

**Instructor/supervisor:** Stephen Davies

**Seminar title:** Sociological issues in teaching and learning foreign languages

**Seminar description:** After a brief introduction to key influences in the sociology of education (e.g., Boudon, Bourdieu, Coleman, Foucault, Snyder, Reay), the seminar will aim to get students thinking about the practical application of research methods in analysing the interplay of social processes at different levels of formal education. Schools are a central institution and a social system deeply embedded in contemporary society. An investigation into the workings of the education system can help in understanding how it is related to other institutions such as communities, families and other social groups. It is also important to analyse how the cognitive and social development of individuals and groups (micro-scale) is strongly influenced by the structures and networks in which they experience is embedded (macro-level). At the heart of the sociology of education is an attempt to investigate and understand the extent to which education reflects inequalities in society and often contributes to them. Moreover, the results of this investigation should suggest solutions to the existing problems and give students greater reflexive insight into power relations as they play out in the educational field.

**Thematic scope of MA research areas:** Sociology of education applies the power of sociological analysis to a diverse set of important educational issues and the impact of the 'hidden curriculum'. MA topics may include all issues related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Example research areas are: *how learners fail or succeed in the education system; socio-cultural differences and inequalities; racial and ethnic inequalities in education; gender differences at school; the socialising role of education; the social impact of the internet and the 'digital divide'; the growth of alternative education and home-schooling*. These topics may be approached using a range of methodological approaches and data collection techniques, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, content analysis, etc. An emphasis will be placed on using mixed methods in order to triangulate data and produce more compelling findings.