Course Description and Objectives

Culture and Cognition is a newer but rapidly growing area in sociology. It is not simply the sum of its two parts -- some culture and some cognition. Rather, the area is defined by relatively specific conceptual interests, analytical frameworks and methodological approaches to the study of culture and cognition as phenomena that are observable in their association at a social level, and that are thus subject to systematic study.

As an area of study, Culture and Cognition is associated with the sociology of culture. But it has a specific set of analytical concerns that make it clearly distinct from the larger subfield. Scholars in Culture and Cognition are interested in studying the relationship between mental schemas, cultural configurations, and social structures. Unlike the broader sociology of culture, the area of Culture and Cognition focuses on the workings of the mind, seeking to understand how mental structures shape actors’ perceptions, thinking, decision-making, actions, and social relations. Scholars in this area utilize a variety of methods -- both qualitative and quantitative -- to empirically investigate the actions, discourses, and patterns of relations through which they can examine how culture and cognition interrelate to shape social arrangements.

This seminar will provide an overview of the kind of research being done in Culture and Cognition. However, the goal of the seminar is not simply to acquire knowledge of the scholarship produced in the area, but rather to explore, debate, and ultimately gain a better understanding of what culture and cognition are and how they work.

To this end, readings and discussions in this seminar should be expected to be largely analytical and theory-oriented, in order to give you the necessary tools for figuring out what culture and cognition are and how best to study them. We will begin with a brief overview of classical and contemporary theories -- in sociology and beyond -- that have served as theoretical foundations for Culture and Cognition. Then, we will focus on contemporary literature, exploring a variety of areas of research and approaches in Culture and Cognition.
Expectations
As a graduate seminar, I assume you are invested in learning, and eager to participate in class discussion. This means that I take it as a given that you will attend every class meeting, do all the required readings thoroughly and deeply in advance of every class, and come to class well prepared to actively participate in discussions. My role will be to provide background (when needed), try to clarify and explain issues that are unclear, and help to make connections among readings. Each class will be largely devoted to critical discussion and assessment of the material. I expect you to come with an open mind (i.e., not letting your prior theoretical and substantive preferences color your assessment of readings), and provide constructive contributions to the discussion.

Course Requirements and Grading
1. participation in class discussions .................. 10%
2. leading class discussion on assigned dates .......... 20%
3. four (4) short memos ................................. 20%
4. final paper .............................................. 50%

1. Given that you are expected to do all the readings before the class for which they are assigned, and to participate actively in class, you will be evaluated not on the quantity of your participation, but on quality. Your goal is to engage the main arguments of the readings, and demonstrate critical thinking in your comments. Original thinking is even better. Important questions and concerns are not only welcome, but encouraged.

2. You are expected to present the required readings and lead discussion on an assigned date. Plan on no more than 30 minutes for your presentation (i.e., this is not a guideline, but a firm limit), and be prepared to jumpstart and lead discussion after your presentation. Your presentation should have an analytical focus on the main arguments presented in the readings, and critical assessments of those arguments. You will be evaluated mostly on your ability to critically engage with the readings, and on your ability to facilitate discussion and respond to your classmates’ comments. You are expected to circulate a handout with a summary of the readings, and three or four questions to jumpstart discussion, by 5pm on the Wednesday prior to the day on which you are scheduled to present. This is a hard deadline; late submission will incur a late penalty (2 points after the deadline, 4 points by 12am, 8 points by the next day).

3. You are responsible for submitting four (4) short memos (2 pp., single-spaced, 12 point type, maximum) on a class’ readings at the beginning of that class. View these as “reaction papers,” neither a summary of the texts, nor final masterpieces. Your reaction papers should identify important themes, draw connections, and/or point to analytical problems. They are not meant to be summaries of readings, but rather should raise important issues that you would want to be part of seminar discussion. These memos need not be perfectly polished essays, but a critical response to the key points and implications of the readings. Importantly, they should engage more than one point, and more than one of the class’ readings. You should consider them as a platform from where to improve your argument-building skills, and gradually develop your own positions. Each memo is worth 5% of the final grade.
4. You are required to submit a paper at the end of the term. The ideal choice would be for you to write a paper that can serve as the foundation for your dissertation project, your research practicum project, or a possible publication. Think of the paper as a chance for you to take stock of what you have learned so far and lay the groundwork for an original contribution to your area of specialization, whether in your dissertation or a publication. You can choose to write a research paper or research proposal. The paper should be about 20 pages double-spaced. We will discuss more details about the paper during the semester.

Readings
Book selections will be available on the Quercus course website, under “Modules.” Journal articles are available through the University of Toronto Libraries website.

Accessibility Services
It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council “Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities” at: http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf.
In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you. Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.
Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.
Class Schedule

September 12
CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS: SOCIAL AND MENTAL STRUCTURE


Supplemental:

September 19
CONTEMPORARY FOUNDATIONS: MENTAL STRUCTURES, CULTURE, AND MEANING


September 26

CULTURE AND SOCIAL SPACE: HABITUS AND REPERTOIRES


Supplemental:


October 3
COGNITIVE COMPONENTS OF CULTURE: CATEGORIES, SCHEMAS, AND FRAMES


Supplemental:

October 10
CULTURE AND COGNITION: THE BIRTH OF AN AREA


Supplemental:

October 17
ESTABLISHING THE MAIN DEBATES: WHAT AND WHERE IS CULTURE?


Supplemental:
October 24
DEEPENING THE MAIN DEBATES: DUAL PROCESS MODELS


Supplemental:

October 31
CULTURE IN MIND AND BODY


Supplemental:

*November 7*

Fall Reading Week

*November 14*

COGNITION BEYOND THE MIND


Supplemental:


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**November 21**

**COGNITION, CULTURE, AND NETWORKS**


Supplemental:


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**November 28**

**METHODOLOGICAL DEBATES IN CULTURE AND COGNITION**


Reading: Allison Pugh, 2013. “What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture: Demystifying Interpretive Analysis.” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1: 42-68;

Supplemental:

December 5
TO CONCLUDE: HOW DOES CULTURE INFLUENCE COGNITION AND ACTION?


Supplemental: