

**SOC281H1F: CULTURE AND INEQUALITY**  
Summer 2013

**Instructor**

Dr. Brooke Sykes

Office hours: Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm or by appointment

Office: Room 301, 725 Spadina Avenue (third floor)

E-mail: brooke.sykes@utoronto.ca

**Teaching Assistant:** Kim de Laat; e-mail: kim.delaat@mail.utoronto.ca

**Course time and place:** Monday and Wednesday, 11:00-1:00 pm, SS 2117

**Course prerequisites:** SOC101Y1 or SOC102H1 or SOC103H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered without notice.

**Course description and goals**

This course examines (1) how individuals' locations in socioeconomic, ethnic, gender, and generational groups shapes their cultural repertoires; (2) how culture affects individual positions in stratification hierarchies; and (3) the role of culture in group boundaries and struggles.

Culture can be broadly conceived as the symbolic and expressive dimension of social life. It includes the customs, tastes, beliefs, habits, values, norms, and so on, that together shape a people's way of life. Culture is learned socially, in social structures from the macro level (societal systems of stratification) to the meso level (intermediate groupings like organizations, networks, and subcultures). Social inequality refers to the ways in which socially-defined categories of persons (according to characteristics such as class, gender, and ethnicity) are differentially positioned with regard to access to a variety of opportunities and rewards. In this course, we consider the most important forms of inequality in our society: class, age, gender, and ethnicity. People in different classes, stages of the life course or generations, genders, or ethnic or racialized groups acquire different cultural repertoires. These differences then contribute to perpetuating inequality.

The course begins with the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the most famous and influential sociologist of culture and inequality. We examine Bourdieu's big question: how are class and culture related to each other in societies? We then discuss the ways in which societies are socioeconomically stratified: by class, hierarchies of income or prestige, or occupational status. How do these different forms of socioeconomic inequality relate to culture? What kinds of culture become "cultural capital," or the kinds of culture that provide advantage in the competition for success? Next we ask how unequal cultural repertoires shape people's unequal pathways through socioeconomic structures by shaping their fortunes in school and work. Then we ask how culture is related to major forms of social inequality that Bourdieu pays little or no attention to: gender, ethnicity, and age or generation. The course concludes by discussing social and cultural boundaries between different kinds of people and groups, and examining forms of resistance by oppressed groups. By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of how culture and inequality are defined and studied in the field of sociology;
- Understand and describe how culture and inequality are related;

- Demonstrate an awareness of key concepts and theories in the sociological study of culture and inequality;
- Use sociological concepts and theories to write an essay on the connections between inequality and culture.

### Lectures

The Powerpoint slides from each lecture will be posted on Blackboard the day of the lecture, immediately after each class.

### Course e-mail policies:

- Please only use your University of Toronto e-mail account and put "**SOC281H1F**" in your subject line.
- E-mail is useful for brief messages and questions requiring short or yes or no answers. For longer questions or points of discussion, we request that you please use the office hours.
- We cannot provide instant responses to the many e-mails that we receive; however, we will make every effort to reply to e-mails at least twice per week.
- Please read this course outline carefully, to avoid using e-mail to ask for information that is already provided here.

### Course Website:

This course will use a Blackboard website. Here you will find the course outline, announcements as they are made, and the lecture slides. To access the site: (1) get a UTORid if you do not already have one; (2) log on to Blackboard at <http://portal.utoronto.ca>; and (3) click on the course name.

### Required Readings

**Text:** McMullin, Julie. (2010). *Understanding Social Inequality: Intersections of Class, Age, Gender, Ethnicity, and Race in Canada. Second Edition.* Oxford University Press Canada.

The textbook will be available at the U of T Bookstore. One copy will also be put on reserve in Short Term Loans in Robarts Library.

**Additional required readings** are articles that you can easily access online using your University of Toronto library log-in.

### Requirements and Evaluation

Students are expected to be present at lectures, and to come to class prepared. Students will be assessed as follows:

<b>Research paper proposal</b> , due May 29 (class 5) .....	10%
<b>In-class test 1</b> , June 3 (class 6).....	25%
<b>Research paper</b> , due June 17 (class 10) .....	40%
<b>In-class test 2</b> , June 19 (class 11).....	25%

### Research paper

Your research paper must discuss connections between culture and inequality. In terms of particular focus, there are a multitude of possibilities. We encourage you to choose one that is especially interesting for you. Some examples of paper topics will be discussed in class. In order to find a topic, we encourage you to read ahead as much as

possible and to examine the course outline for a topic that you find interesting, and then to use the university's electronic library to find recent work in this area. This work will lead you to other relevant texts on the topic, and will familiarize you with the topic. Once you choose a topic of interest, decide on particular aspect that you would like to explain and develop your own argument to explain it. Again, examples will be provided in class. In your paper, you must incorporate both some readings from our course and other academic sources that you have found yourself.

The papers should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and should not exceed 10 pages (not including your reference list or tables or figures, if any).

Students are asked to bring hard copies of their paper to class by **June 17** and to submit their paper to Turnitin (see details below). If you cannot hand your paper in in class, you may submit it by June 17 to the second year dropbox in room 225, at 725 Spadina, which is open Monday - Friday, 9-5 pm.

We have only 6 weeks, so you are strongly encouraged to start now. You are welcome to discuss your ideas for possible topics with us.

Please consult the university's **writing centre** [www.writing.utoronto.ca](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca) for resources on:

- writing (style, research, organization, grammar, punctuation);
- citing and how to avoid plagiarism;
- writing when English is a second language;
- reading;
- writing instruction and support at the University of Toronto.

### **Research paper proposal**

Your research paper proposal should briefly outline your topic, what you want to explain, and what explanations you will examine. The proposals should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and should not exceed 1 page.

Students must submit their proposals in class by **May 29**. Proposals will be returned with comments and suggestions for further developing the paper.

### **Late Penalties, Make-up Tests, Plagiarism and Turnitin**

If assignments are submitted after the due date, students will lose 10% of their grade for every day late. If the assignment is late due to illness, students must provide an official University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate (please see details below):

<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/undergraduate/forms>.

**Make-up tests:** students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero for that test unless reasons beyond their control prevent them from taking it, and they can document these reasons. Within three days of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test must send or give a written request for special consideration, after they have followed the steps outlined in the next paragraph. A request should be accompanied by contact information (the student's telephone number and email address) so the date, time and place of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. At the make-up test a student must submit proper documentation from a physician or college registrar (see details below). A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a *valid* reason will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns on the other test in this course.

**Documentation from your physician or college registrar:** If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps

described here. In case of illness, you must supply a duly complete University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate. A doctor's note is not acceptable. There is a blank Certificate in the Faculty of Arts and Science Registration Handbook & Timetable. Attach this Certificate to your work and then hand it in at class or to your TA (in a sealed envelope addressed to the instructor) during their office hours.

If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar. Attach this letter to your work and then hand it in at class or during our office hours.

**Plagiarism** is a serious academic offence and will not be tolerated. All papers must be written independently. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly. Please review and follow the guidelines for avoiding plagiarism, found here:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>; and review the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Please note that Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters says it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

### **Turnitin**

The final research paper should be submitted to turnitin.com. In order to do this, go to <http://www.turnitin.com> and enter the class ID and enrolment password (you will receive these in class). 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.

**Accessibility needs:** The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

### **More on academic integrity**

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.

- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

## Course Outline

### ***Class 1, May 13: Introduction***

What is inequality? In what forms does it exist in Canada today? What is culture? What are the roles of culture in inequality, and inequality in culture? Please try to read the required readings for this lecture before the class. Readings:

- Chapters 1 (Introduction) and the first few pages of Chapter 2 (Class and Inequality) from text.
- Neckerman, Kathryn M. and Florencia Torche. 2007. "Inequality: Causes and consequences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:335-357.
- Paul DiMaggio. 1979. "Review Essay: On Pierre Bourdieu." *American Journal of Sociology* 84: 1460-1474.

### ***Class 2, May 15: Fields***

What is the overall structure of class inequality, and related differences in culture, in a society? Readings:

- Finish Chapter 2 (Class and Inequality) from text.
- Rogers Brubaker. 1985. "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu." *Theory and Society* 14: 723-744.
- Gerry Veenstra. 2010. "Culture and Class in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 35: 83-111.

### ***Class 3, May 22: Culture and Class Relations in a Field***

What is the meaning of social networks in the links between culture and inequality?

Readings:

- Chapter 9 (Paid Work) sections on class from text.
- DiMaggio, Paul and Filiz Garip. 2012. "Network Effects and Social Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 93-118.
- *Optional reading:* Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6):1360-1380.

### ***Class 4, May 27: Cultural Capital***

Cultural capital is one of Bourdieu's most important concepts, however, it is a much debated concept. In this class we compare and contrast cultural capital as high status culture (Bourdieu's main view) versus cultural capital as wide-ranging cultural competence. Readings: There are no new assigned readings for this week.

### ***Class 5, May 29: Culture and Education (\*Paper proposal due)***

We examine how families in different class locations pass on their culture to their children, in turn, giving their children unequal chances of success in school. Education is the main predictor of a child's own class position, so through various mechanisms,

culture plays a key role in class reproduction from generation to generation. Readings:

- Chapter 10 (Class and Education), especially pp. 209-224; Chapter 6, especially Bourdieu on habitus.
- Lareau, Annette and Elliot B. Weininger. 2003. "Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment." *Theory and Society* 32(5/6): 567-606.

**Class 6, June 3: In-class test 1 and Gender, Culture, and Inequality**

After a short in-class test, we move on to another aspect of inequality: gender. Readings:

- Chapter 3 (theories of gender inequality) from text.

**Class 7, June 5: Ethnicity, Culture, and Inequality**

The work of Andreas Wimmer (optional further reading) is heavily drawn upon in the lecture. Readings:

- Chapter 4, theories of racialization and oppression; the relevant parts of Chapter 9 (Paid Work) and 10 (Education) from text.
- *Optional reading:* Andreas Wimmer. 2008. "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 113: 970-1022.

**Class 8, June 10: Age and Generation, Culture, and Inequality**

The text discusses age and inequality, but only touches briefly upon generation, which is powerfully related to culture. Readings:

- Chapter 5 (theories of age and inequality), and relevant parts of Chapters 9 and 10; Chapter 7, pp. 128-129.
- Julian Tanner, Mark Asbridge and Scot Wortley, 2008. "Our favourite melodies: musical consumption and teenage lifestyles" *The British Journal of Sociology* 59:118-144.
- *Optional reading:* Karl Mannheim. 1952. "The Problem of Generations." Pp. 288-320 in *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

**Class 9, June 12: Boundaries**

The theme of boundaries (between classes, genders, ethnicized groups, life course stages, and generations) is discussed, drawing on materials from the earlier parts of the course. No new required readings. *Optional reading:*

- Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:167-95.

**Class 10, June 17: Domination and Resistance (\*Research papers due)**

This course has examined how inequality is maintained and reproduced in society. Oppressed groups, however, do not stay passive; various forms of resistance are possible. No new readings. *Optional reading:*

- Douglas B. Downey. 2008. "Black/White Differences in School Performance: The Oppositional Culture Explanation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 107-26.
- Victoria Paraschak. 1997. "Variations in Race Relations: Sporting Events for Native Peoples in Canada." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14: 1-21.

**Class 11, June 19: In-class test 2**