requirements.

Program faculty will annually review each student’s progress. Where there are concerns about satisfactory progress, students will be informed by the program faculty. If a student is performing below expectations he/she may be required to complete additional coursework. The program will provide a plan and timeline for remediation so students know the expectation for them to continue in the program. If satisfactory progress is not maintained, a student may be dismissed from the program.

Any student receiving eight or more points in grades of C- or lower is not permitted to continue registration at the College in any capacity and may not receive a degree or diploma. Petitions for exception to this policy are to be submitted, in writing, to the Registrar with a written recommendation from the department in which last enrolled.

For more information please contact the Department of Education Policy & Social Analysis.
212-678-3165.

Program Requirements

Master of Arts Degree in the Program in Sociology and Education – minimum of 33 points

Please refer to the M.A. worksheet for information on all course requirements.

Services for Students with Disabilities: The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities for information about registration (166 Thorndike Hall). Services are available only to students who are registered and submit appropriate documentation.

Statement on Academic Conduct: A Teachers College student is expected to refrain from any conduct, including cheating, plagiarizing, or purchasing documents submitted for academic evaluation, that calls into question his/her academic and/or professional probity. Decisions regarding academic evaluation in all aspects of students' work at the college, including course work, certification examinations, clinical or field experiences, and preparation of dissertations, are within the sole jurisdiction of the faculty concerned, including as appropriate, the department or program staff members. Disciplinary actions (e.g., reprimand, suspension, or dismissal) in cases of academic misconduct can be imposed by the Vice Provost or the Committee on Student Conduct. For more information, please view [here](#).

Resolution of Student Academic Program Concerns: Any student who has a concern regarding an academic matter may seek assistance. The procedure for resolving academic program concerns (see note of grade correction process below) begins with either the faculty member (if the concern is related to a course) or the student's advisor. If the student is not satisfied with the response or resolution achieved at this first level, or if speaking with the faculty member presents a conflict of interest for the student, the student should proceed to speak with the Program Coordinator in the area in which the academic concern resides. If the student is not satisfied with the response or resolution achieved through the Program Coordinator, the student should proceed to speak with the Chair of the academic department in which the academic concern resides. If the student is still not satisfied with the response or resolution achieved through the Department Chair, or if speaking with the Department Chair presents a conflict of interest for the student, the next step is to contact the Office of the Vice Provost. At any stage of the process, students are welcome to seek the advice and guidance of the Ombudsman, who is charged with attempting to informally resolve student dissatisfaction of an academic nature on a completely confidential basis.

Grade Correction Procedure: The instructor for a course has the responsibility for setting the requirements for a course and making an evaluation of students' work. Once a grade has been given, the instructor is not free to change the grade unless the instructor indicates to the Registrar that an error was made in the original grade transmitted. If a student believes that an error has been made, he/she must take the initiative in bringing about the necessary correction prior to the conclusion of the semester immediately following the semester in which the course was taken. The normal procedure for effecting a correction would be through direct discussion between the student and the instructor. If redress cannot be attained through such discussions, the student may next appeal to the department chairperson of the department offering the course. If resolution cannot be attained through appeal, the student may next appeal to the Dean. In situations where the student feels that such an appeal process might not be in the student's interest, counsel and assistance can be sought from the Office of the College Ombudsman and the Office of the Vice Provost.