

SOCIOLOGY 395H1F: THE SOCIOLOGY OF HIP HOP

Fall 2012

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Introduction

What is Hip Hop? How does a sociological lens enhance our understanding of Hip Hop?

This is a “mash up” course. Like musical mash ups that blend different—and often quite distinct—musical genres together, this course will bring together different research traditions in Hip Hop studies *and* Sociology. This pairing will produce a nice dialogue between complementary fields of research.

I have two goals for you in this course:

- (1) I want to give you a basic footing in *some* Hip Hop scholarship;
- (2) I want to show you how a sociological lens can help us better understand and analyze Hip Hop culture.

Please keep in mind that this is *not* a comprehensive study of Hip Hop culture. Although we will spend time reading and thinking about different dimensions of Hip Hop culture, most of our substantive focus will be spent on rapping and bboying/bgirling. Although graffiti art and turntablism will make cameo appearances throughout our course, there is simply not enough time in a 12-week course to really delve into all “4 elements” of Hip Hop culture.

Also, please keep in mind that you do not have to be a seasoned Hip Hop fan or practitioner to do well in this course. While a basic familiarity with Hip Hop is always welcomed and may enhance our in-class discussions, I have designed the course so that the devout Hip Hop “head” and complete outsider can both thrive and walk away with fresh insights from the course. In other words, much like Hip Hop culture, this course is designed for everyone.

NOTE: The prerequisite for SOC 395H1F is successful completion of a SOC 200+ level course. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time they are discovered.

Course Expectations

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory.

You are responsible for all material presented in class. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements that may have been made in class as well as notes on the material covered from their classmates.

Proper documentation from a University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate or college registrar is required to justify an absence.

Course Webpage

We will have a course website hosted on Blackboard. This website will contain the course syllabus, links to all the readings that are in journal article form, handouts, and course announcements. You are responsible for all the course materials and for all announcements. Please make sure to check your official utoronto.ca email addresses regularly.

Assignments

You will have 3 major grades for this course, which add up to 80% of your final grade (the research paper will be discussed in class):

- 1) An in-class midterm (25%);
- 2) A short research paper (30%);
- 3) An in-class final (25%)

You will also have 2 minor grades for this course, which add up to 20% of your final grade:

The minor grades will be short, in-class media quizzes. During these assignments, I will play you a video clip or music. You will then write a short response piece on how the multimedia might connect with one of the themes that we have covered in class. These assignments are not meant to test whether or not you know the “right” or “wrong” answers. Instead, these are designed for you to make some connections between readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. Make-ups for these impromptu assignments will **NOT** be accepted. I will only make exceptions for students who provide me with email and medical documentation of an emergency **24 hours before** the class in which I announce these assignments.

Small Quizzes

- 1) Media assignment #1 (10%);
- 2) Media assignment #2 (10%);

Plagiarism: Avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using somebody else’s ideas, do not present them as your own, whether you are quoting exact words, paraphrasing or summarizing. Give proper references if you are using somebody else’s ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference--you are not going to be penalized for that. Go to <http://turnitin.com> to submit your research paper online. “Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.”

Deadlines: You have two in-class assignments and a paper due in this course. Late work will **NOT** be accepted. I will only make exceptions for students who provide me with email and medical documentation of an emergency **24 hours before** the test dates and deadline to turn in the essay. **Also, the essay must be turned in by YOU; I will not accept papers from friends in or out of the class. Similarly, these papers will not be due at the beginning or end of class. Instead, I will announce sometime in the course of my lecture when I will collect these essays. I will not accept papers from students who arrive early just to drop off their papers and leave. Similarly, if you are not present when I collect these essays, your paper will be counted as LATE. There are no exceptions to this rule.**

Medical documentation must include the University of Toronto's Student Medical Certificate. I will **NOT** accept any other form of medical documentation. The certificate is available on the University of Toronto's website and may be completed by a Health Services physician or by your physician.

Late assignments will be penalized 10% for the first week and 5% per day afterwards.

Accessibility Services: If you have documentation that you are using accessibility services, please see me as soon as possible to discuss how best to assist you in this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Brown, Ethan. 2005. *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler*. New York: Anchor.

Rose, Tricia. 2008. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop--And Why it Matters*. New York: Basic.

Schloss, Joseph. 2009. *Foundation: B-Boys, B-Girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press.

OVERVIEW

Week 1: Introduction and a Brief History of Hip Hop Culture

Week 2: A Sociological Road Map to Hip Hop

Becker, Howard. 1974. "Art as Collective Action." *American Sociological Review*. 39: 767-776.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise" from *The Sociological Imagination*. Pp. 3-24.

Alim, H. Samy. 2006. "The Natti Ain't no Punk City": Emic Views of Hip Hop Culture." *Callaloo*. 29(3): 969-990.

HIP HOP AND THE CULTURE WARS

Week 3: Hip Hop as a Problem

Rose, Tricia. 2008. *The Hip Hop Wars*... Chapters 1-5

Week 4: Hip Hop as Resistance

Rose, Tricia. 2008. *The Hip Hop Wars*... Chapters 6-10

Week 5: IN-CLASS MIDTERM!

HIP HOP, HUSTLING, AND THE GHETTO

Week 6: Hip Hop and The Ghetto

Anderson, Elijah. 2012. "The Iconic Ghetto." *ANNALS* 642: 8-24.

Brown, Ethan. 2005. *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler*. New York: Anchor. Part 1: Hustling (Ch. 1-4)

Week 7: Hip Hop and Hustlin' part 1

Wacquant, Loic. 1998. "Inside the Zone: The Social Art of the Hustler in the Black American Ghetto." *Theory, Culture & Society*. 15(2):1-36.

Brown, Ethan. 2005. *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler*. New York: Anchor. Part 1: Hustling (Ch. 5-8)

Week 8: Hip Hop and Hustlin' part 2

Bourgois, Philippe. 1997. "Overachievement in the Underground Economy: The Life Story of a Puerto Rican Stick-Up Artist in East Harlem." *Gangs, Drugs & Violence* 25(1): 23-32.

Brown, Ethan. 2005. *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler*. New York: Anchor. Part 2: Hip Hop (Ch. 9-11)

PERFORMING HIP HOP

Week 9: Freestyling and Battling

Becker, Howard. 2000. "The Etiquette of Improvisation." *Mind, Culture, and Activity*.

Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. "Escaping Embarrassment: Face-Work in the Rap Cipher." *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. "Battlin' on the Corner: Techniques for Sustaining Play." *Social Problems*.

RESEARCH PAPER DUE!

BBOYS, BGIRLS, AND HIP HOP DANCE

Week 10: Bboys and Bgirls part 1

Mauss, Marcel. 1973. "Techniques of the Body" *Economy and Society* 2(1): 70-88.

Schloss, Joseph. 2009. *Foundation: B-Boys, B-Girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 1-4

Week 11: Bboys and Bgirls part 2

Schloss, Joseph. 2009. *Foundation: B-Boys, B-Girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 5-8

Week 12: IN-CLASS FINAL!