

# Culture I

## SOC6516H Graduate Seminar

Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, Winter 2018

"Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language."  
Raymond Williams, 1976

### **Professor A. Mullen**

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**Course location:** Room 41, 725 Spadina Ave.

**Course time:** Thursdays, 10 – 12

This seminar provides an introduction to some of the principal approaches to the sociological study of culture. The course is designed to equip students with an overview of how sociologists conceive of culture, the methodological approaches they use to study it, the major debates within the field, and an appreciation for how the field has evolved in the past few decades. Emphasis is on understanding how culture influences action, the relationship between culture and social inequality, how culture is produced and consumed, and how to measure meaning. Along the way, students will learn what the sociology of culture offers for studying a range of cultural objects, such as food, music, books, art, film and fashion.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### Analytical Essays

Submit six 3 – 4 page, double spaced, analytical essays (1000 words maximum) on the course readings.

Guidelines for essays:

- The purpose of the essays is to help you to deepen your engagement with the course readings and provide you an opportunity to develop and present your emerging analyses and critical reflections. They also allow me to provide guidance and feedback throughout the semester. In writing the essays, focus on what you find particularly interesting, important or problematic about the readings. A good place to start is by going through the questions recommended below for preparation for class participation.

- What to avoid:
  - Avoid summarizing the readings. You may refer to specific points in the readings or include brief quotations or paraphrases but no broad or extensive summaries.
  - Avoid personal reflection and the use of anecdotal evidence.
  - Avoid focusing on only one reading. In general, try to address or build an argument across some or all of the assigned readings for that session.
- Essays are due by noon on the Wednesday before each session via e-mail. No credit will be given for late essays. List the word count for each essay and do not go above the word limit. Proofread carefully as essays will be marked down for typos, spelling and grammatical errors
- Essays will be marked as check (82%), check – (77%), and check+ (87%).

The following website includes some helpful guidelines for developing critical analysis in your essays: <http://leeclarke.com/docs/writingcritically.html>

### Discussion Questions

Before each session, students will compose a minimum of three discussion questions for that session's readings. Your discussion questions help prepare you for class, give me a sense of how you are engaging with the course readings and help focus our discussions. Think carefully about what you want to ask. Good questions focus on core and critical issues or make connections between different readings. Avoid questions that focus on a small detail or tangential point, questions that can easily be answered in a sentence or two, questions that address only one reading, and yes/no questions.

Discussion questions are due by noon on the Wednesday before each session via e-mail (to me and the presenter for that week). Students must submit questions on ten sessions to receive full credit. Questions will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis (calculated as 85%/75%).

### Class Presentations

Each student will prepare short (10 – 15 minutes), in-class presentations to guide our discussions, based on the readings for the session. The number of presentations will depend on course enrollment. Presenters may begin by *briefly* reviewing the main points of the reading before turning to a critical, substantive discussion. This is an opportunity to share your critical assessments, emerging questions, ideas and analyses, and reflections on what you find particularly noteworthy, compelling, or troubling about the readings. The goal of the presentation is to motivate class discussion and provide a starting framework for the conversation to follow. Presenters will also prepare a handout including brief summaries of each reading and 3 – 5 written discussion questions to begin the class meeting (based in part on questions submitted by students) and will then lead class discussion (with my assistance). Presentations will be marked for organization, clarity, comprehension of materials, and presentation style.

## Class Participation

Students are expected to do the reading thoroughly before each class meeting and to come to class prepared to actively discuss the readings. This means taking the time to reflect on what you've read before class. Working through the following twelve questions for each reading will help prepare you:

- What is the research question(s) the author is trying to answer?
- How does the author define "culture" (or the aspect of culture on which she or he focuses)?
- What are the other key concepts and how are they defined?
- What is the research design and the data or empirical evidence? Is the research design effective for the questions the author(s) is posing?
- What are the main conclusions of the research? How convincingly does the evidence support the conclusions?
- How does the work relate to other readings or streams of research? Does it build and extend earlier work? Challenge or contradict other studies?
- What do you see as the weaknesses or flaws in the research?
- Are there any ideas or assertions in the reading that you disagree with?
- What do you find innovative, if anything, about the work?
- What is most surprising or puzzling to you about the reading?
- What puzzles or questions are left unanswered by the reading?
- What is the main contribution of the reading?

Your class participation will be evaluated on the basis of your contribution to class discussion, the level of comprehension of the readings reflected in your contributions, and your ability to actively listen and engage with other members of the class.

If you must miss a class, please inform me beforehand. Unexcused absences or lateness will negatively impact your participation grade.

## Final Essay

The final paper for this course gives you an opportunity to step back and consider the course as a whole. There are two options for this paper: a) motivated by the readings in this course, write a research proposal that presents your take on one of the most pressing and promising areas for future research in the sociology of culture; b) write an essay that in some way synthesizes and takes stock of what you've learned about the sociology of culture subfield in this class. Further direction will be provided. I am also open to other proposals for papers. Due Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 5 p.m. via e-mail. 10-12 pages, double-spaced.

## **Marking Scheme**

Critical Essays	60% (each essay is 10% of the final mark)
Discussion questions	10% (pass/fail)
Class presentations	10%
Class Participation	5%
Final Essay	15%

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Session One, January 11: Introduction and Overview**

Roy, William G. and Timothy J. Dowd. 2010. "What Is Sociological about Music?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 36(1):183–203.

### **Session Two, January 18: Conceptualizations of Culture**

Fine, Gary Alan Fine. 1979. "Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams." *American Sociological Review* 44(5):733-745.

Griswold, Wendy. 1992. "The Sociology of Culture: Four Good Arguments (and One Bad One)." *Acta Sociologica* 35(4):323–28.

Sewell, William H. 1999. "The Concept(s) of Culture." Pp.35-61 in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, edited by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#### *Supplementary:*

Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer. [2000]. The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In J. Schor and D. Holt. *The Consumer Society Reader*. Pp. 3-19. NY: The New Press. [Note: Excerpt also available in Cultural Studies Reader. Ed. S. During]

Berger Peter L. and T. Luckman. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Pp. 28-80.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Pages 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Friedland, Roger and John Mohr. 2004. "The cultural turn in American Sociology." In *Matters of Culture: Cultural Sociology in Practice*, eds. Roger Friedland and John Mohr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1- 39.

### **Session Three, January 25: Meaning and Measurement**

Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture." *Sociological Methodology* 17: 1-35.

Mohr, John and Craig Rawlings. 2012. "Four Ways to Measure Culture: Social Science, Hermeneutics, and the Cultural Turn." Pp. 70-113 in *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, edited by Jeffrey Alexander, Ronald Jacobs and Philip Smith. Oxford University Press.

Pugh, Allison. 2013. "What Good Are Interviews for Thinking About Culture? Demystifying Interpretive Analysis." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1): 42-68.

#### *Supplementary:*

Bail, Christopher A. 2014. "The cultural environment: measuring culture with big data." *Theory and Society* 43 (3-4):465-482.

Biernacki, Richard. 2012. *Reinventing Evidence in Social Inquiry: Decoding Facts and Variables*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Breiger, Ronald L. 2000. "A Tool Kit for Practice Theory." *Poetics* 27: 91-115.

Ghaziani, Amin. 2009. "An Amorphous Mist"? The problem of measurement in the study of culture." *Theory and Society* 38: 581-612.

Jepperson, Ron and Ann Swidler. 1994. "What Properties of Culture should We Measure?" *Poetics* 22:359-71.

Martin, John Levi. 2000. "What Do Animals Do All Day?: The Division of Labor, Class Bodies, and Totemic Thinking in the Popular Imagination." *Poetics* 27(2-3):195-231.

Mears, Ashley. 2014. "Seeing culture through the eye of the beholder: four methods in pursuit of taste." *Theory and Society* 43(3-4): 291-309.

Mohr, John. 1998. "Measuring Meaning Structures." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 345-370.

### **Session Four, February 1: Culture as Capital**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital," In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson, 241–58. New York: Greenwood Press.

DiMaggio, Paul and Toqir Mukhtar. 2004. "Arts participation as cultural capital in the United States, 1982–2002: Signs of decline?" *Poetics* 32:169–194.

Erickson, Bonnie H. 1996. "Culture, Class, and Connections." *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 217-251.

#### *Supplementary:*

Bernstein, Basil. 1975. Social class, language and socialization. Pp. 170-89 in *Class, Codes and Control: Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*, 2nd ed. NY: Schocken Books.

Lamont, Michèle and Annette Lareau. 1988. "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments." *Sociological Theory* 6:153-168.

Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals, & Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Session Five, February 8: Cultural Capital and School Success**

DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. "Cultural Capital and School Success: the Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students." *American Sociological Review* 47(2): 189-201.

Kingston, Paul W. 2001. "The Unfulfilled Promise of Cultural Capital Theory." *Sociology of Education* 74:88-99.

Lareau, Annette. 1987. "Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: the Importance of Cultural Capital." *Sociology of Education* 60:73-85.

#### *Supplementary:*

Carter, Prudence. 2006. "Straddling Boundaries: Identity, Culture, and School." *Sociology of Education* 79(4):304-

328.

Davies, Scott. 1995. "Reproduction and Resistance in Canadian High Schools: an Empirical Examination of the Willis Thesis." *The British Journal of Sociology* 46(4):662-87.

Devine, Fiona. 2004. *Class Practices: How Parents Help Their Children Get Good Jobs*. London: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1, 3, 5 (67 pages).

Dumais, Susan A. 2002. "Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: The Role of Habitus." *Sociology of Education* 75:44-68.

Dumais, Susan A. and Aaryn Ward. 2010. "Cultural capital and first-generation college success." *Poetics* 38:245-265.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67(5):747-776.

MacLeod, Jay. 1987. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder: Westview Press. Chapters 1 – 7.

Roscigno, Vincent and James Ainsworth-Darnell. 1999. "Race, Cultural Capital, and Educational Resources: Persistent Inequalities and Achievement Returns." *Sociology of Education* 72(3):158-178.

Willis, Paul. 1981. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5 -9.

## **Session Six, February 15: Culture in Action**

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51: 273-86.

Swidler, Ann. 2001. *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction, pp. 1 – 8.

Omar Lizardo. 2017. "Improving cultural analysis: Considering personal culture in its declarative and nondeclarative modes." *American Sociological Review* 82: 88-115.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2008. "Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle: Three Ways of Thinking About Culture in Action." *Sociological Forum* 23(3):603-613.

### *Supplementary:*

Vaisey, Stephen. 2008. "Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle: Three Ways of Thinking About Culture in Action." *Sociological Forum* 23(3):603-613.

Swidler, Ann. 2008. "Comment on Stephen Vaisey's 'Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle: Three Ways of Thinking About Culture in Action.'" *Sociological Forum* 23(3):614-618.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2008. "Reply to Ann Swidler." *Sociological Forum* 23(3):619-622.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(6):1675-1715.

## Session Seven, February 22: Culture as Boundaries

- Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "“Anything But Heavy Metal”: Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review* 61: 884-99.
- Johnston, Josée, and Shyon Baumann. 2007. "Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):165-204.
- Pugh, Allison. 2011. "Distinction, Boundaries or Bridges?: Children, Inequality and the Uses of Culture." *Poetics*. 39 (1): 1-18.
- Supplementary:*
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. Chapters 5 ("The Sense of Distinction," pp. 260-317) and 7 ("The Choice of the Necessary," pp. 372-96).
- Carfagna, Lindsey B, Emilie A. Dubois, Connor Fitzmaurice, Monique Y. Ouimette, Juliet B. Schor, Margaret Willis, and Thomas Laidley. "An emerging eco-habitus: The reconfiguration of high cultural capital practices among ethical consumers." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 0(0):1-21.
- Holt, Douglas. 1997. "Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's theory of tastes from its critics." *Poetics* 25:93-120.
- Holt, Douglas. 1998. "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?" *Journal of Consumer Research* 25 (1): 1-25.
- Lamont, Michele and Virag Molnar. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:167-195.
- Liebertson, Stanley. 2000. *A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Peterson, Richard A., and Roger Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61:900-907.
- Warde, Alan, and Modesto Gayo-Cal. 2009. "The anatomy of cultural omnivorousness: The case of the United Kingdom." *Poetics* 37,2: 119-145.
- Veenstra, Gerry. 2010. "Culture and Class in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Sociology*.

## Session Eight, March 1: Production of Culture

- Becker, Howard. 2008. *Art Worlds, 25th Anniversary edition, Updated and Expanded*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapter one, pp. 1- 39.
- Griswold, Wendy. 1981. "American Character and the American Novel." *American Journal of Sociology* 86:740-765.
- Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:311-334.

*Supplementary:*

Baumann, Shyon. 2007. *Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bielby, William T. and Denise D. Bielby. 1994. "All Hits Are Flukes?: Institutionalized Decision Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development." *American Journal of Sociology* 99:1287-1313.

Crane, Diana. 1997. "Globalization, Organization Size, and Innovation in the French Luxury Fashion Industry: Production of Culture Theory Revisited." *Poetics* 24:393-414.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1977. "Market Structure, the Creative Process, and Popular Culture: Toward an Organizational Reinterpretation of Mass-Culture Theory." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 11(2): 436-452.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston, Part I: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." *Media, Culture, and Society* 4:33-50.

Dowd, Timothy J. 2004. "Concentration and Diversity Revisited: Production Logics in the U.S. Mainstream Recording Market, 1940 to 1990." *Social Forces* 82(4):1411-1455.

Kaufman, Jason. 2004. "Endogenous Explanation in the Sociology of Culture." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:335-57.

Hirsch, Paul M. 1972. "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organizational-Set Analysis of Culture Industry Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 77:639-659.

Lopes, Paul D. 1992. "Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry, 1969 to 1990." *American Sociological Review* 57(1): 56-71

Mears, Ashley. 2010. "Size zero high-end ethnic: Cultural production and the reproduction of culture in fashion modeling," *Poetics* 38: 21-46.

Peterson, Richard A. and David G. Berger. 1975. "Cycles in Symbol Production: The Case of Popular Music." *American Sociological Review* 40(2): 158-173.

White, Harrison C., and Cynthia A. White. 1993 [1965]. *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter three.

## **Session Nine, March 8: Reception of Culture, I**

Baxandall, Michael. 1988. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 86- 108, 147-153.

Childress, C. Clayton and Noah E. Friedkin. 2012. "Cultural Reception and Production: The Social Construction of Meaning in Book Clubs." *American Sociological Review* 77(1):45-68. [1]

Hall, Stuart. 1993. "Encoding, Decoding", In *Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. S. During. Pp. 507-517.

Shively, JoEllen. 1992. "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos." *American Sociological Review* 57:72-734.

*Supplementary:*



Cheyne, Andrew and Amy Binder. 2010. "Cosmopolitan preferences: The constitutive role of place in American elite taste for hip-hop music, 1991-2005." *Poetics* 38: 336-364.

Crane, Diana. 1999. "Clothing Behavior as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress Body & Culture* 3(2):241-268.

Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology* 97:1077-1117.

Holt, Douglas. 2002. "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding." *Journal of Consumer Research* 29(1):70-90.

Schudson, Michael. 1989. "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory and Society* 18: 153-180.

### **Session Ten, March 15: Reception of Culture, continued**

Benzecry, Claudio E. 2011. *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and chapters 3 and 4, pp. 1 – 14, 63-110.

Milkie, Melissa. 1999. "Social Comparisons, Reflected Appraisals, and Mass Media: The Impact of Pervasive Beauty Images on Black and White Girls' Self-Concepts." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62: 190-210.

*Supplementary:*

Crane, Diana. 2001. *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crane, Diana. 1999. "Gender and Hegemony in Fashion Magazines: Women's Interpretations of Fashion Photographs." *The Sociological Quarterly* 40(4):541-563.

DeNora, Tia. 2002. "Music into action: performing gender on the Viennese concert stage, 1790-1810." *Poetics* 30: 19-33.

Halle, David. 1994. *Inside Culture: Art and Class in The American Home*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Halle, David. 1993. "The Audience for Abstract Art: Class, Culture and Power." In *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Ed. Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Long, Elizabeth. 2003. *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 6, pp. 1-30, 144-188.

### **Session Eleven, March 22: Classification**

DiMaggio, Paul. 1987. "Classification in Art." *American Sociological Review* 52(4):440-455.

Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Introduction and chapter two.

Velthuis, Olav. 2006. *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (Introduction) and chapter 8

(Conclusion).

*Supplementary:*

DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston I: The Creation of an Organizational Base of High Culture in America" and "II: The Classification and Framing of American Art," *Media, Culture and Society* 4: 33-50 and 303-22.

Lena, Jennifer C. and Richard A. Peterson. 2008. "Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres." *American Sociological Review* 73(5):697-718.

## **Session Twelve, March 29: Culture and Materiality**

DeNora, Tia. 2002. "Music into Action: Performing Gender on the Viennese Concert Stage, 1790–1810." *Poetics* 30(1–2):19–33.

Latour, Bruno. 1992. "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts." In W. Bijker and J. Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. 1996. "What Do Pictures Really Want?" *October* 77: 71-82.

*Supplementary:*

DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music In Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Griswold, Wendy, Gemma Mangione, and Terence E. McDonnell. 2013. "Objects, Words, and Bodies in Space: Bringing Materiality in to Cultural Analysis." *Qualitative Sociology* 36: 343-364.

McDonnell, Terence E. 2010. "Cultural Objects as Objects: Materiality, Urban Space, and the Interpretation of AIDS Campaigns in Accra, Ghana." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(6):1800-1852.