Roma Exclusion: Education as a Domain of the Racialization of Poverty

INSTRUCTOR:

Julia Szalai, Visiting Professor
Department of Political Science & Nationalism Studies, Central European University

Spring semester, 2014/2015

No. of credits: 2

Course e-learning site:

Office hours: Mondays, 16:00–17:00, Room FT 205, upon appointment

AIMS AND FOCUS OF THE COURSE

This course will provide insights into the main structural factors and currents in education in local communities that contribute to the significantly lower educational attainments of poor Roma students as compared to their, equally impoverished, non-Roma peers. It will be shown that the lower educational results and the subsequent departures in career paths of Roma are to a great extent the products of processes of racializing their poverty and considering it as their special 'ethnic characteristic' that allegedly explains underachievement. For this purpose, the course will offer an introduction into the concepts and the methodology of understanding different manifestations of poverty partly through familial interviews and partly through analyzing representations of the problem in films and documentaries. This endeavor will serve to show how segregation and exclusion (in and across schools) endow Roma poverty with certain particular traits and how these manifestations of ethnic separation also facilitate its enclosure into the institutionalized arrangements of separated physical and mental spaces. In the next step, Roma poverty will be viewed through the lenses of influential representatives of the non-Roma majority. After preparing the methodology and discussing certain typical dilemmas in approaching them, representatives of the educational offices of municipalities, local decision-makers, school principals, teachers and social workers will be interviewed about their experiences when working with Roma and non-Roma poor, and also their views and explanations of segregation vs. color-blind integration and inclusion will be explored. Additionally, these institutional interviews will serve to reveal the play of broader interests behind ethnic separation in education that will lead us to understand Roma exclusion in the contexts of power and representation. In order to see these associations in their empirical manifestations, attempts will be made to invite students and a group of teachers and parents of the local schools to listen to their arguments in favor/against ethnic segregation. In the last phase of the course, the collected field-material will be processed in class with the aim to put together the different sides of the prism and this way revealing the mechanisms of the racialization of Roma poverty and exclusion in education as deeply ingrained into the hierarchization and ongoing competition that dominate the social struggles around schooling.

Fieldwork will take place in the 8th district of Budapest, a part of the city with a high percentage of Roma among the inhabitants.

In order to tackle language difficulties, all foreign students will be assisted by a Hungarian-speaking partner throughout their work on the field.

The course will run in the Spring semester of the current academic year. The format will be daily classes and field visits between April 27 – May 8, 2015.

Although students are welcome to register for this course independently from earlier training in Roma issues, attending the preceding course on 'Sociological Approaches of Race and Ethnicity: The Roma in Postcommunist Central Europe' will render the advantage of a deeper understanding of the theories and practices of poverty and racialization and their impacts on education.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students attending this course will gain:

- Insight into those structural and institutional factors and processes that produce and reproduce the multiply disadvantaged positions and the underachievement of Roma in the Hungarian educational system.
- By looking at associations between poverty and institutionalized and personified manifestations of discrimination, they will become capable of contextualizing ethnic/racial differentiation in the working of education and its social environment.
- Further, attendants of the course will acquire a set of methodological tools for operationalizing and empirically approaching poverty, ethnic identities, discrimination and racialization in education.
- By preparing their designs of interviews and focus-group discussions, students' skills in translating operationalized concepts into empirically accessible inquiries will be developed.
- Through active participation in the discussions in class, students will acquire skills in orally presenting given scholarly arguments and defending their own standpoints in debates.
- By drafting their research reports at the end of the course, they will demonstrate capabilities in translating theoretical concepts into research questions and methods and will demonstrate the qualities of building up a coherent piece of research and its scholarly analysis and interpretation.

Learning outcomes are supported, in addition to the course design, by the instructor's continuous feedback on students' accomplishments and also by formal assessment of their course-work.

ASSESSMENT

Marking for the course will be based in 25 per cent on assessing contribution to the in-class discussions, in 25 percent on the individually prepared guides for interviews and group discussions, and in 50 per cent on the final research report.

The final research reports of a length of 3000-3500 words should be simultaneously submitted to the instructor's two e-mail addresses that are: szalaij@ceu.edu and szalai.julia@chello.hu. The deadline of submission will be set in due course in class. Individually addressed comments and final grading will be provided within two weeks after submission.

THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

April 28, 2015 (Tuesday)

> 1st session (morning): Theories and concepts: poverty, marginalization, social exclusion

April 29, 2015 (Wednesday)

> 1st session (morning): Ethnicity, the construction of ethnic identity

> 2nd session (morning cont.): How to approach poverty and social exclusion: issues of

> operationalization

April 30, 2015 (Thursday)

> 1st session (morning): How to explore identities and identity strategies on the individual and collective levels: issues of operationalization – continued

May 4, 2015 (Monday)

> 1st session (morning) : Film on Roma everyday life: manifestations of poverty and exclusion

> 2nd session (morning cont.): Introduction to individual interviews; the interview design (Luca Váradi)

May 5, 2015 (Tuesday)

> 1st session (morning) Educational inequalities and exclusionary tendencies in schooling:intersections of class, gender and ethnicity

May 6, 2015 (Wednesday)

> 1st session (morning): Discussion of the readings on poverty, exclusion and ethnic identity

> 2nd session (morning cont.): Introduction to group discussions

May 7, 2015 (Thursday)

> 1st session (morning): Preparation of individual and group interviews with students, parents, teachers and educational officials (Luca Váradi – Julia Szalai)

May 11, 2015 (Monday)

> Fieldwork I

May 12, 2015 (Tuesday)

> 1st session (morning): Discussion of the fieldwork experiences

May 13, 2015 (Wednesday)

> Fieldwork II

May 14, 2015 (Thursday)

> 1st session (morning) Discussion of the fieldwork experiences (continued); preparation of the research report

READING LIST

Brüggemann, Christian (2012) *Roma Education in Comparative Perspective*. Roma Inclusion Working Papers. Bratislava: UNDP.

Gillham, Bill (2000) *The research interview*. London: Continuum (details currently under selection).

Loury, Glenn C. (1999) *Social Exclusion and Ethnic Groups: The Challenge to Economics*. Conference Paper presented at the Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington, D.C., April 28-30.

Moldenhawer, Bolette (2014) 'Educational Strategies of Minority Youth and the Social Construction of Ethnicity'. In J.Szalai and C. Schiff (eds.) *Migrant, Roma and Post-Colonial Youth in Education across Europe: Being 'Visibly Different'*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 135-151.

On group dinamics (details currently under selection).

On the evolution of social networks (details currently under selection).

Kvale, Steinar (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thausand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (details currently under selection).

Sen, A. (1992) *Inequality Reexemined*. New York – Oxford: Russel Sage Foundation – Clarendon Press, pp. 102-117.

Somers, Margaret R. and Fred Block (2005) From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 4, pp. 260-287.

Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke (2000) Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 224-237.

Szalai, Julia (2014) 'The Emerging "Ethnic Ceiling": Implications of Grading on Adolescents' Educational Advancement in Comparative Perspective'. In J.Szalai and C. Schiff (eds.) *Migrant, Roma and Post-Colonial Youth in Education across Europe: Being 'Visibly Different'*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 67-84.