

SOC483H1S: CULTURE AND COGNITION

Gordon Brett
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Winter 2022

Mode of Delivery: Online, Zoom

Time: Thursdays, 12:10-2pm

Office Hours: Monday 1-2pm

Email: gordon.brett@utoronto.ca

Brief Overview of the Course

This course is organized as a discussion seminar. This means that you **MUST** do **ALL** the readings and come prepared to critically discuss them in class. In this seminar, you will have the opportunity to actively participate in discussions, hone your communication and analytical skills, explore and develop your research interests, and improve your writing and research skills.

This is a Theory and Research seminar around the specific topic of Culture and Cognition. Readings and discussions will be theory-oriented. However, the main goal is not simply to read theory and discuss it (as fruitful an endeavor as this is), but to acquire analytical and theoretical tools in order to apply them to the analysis of the social world. Culture and Cognition are central aspects of our everyday life, and you will be bringing your knowledge of the social world to critically evaluate the readings. This seminar will provide an overview of the contemporary literature in Culture and Cognition, exploring a variety of perspectives and research areas within this sub-field.

What is Culture and Cognition? It is a newer but rapidly growing area in sociology. It is not simply the sum of its two parts, that is, some Culture and some Cognition. Rather, the area is defined by relatively specific conceptual interests and empirical 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 to, but nonetheless distinct from, the Sociology of Culture. Scholars in Culture and Cognition are interested in studying how actors actively use culture through shared cognitive schemas that are embedded in larger social structures. They study the actions, practices, discourses or patterns through which actors put cognition at work. And they use methods to empirically identify how actors put their cognition at work rather than assume how they do it. **BUT**, what is culture and cognition is a question that we will explore and debate *as* you learn about it throughout the term.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time they are discovered.

Class Format, Requirements, and Grading

- 1- take home test February 18.....30%
- 2- research proposal, March 4.....5%
- 3- paper, due April 735%
- 4- presentation and leading class discussion 15%
- 5- participation in class discussions10%
- 6- paper presentation, April 75%

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students 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.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted unless submitted with proper documentation. See below for details.

Documentation for Missing an Assignment due to Health or Personal Reasons

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor unless you have followed the steps described here.

You will not be required to submit a medical note. Instead, you will need to declare your absence on ACORN on the day you missed the test or due date of the assignment, and email the instructor directly. If you miss these for personal reasons, you need to contact your College Registrar and have them email the instructor directly.

Readings

BOOK SELECTIONS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

Book selections and all journal articles will be available on the Quercus course website, under “Course Materials.”

Students are solely responsible for obtaining and reading all required materials before class. Please give yourself enough time to deal with any problems or delays accessing the readings that may arise so you can be sure to come to class prepared to discuss the materials. Problems accessing readings (online readings or the book) will not excuse failure to demonstrate having done the required readings.

Assignments

In-class test

There will be one test. The test will be given on February 17th and will be a mix of short and long answer questions. Request for a make-up test will only be granted with proper documentation (see above).

Make-up test

Students who miss the test for a valid reason and wish to take a make-up test must give the instructor a written request for special consideration -- no later than 5 days after the date of the test -- which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by proper documentation (see above). 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, and the mark assigned for the test will be a zero.

Research Proposal

You must submit a digital copy of a proposal for your research paper on March 4th to Quercus. This proposal should specify the kind of paper you will write (empirical paper, theoretical paper, or research proposal), the topic, and research question. It should include information about the data, theories, and perspectives that you will use for the paper.

Paper

You may choose to write an empirical paper or a theoretical paper. The paper will be based on a topic of your choice that is suited to this course. The paper is due on August 12th, and it should be no more than 20 pages (all double spaced, 12-point type, including references). A digital copy of the paper is to be submitted to both Quercus and Original at the beginning of the class on the due date.

Plagiarism: Be careful to 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. 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 punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Presentation and Leading Class Discussion

You will be scheduled to present readings and lead discussion on an assigned day to be arranged with the instructor at the beginning of the term. On the assigned day, you are expected to give a PowerPoint presentation about the readings which includes a) a summary of the main points of the readings, b) definitions of key concepts used in the readings, and 3) between 2-4 questions related to the readings for class discussion.

Participating in Class Discussions

You will be evaluated for your contributions to class discussion over the course of the semester. I will consider both the quantity and quality of your contributions. This is a small seminar, organized around class discussions, so student participation is expected. Be sure to allow enough time to read materials closely and critically think about them prior to each class meeting so that you are prepared to participate in class. The quality of your learning experience will hinge upon what each student brings to the classroom. Students must turn their cameras on for the seminar.

Paper Presentation

You are expected to give a brief presentation about your paper on the last class of the semester, on August 12th, when your paper is due. The presentation should cover the main ideas in your paper, describe your approach, and explain your analysis and conclusions.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: _disability.services@utoronto.ca_ or [_http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_](http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_).

Class Schedule

January 13

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CULTURE AND COGNITION?
CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS

January 20

THE SOCIAL MIND

Eviatar Zerubavel, 1997. "The Sociology of the Mind," "Social Optics," "The Social Gates of Consciousness," and "The Social Division of the World," in *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (pp. 1-22, 23-34, 35-52, 53-67).

Paul DiMaggio, 1997. "Culture and Cognition," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 263-287.

January 27

CULTURE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Pierre Bourdieu, 1990. "Structures, habitus, practices," in *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (pp. 52-65).

Pierre Bourdieu, 1984. "Conclusion: Classes and Classifications," in *Distinction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (pp. 466-484).

February 3

CULTURAL REPERTOIRES

Ann Swidler, 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51: 273-286.

Ann Swidler, 2001. "Finding Culture," "Repertoires," "Conclusion: How Culture Matters" in *Talk of Love*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (pp. 11-23, 24-34, 160-180).

February 10
ONTOLOGY AND METHOD

Stephen Vaisey, 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114: 1675-1715.

John Levi Martin, 2010. "Life's a Beach but You're an Ant, and Other Unwelcome News for the Sociology of Culture." *Poetics* 38: 229-244.

Take Home Test Provided

February 17
CULTURAL AND COGNITIVE MECHANISMS

Cerulo, Karen A. 2010. "Mining the Intersections of Cognitive Sociology and Neuroscience." *Poetics* 38 (2): 115–132.

Boutyline, Andrei, and Laura K. Soter. 2021. "Cultural Schemas: What They Are, How to Find Them, and What to Do Once You've Caught One." *American Sociological Review* 86(4): 728-758.

Take Home Test Due February 18th at 11:59pm

February 24th
Reading Week!

March 3
STABILITY AND CHANGE IN PERSONAL CULTURE

Kiley, Kevin, and Stephen Vaisey. 2020. "Measuring Stability and Change in Personal Culture Using Panel Data." *American Sociological Review* 85, no. 3 (2020): 477-506.

Shaw, Lynette. 2021. "On Rupture: Establishing the Cognitive Bases of Social Change." *Sociological Forum*.

Research Proposal Due

March 10
Writing Workshop – No Readings!

March 17
CULTURE, COGNITION, AND CONTEXT

Aliza Luft, 2020. "Theorizing Moral Cognition: Culture in Action, Situations, and Relationships." *Socius* 6: 2378023120916125

Hana Shepherd, 2011. "The Cultural Context of Cognition: What the Implicit Association Test Tells Us About How Culture Works." *Sociological Forum* 26(1):121-143.

March 24

BRIDGING THE DUALITY OF CULTURE

Karen Cerulo, 2018. "Scents and Sensibility: Olfaction, Sense-Making, and Meaning Attribution." *American Sociological Review* 83: 361-389.

Vanina Leschziner and Gordon Brett. 2019. "Beyond Two Minds: Cognitive, Embodied, and Evaluative Processes in Creativity." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 82.4: 340-366.

March 31

WHAT HAVE WE DONE, WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Vaisey, Stephen. 2021 "Welcome to the Real World: Escaping the Sociology of Culture and Cognition." *Sociological Forum*.

Cerulo, Karen A., Vanina Leschziner, and Hana Shepherd. 2021. "Rethinking Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 47: 63-85.

April 7

Paper Due

Paper Presentations