

## A for effort, B for achievement? A critical introduction to education studies

---

**Start date** 12 June 2020**End date** 14 June 2020**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge**Tutor** Dr Nigel Kettley**Course code** 1920NRX047**Director of ISP and LL**

Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on  
this course, please contact  
the Lifelong Learning team**Zara Kuckelhaus, Fleur Kerrecoe  
[shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 764637**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

---

### Tutor biography

Nigel has had a wide-ranging teaching and research career in the fields of sociology, education studies, research methods and teacher education. Before joining the Institute of Continuing Education in 2007, he was a Research Associate in the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and earlier still an MPhil and PhD student at Wolfson College.

Before returning to study in 1997, he was a lecturer in a Further Education college. He is an active researcher in the areas of widening participation, educational attainment and lifelong learning more generally with a particular focus on issues of gender, social stratification and theory formation.

Nigel teaches on a variety of courses for the Institute, supervises postgraduate students and is Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for Education and Social Science courses at the Institute. His major publications include *Educational Attainment and Society* (2007, Continuum) and *Theory Building in Educational Research* (2010/2012, Continuum). He is also a Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

---

## Course programme

---

### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1 Education and the disciplines: What is education studies?
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2 Education, meritocracy and social justice
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3 Educational inequalities 1: School and college outcomes
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4 Educational inequalities 2: Participation in higher education
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5 Explaining inequalities 1: The old sociology of education
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6 Explaining inequalities 2: The new and contemporary sociology of education
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7 Promoting equality? Education policy and social mobility
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

---

## Course syllabus

---

### Aims

1. To explore the origins and growth of education studies, for example in teacher training, and assess whether it is a separate discipline or merely a conglomeration of other disciplines;
2. To examine the relationship between education, meritocracy and social justice – does education reproduce social inequality or is it route to upward social mobility?;
3. To assess evidence related to ongoing inequalities in school- and college-based outcomes and participation in higher education primarily by social class;
4. To critically evaluate sociological explanations for persistent educational inequalities and reflect on the efficacy of policies to promote social mobility and justice.

### Content

Education is a core institution for transmitting knowledge, skills and values. It is also a mechanism used by governments to achieve their wider economic and social policy objectives. In this course, you will explore the origins and growth of education studies, the meaning of 'education studies' and the thorny relationship between education and social justice. Does education promote equality or reproduce inequality? What does the research evidence suggest? It is argued that education studies represents a recent addition to the field of academic disciplines, that it deals with essentially contested issues (e.g. the purpose of education and social mobility) and that its explanations for persistent inequality are of variable quality but, perhaps, improving over time.

Research evidence related to school- and college-based outcomes and participation in higher education by social class will be explored (for example Department for Education 2016a, 2016b). Official data on educational inequality will be contrasted with the research of educationalists and you will examine educational interventions which might promote equality (Gregg and Washbrook 2009; Gorard, See and Davies 2012). A critical review of the concepts and theories educational researchers have used to explain persistent inequality in educational outcomes will also be provided by analysing the old, the new and the contemporary sociology of education (Kettley 2007, 2012). It is argued that these explanatory models, perhaps, score 'A for effort, B for achievement'. Finally, the course will conclude by examining the efficacy, or otherwise, of various governments' attempts to promote social mobility and justice through the manipulation of education policy.

### Presentation of the course

The course will be taught using highly interactive seminar-style sessions, which draw on students' knowledge and experience to illustrate key ideas in relation to education, education policy and social justice.

PowerPoint presentations will be used to guide sessions. Class discussion and interaction will be encouraged. Copies of PowerPoint presentations and all resources used in teaching sessions will be made available to students.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. Differentiate and assess competing definitions of education studies and briefly outline the origins of education studies;
2. Outline and critically assess competing positions with respect to the relationship between education and social justice (e.g. the case for and against 'social reproduction');
3. Assess statistical evidence, both official and scholarly, related to inequalities in school- and college-based outcomes and participation in higher education by social class;
4. Evaluate the efficacy of sociological explanations and government policy responses to persistent educational inequalities.

---

## Reading and resources list

---

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

**\*Recommended.**

Author	Title	Publisher and date
*Bartlett, S. and Burton, D	<i>Introduction to Education Studies</i> Fourth Edition. Chapters 1 and 10	2016. London: Sage.
Chitty, C.	<i>Education Policy in Britain.</i> Third Edition	2014. Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan.
Dandridge, N.	<i>Working in Partnership: Enabling Social Mobility in Higher Education.</i>	2016. London: UUK.
Department for Education	<i>Level 2 and 3 attainment in England: Attainment by age 19 in 2015.</i>	2016a. London: DfE.
Department for Education	<i>Widening Participation in Higher Education, England, 2013/14 age cohort.</i>	2016b. London: DfE.
Gorard, S., See B. H. and Davies, P.	<i>The impact of attitudes and aspirations on educational attainment and participation</i>	2012. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Gregg, P. and Washbrook, E	<i>The socio-economic gradient in child outcomes the role of attitudes, behaviours and beliefs</i>	2009. Bristol: University of Bristol.
*Kettley, N.	<i>Educational Attainment and Society.</i> Chapter 1.	2007. London: Continuum
Kettley, N.	<i>Theory Building in Educational Research</i>	2012. London Continuum.
Young, M	<i>The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870-2033 An Essay on Education and Equality:</i>	1958. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.

## Website addresses

None.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 20 January 2020