GUADALUPE
MORENO

Course syllabus

# Global Inequalities

## What Do They Mean for Schools and Classrooms?

Summer Semester 2025
Block Seminar

Instructor: Dr. Guadalupe Moreno
Module: BW-E/Sb2

**Location:**
Sessions on 17.10.2025, 14.11.2025, 15.11.2025, and 06.12.2025: **Casino – Cas 1.802**
Session on 05.12.2025: **Casino – Cas 1.812**

**Office Hours**
Wednesdays, 14:00–15:00 at PEG 3.G 175. If you plan to attend, please send a short email to Moreno@em.uni-frankfurt.de

| **Sessions** | |
|---|---|
| 17.10.2025 – 16:00 - 17:30hs. | Session 1: Introduction and Course Format |
| **Block 1** | |
| 07.11.2025 – 14:00 - 15:30hs. | Session 2: Why Study Global Inequality in Teacher Education? |
| 07.11.2025 – 16:00 - 17:30hs. | Session 3: Theories of Inequality – Structure, Power, and Globality |
| 07.11.2025 – 18:00 - 19:30hs. | Session 4: Colonial Legacies and Education Systems |
| **Block 2** | |
| 08.11.2025 – 09:30 - 11:00hs. | Session 5: Global Economics, Development, and Educational Inequality |
| 08.11.2025 – 11:30 - 13:00hs. | Session 6: Migration, Displacement, and Schooling |
| 08.11.2025 – 14:00 - 15:30hs. | Session 7: Race, Difference, and Structural Discrimination in Schools |
| **Block 3** | |
| 05.12.2025 – 14:00 - 15:30hs. | Session 8: Digitalization and the Global Divide |
| 05.12.2025 – 16:00 - 17:30hs. | Session 9: Gender and Education in a Global Context |
| 05.12.2025 – 18:00 - 19:30hs. | Session 10: Global Testing and the Politics of Comparison |
| **Block 4** | |
| 08.11.2025 – 09:30 - 11:00hs. | Session 11: Education in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States |
| 08.11.2025 – 11:30 - 13:00hs. | Session 12: Global Structures in the German Classroom |
| 08.11.2025 – 14:00 - 15:30hs. | Session 13: What Can Teachers Do? Final Reflections |

## Course Description

This course explores how social inequality is produced, reproduced, and contested in and through education—linking the local realities of classrooms with the broader global structures that shape them. We begin by asking why inequality matters for teacher education and how concepts such as power, structure, and intersectionality help us understand persistent educational disparities. From there, we explore key global dynamics—including colonial legacies, economic dependence, international education policy, and digitalization—and consider how these forces shape national school systems and local learning environments.

Through twelve thematic sessions, we examine how inequality manifests in various educational contexts: classrooms shaped by transnational forces including migration, racial and structural discrimination, gender gaps, digital divides, global testing regimes, and education in conflict-affected settings. Each session is grounded in critical readings from sociology, education studies, and political economy, and encourages students to connect theoretical insights with empirical examples—including reflections on the German context.

The course invites students to critically reflect on their own roles as (future) educators operating within unequal systems. It equips them with conceptual tools to analyze how inequality becomes visible in everyday school life and what responses are possible within institutional constraints. Learning is structured around short lectures, student-led discussions, and collaborative engagement with the readings. Assessment includes active participation, in-class presentations, and a final written assignment where students explore a topic of their choice in depth, connecting theoretical perspectives and empirical experience.

## Preparatory Readings

Students are encouraged to read the following texts to gain an initial orientation to the course themes and theoretical approaches:

**Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2010).** *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone.* London: Bloomsbury Press.
→ A widely accessible overview of why inequality matters and how it affects societies.
**Therborn, G. (2013).** *The Killing Fields of Inequality.*
→ Introduces a structural and global understanding of inequality from a sociological perspective.

You may also wish to review the **course description** and **session overview** in advance, and reflect on what experiences or observations you bring to the topic of inequality in education.

# Course Requirements

This seminar can be completed in two ways. In the first block session, you will be asked to indicate whether you intend to earn a **Teilnahmeschein** (ungraded certificate of participation) or a **Modulprüfung** (graded certificate of completion).

## Teilnahmeschein (ungraded certificate of participation)

To obtain a Teilnahmeschein you must:

- Attend regularly — no more than two absences are allowed.
- Prepare all assigned readings before each session.
- Play an active role in discussion by **serving twice as a Preferred Conversation Partner** (PCP) and uploading a discussion paper to OLAT by 20:00 on the day before your slot.

## Leistungsschein (graded certificate)

To obtain a Leistungsschein you must first meet all Teilnahmeschein requirements and, in addition:

- Submit a written exposé (approx. 500 words) outlining your paper topic, argument, and analytical approach (this can be submitted anytime until the final session).
- Present this exposé briefly during our last session.
- Submit a final paper of approx. 4,000 words (12–15 pages) (deadline to be announced in class).

## Roles and Written Work

### Preferred Conversation Partner (PCP)

A PCP opens the session by giving a concise, two-minute summary of the required readings and then poses two or three sharply focused questions to launch discussion. The aim is to highlight the authors' key arguments, identify possible blind spots, and connect the texts to the broader course theme.

### Guidelines for discussion papers:

Each preferred conversation partner must submit a discussion paper engaging with the readings of the session they are selected for. This has to be a coherently written text, not a list of bullet points. The paper must be uploaded as a PDF to the designated folder on OLAT the day before each relevant block session by 20:00. The purpose of the paper is to critically engage with the assigned reading. You may discuss the text's core arguments, focus on a particularly interesting aspect, or raise questions that emerge from your reading. Each paper must include at least three questions (for discussion, clarification, or critical reflection) which may be embedded in the main text or

listed at the end. To obtain a Teilnahmeschein you must submit 2 papers during the duration of the seminar.

**Paper Outline (Leistungsschein only)**

If you intend to write a term paper, please prepare a short paper outline (approx. half a page, A4), which you will present in Session 07. Your exposé must include:

- a clear research topic
- a focused research question
- the theory and/or empirical example you plan to use
- a preliminary outline of your paper

You will receive feedback during the last session to help ensure your final paper is focused and feasible.

**Term Paper (12–15 pages / approx. 4,000 words) (Leistungsschein only)**

You may choose one of the following approaches:

A. Analyze a school-related (empirical) problem or phenomenon from a sociological perspective (e.g. inequality, migration, digitalization).

B. Compare two sociological perspectives on education or inequality.

The paper should be structured like a short academic essay: with a clear introduction, theoretical framing, empirical analysis, and conclusion. Use proper citations and include a title page and abstract. You may write in English or German.

**Detailed writing guidelines for the Term Paper will be available on OLAT.**

# Course Readings

## Session 1: Introduction and Course Format

*No assigned readings.*

This session introduces the course structure, objectives, and expectations. We will discuss the syllabus, grading criteria, and assignments, and clarify any organizational matters. In addition, we will coordinate presentation topics and preferred conversation partners for group discussions. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and familiarize themselves with the overall course framework.

## Session 2: Why Study Global Inequality in Teacher Education?

This session opens the thematic content of the course. We explore why global inequality is a relevant issue in education and examine how structural inequalities manifest in classrooms. Students will begin engaging with core course concepts and are invited to reflect on their own educational experiences in relation to global dynamics.

**Required Readings:**

Macionis, J. J., & Plummer, K. (2018). *Sociology: A Global Introduction* (8th Edition). London: Pearson. Chapter 10.

→ This chapter defines key terms like poverty, inequality, and development, offering a foundational framework for understanding global disparities, including those found in education.

Gross, C., Meyer, H.-D., & Hadjar, A. (2020). *Education Systems and Inequalities.* London: Policy Press. Introduction.

→ Offers a cross-national framework explaining how institutional features of education systems (e.g. tracking, standardization, stratification) shape inequality.

**Complementary Readings:**

Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. (2010). *The Spirit Level. Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. London: Bloomsbury Press. Chapters 1,2,3 and 8.

→ This text introduces the central claim that inequality damages everyone in society—not just the poor. It provides accessible data and visualizations that help connect abstract inequality to everyday educational outcomes

## Session 3: Session: Theories of Inequality – Structure, Power, and Globality

We examine foundational and critical theories of inequality, including the work of Marx, Bourdieu, and postcolonial scholars. The session explores how structural power relations are produced and maintained globally and how these dynamics intersect with education.

**Required Readings:**
Gross, C., Meyer, H.-D., & Hadjar, A. (2020). *Education Systems and Inequalities.* London: Policy Press. Chapter 1.
→ Offers a robust theoretical framework linking institutional features (like tracking, standardization, and school stratification) with the reproduction of inequality. It's essential if you want to deepen the theoretical grounding early in the course.

Macionis, J. & Plummer, K. (2018). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. London: Pearson Education. Chapter 8.
→ Offers an overview of classical and modern theories of social class—including Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu—making it ideal for students new to sociology.

**Complementary Readings:**
Bourdieu, P. (1986). "The Forms of Capital." In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
→ Introduces key concepts like cultural and social capital, which are vital for understanding how educational inequality works beyond income or wealth

Therborn, G. & Aboim, S. (2014). "The Killing Fields of Inequality: Interview with Göran Therborn". *Análise Social*, 49(212), 728–735.
→ This interview provides a big-picture sociological view of inequality, explaining how it is created and how it affects life chances worldwide. A helpful introduction to inequality as a global force.

Therborn, G. (2013). *The Killing Fields of Inequality*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
→ Expands on the interview by showing how inequality has evolved historically and across different world regions.

Wright, E. O. (2015). *Understanding Class*. London: Verso. Chapters 2 and 4.
→ Presents a modern class analysis that helps explain how economic exploitation and domination persist in contemporary education systems.

## Session 4: Colonial Legacies and Education Systems

This session focuses on how colonial legacies shape contemporary education systems and knowledge hierarchies. We discuss the persistence of Eurocentrism in curricula and how postcolonial perspectives challenge dominant narratives in education.

**Required Readings:**
Adick, C. (2005). "Education and Colonialism." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*.

→ Explores how colonial histories continue to shape how we teach about the world, and how global education can challenge dominant narratives.

**Complementary Readings:**
Adick, C. (2002). "The didactics of global education. A tool for combining the international and intercultural dimensions of education". In F. Audigier & N. Bottani (Eds.), *Education et vivre ensemble. Actes du Colloque la problématique du vivre ensemble dans les curricula. Learning to live together and curricular content* (pp. 233-256).
→ Provides a concise summary of the relationship between education systems and colonial power structures.

Bhambra, G. K. (2014). *Connected Sociologies*. London: Bloomsbury. Chapter 1 and 6.
→ These chapters offer a clear and powerful critique of Eurocentric sociology and show why colonial legacies must be included in any analysis of global inequality.

## Session 5: Global Economics, Development, and Educational Inequality

This session explores how economic inequality intersects with educational inequality on a global scale. We examine how international organizations like the OECD and UNESCO frame educational challenges in terms of economic efficiency, social mobility, and inclusion. Through key global reports, we analyze how indicators such as income distribution, test performance, and policy benchmarks are used to diagnose problems and recommend solutions. In the second half, we discuss critical perspectives that question the neutrality of these metrics and highlight how educational systems may reinforce economic hierarchies.

**Required Readings:**
OECD. (2018). *Equity in Education: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*. Executive Summary (pp. 9–24). Paris: OECD. (Read Executive Summary and Overview and policy implications)
→ Presents clear international comparisons of how inequality impacts learning outcomes, using Gini and PISA data to link economic and educational disadvantage.

Tikly, L. (2004). Education and the new imperialism. *Comparative Education*, 40(2), 173–198.
→ Critiques global education agendas and highlights how international reforms can reproduce rather than reduce inequality

**Complementary Readings:**
UNESCO. (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and Education*. Chapter 1: "Inequality and Its Educational Consequences".
→ Outlines how various forms of inequality—economic, gender-based, geographic—affect access to and quality of education worldwide.

Engel, L. C., Rutkowski, D., & Thompson, G. (2019). "Toward an International Measure of Global Competence? A Critical Look at the PISA 2018 Framework." *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 17(2), 117–131.
→ Critiques the growing use of PISA testing to measure "global competence" and questions whether global metrics can meaningfully capture local educational realities.

## Session 6: Migration, Displacement, and Schooling

This session explores how global migration and forced displacement shape classrooms and educational experiences. We look at the concept of transnational classrooms and consider challenges and strategies for inclusive schooling in diverse societies.

**Required Readings:**

Crul, M., & Schneider, J. (2010). "Comparative Integration Context Theory: Participation and Belonging in New Diverse European Cities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1249–1268.
→ Offers a conceptual framework for understanding integration and belonging in European schools shaped by migration.

**Complementary Readings:**

Andreotti, V. (2011). *Actionable Postcolonial Theory in Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 8.
→ This chapter critically unpacks how educational practices often construct the "Other" in ways that reproduce paternalistic and exclusionary dynamics—directly relevant for discussing migration and inclusion in classrooms.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. (2012). "Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(1), 39-56.
→ Provides concrete examples of inclusion practices and challenges when working with refugee learners.

## Session 7: Race, Difference, and Structural Discrimination in Schools

We examine how race and other axes of difference are structurally embedded in education systems. The session introduces intersectional perspectives to understand how discrimination operates within schools and affects learning outcomes.

**Required Readings:**

Gillborn, D. (2002). *Education and Institutional Racism.* London: Institute of Education, University of London.
→ A foundational overview of how institutional racism operates in schools, drawing on UK data to highlight structural inequality in education.

**Complementary Readings:**
Hill Collins, P. (2009). *Another Kind of Public Education: Race, Schools, the Media, and Democratic Possibilities.* Boston: Beacon Press. Chapter 1.
→ Brings a Black feminist perspective to issues of race, power, and voice in public education.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
→ Introduces the concept of intersectionality, helping students grasp how multiple dimensions of identity (race, gender, class) shape educational experiences.

## Session 8: Digitalization and the Global Divide

This session investigates the global digital divide in education, focusing on unequal access to digital technologies and EdTech infrastructures. We critically assess the promises and limitations of digitalization in addressing educational inequality and examine how digital reforms can both reproduce and challenge social stratification. We discuss global trends and specific country examples.

**Required Readings:**
Selwyn, N. (2016). *Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates.* London: Bloomsbury. Chapter 5.
→ Offers a clear and accessible analysis of how technology intersects with social inequality, drawing on sociological theory and global data to explore the persistence of digital divides in education.

**Complementary Readings:**
Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2007). "Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people and the digital divide." *New Media & Society, 9*(4), 671–696.
→ Explores how digital access and use are shaped by socioeconomic background, providing useful empirical insights into youth and education.

Eickelmann, B., Gerick, J., & Vennemann, M. (2017). "Teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding ICT in teaching and learning in European countries." *European Educational Research Journal, 16*(6), 733–761.
→ Focuses on teacher-level perspectives across Europe, showing how institutional context and personal attitudes influence digital inequality in classrooms.

## Session 9: Gender and Education in a Global Context

This session discusses global patterns of gender inequality in education, including access, achievement gaps, and curriculum content. We reflect on how gender intersects with other forms of disadvantage and how education can both challenge and reinforce inequality.

**Required Readings:**
Stromquist, N. P. (2015). "Women's Empowerment and Education: Linking Knowledge to Transformative Action." *European Journal of Education*, 50(3), 307–324.
→ Offers a critical sociological analysis of how education contributes to — and limits — women's empowerment. Connects theory to policy and challenges instrumentalist framings of gender equity.

**Complementary Readings:**
UNESCO. (2022). Global Education Monitoring Report: Gender Report – Deepening the debate on those still left behind.
→ Offers a global overview of gender disparities in education with current data, policy implications, and attention to intersectional disadvantages.

Robert, S. A., Pitzer, H., & Muñoz García, A. L. (2018). "Introduction: Neoliberalism, Gender, and the Work of Education." In *Neoliberalism, Gender and Education Work* (pp. 1–8). London: Routledge.
→ Explains how neoliberal reforms redefine who counts as a "good teacher" and how gendered expectations shape educational labor—offering a critical sociology lens on gender and education

## Session 10: Global Testing and the Politics of Comparison

This session explores the rise of international large-scale assessments (like PISA), their global influence, and their impact on national education policies. We examine how these tests create pressure to conform to global standards and how this affects teachers, curricula, and the definition of success in education.

**Required Readings:**
Grek, S. (2009). "Governing by Numbers: The PISA 'Effect' in Europe." *Journal of Education Policy, 24*(1), 23–37.
→ Explains how PISA reshaped education governance in Europe, including Germany.

**Complementary Readings:**
Martens, K., & Niemann, D. (2013). "When do numbers count? The differential impact of the PISA rating and ranking on education policy in Germany and the US." German Politics, 22(3), 314–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2013.794455
→ ➤ Compares how PISA data is received and used in two national contexts, revealing power struggles and political appropriation.

Engel, L. C., Rutkowski, D., & Thompson, G. (2019). "Toward an international measure of global competence? A critical look at the PISA 2018 framework." *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 17(2), 117–131.
→ Critically examines the OECD's attempt to measure 'global competence' and the risks of simplifying complex educational goals.
Robert, S. A., Pitzer, H., & Muñoz García, A. L. (2019). "Introduction: Neoliberalism, Gender, and the Work of Education." In *Neoliberalism, Gender and Education Work* (pp. 1–8). London: Routledge.
→ Situates standardized testing within broader neoliberal trends, emphasizing how performance measures affect gendered labor and reshape educational work.

## Session 11: Education in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States

We examine the role of education in contexts of violence, displacement, and fragile statehood.

**Required Readings:**
Novelli, M., & Higgins, S. (2017). "The Violence of Peace and the Role of Education: Insights from Colombia." *Compare*, 47(1), 32–45.
→ Explores how education policies interact with conflict and peacebuilding efforts.

**Complementary Readings:**
UNESCO (2011). *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education.* Global Monitoring Report Summary.
→ Provides global data on education in conflict zones and critiques of donor-driven models.

## Session 12: Global Structures in the German Classroom

This session explores how inequality is reproduced through institutional features of the German school system. We focus on early tracking, migration background, and systemic discrimination. Students will analyze how policy, practice, and rights frameworks intersect in producing unequal outcomes for working-class and migrant students.

**Required Readings:**
Krause-Pilatus, A., & Schüller, S. (2014). "Evidence and Persistence of Education Inequality in an Early-Tracking System: The German Case". *Scuola Democratica*, 2, 201–230.
→ Reviews two decades of research on early tracking in Germany, showing how class, migration background, and even relative age produce long-term educational inequalities. Highlights policy options such as later tracking and binding teacher recommendations.

Fernandez-Kelly, P. (2012). “The Unequal Structure of the German Education System: Structural Reasons for Educational Failures of Turkish Youth in Germany”. *Spaces and Flows*, 2(2), 93–112.
→ Uses the case of Turkish-origin students to analyze how tracking, teacher expectations, and weak intercultural curricula marginalize migrants and reproduce inequality across generations.

**Complementary Readings:**
Niendorf, M., & Reitz, S. (2020). *The Human Right to Education in the German School System: What Will it Take to Reduce Discrimination?* Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte.
→ Brings a human rights lens to German education, emphasizing systemic discrimination and the legal obligations to ensure inclusive and equal access to schooling.

Chadderton, C., & Wischmann, A. (2014). “Racialised Norms in Apprenticeship Systems in England and Germany”. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 66(3), 330–347.
→ Highlights how racialized expectations and structural barriers shape vocational pathways, linking school tracking to long-term labor market disadvantage for migrant youth.

## Session 13: What Can Teachers Do? Final Reflections

In this concluding session, we revisit the big themes of the course: how inequality is structured, reproduced, and contested through education. We reflect on the teacher's role and discuss critical pedagogy as a way to engage with structural injustice. Students will present and discuss the main arguments of their final term papers, receive feedback from peers and the instructor, and engage in a collective conversation about key insights, open questions, and overarching themes from the course. The session concludes with a brief course evaluation.

**Required Readings:**
Gross, C., Meyer, H.-D., & Hadjar, A. (2020). *Education Systems and Inequalities*. London: Policy Press. Chapter 15.
→ Draws together empirical and theoretical insights from the book to reflect on what constitutes a "good" education system. Offers a framework to evaluate systemic features—like tracking, standardization, and inclusion—and to imagine alternatives rooted in equity.

**Complementary Readings:**
Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum. Chapter 2.
→ Classic work on critical pedagogy, emphasizing teacher agency and empowerment in unjust systems.

Hooks, Bell (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1
→ Offers a powerful, accessible reflection on liberatory education, race, and critical pedagogy from a practitioner's perspective.