Culture I

SOC6516H Graduate Seminar

Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, Winter 2021

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Office: Room 246, 725 Spadina Ave.
Course location: TBD
Course time: Tuesday, 2 – 4 p.m.

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 conceptualize culture, the methodological approaches they use to study it, the major debates within the field, and an appreciation for how the field has evolved over 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, art, and film.

Course Requirements:

Slip-Box

Build a slip-box (following techniques developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann). Your slip-box will contain three components:

1. Bibliographic notes: for each reading, answer the following five questions in your own words (bullet format is fine):

   - What is the central research question or purpose of the study?
   - What is the main argument?

- What are the key concepts and how are they defined?
- What are the weaknesses? (If you think the work is perfect or nearly so, then write about what should be the next step in extending the study.)
- What is the main contribution *as you see it*? (This may differ from what the author presents as the main contribution.)

2. Idea notes (zetttels): after completing the reading for the week, write at least three idea notes (in complete sentences) for each reading. Each note contains only one idea and allows you to collect insights in a lightweight way through the course of the semester. You might begin by asking yourself what new ideas you are most excited about, what are the most interesting things about each study, what pressing questions do the readings raise, what has most inspired you or what has most troubled you.

3. Register: Create a register for the idea notes you have written.

Entries are due by 5 p.m. on the Monday before each session via Qualtrics. No credit will be given for late entries. Entries will be marked as check (82%), check – (77%), and check+ (87%).

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 5 p.m. on the Monday 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%).

Presentations & Leading Discussion

Each student will prepare a short (10 – 15 minutes), in-class presentation to guide our discussions, based on the readings for the session. 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 of 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 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?
- 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 questions are left unanswered by the reading?
- What is the main contribution of the reading?
- How does the work relate to other readings or streams of research? Does it build and extend earlier work? Challenge or contradict other studies?

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 and develop ideas that have been emerging in your slip-box. 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 9th, 5 p.m. via e-mail. 10-12 pages, double-spaced. Late papers will not be accepted without legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control.

Course Requirements

Slip-Box	50% (bibliographic notes, 20%; idea notes & index 30%)
Discussion Questions	10% (pass/fail)
Class Presentation	15%
Class Participation	10%
Final Essay	15%

Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:
(http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters 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."*

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters) and *Code of Student Conduct* (http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Accessiblity 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.

Equity and Diversity
The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca.

Copyright Statement
Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the *Copyright Act*, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes, and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

Course Schedule:

Session One, January 12: 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 19: Conceptualizations of Culture

Du Bois, W. E. B. 2007 (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Brent Hayes Edwards. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 ("Of Our Spiritual Strivings"), Pp. 7-14.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," pp. 3-30.

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.

Session Three, January 26: Meaning and Measurement

Mohr, John W., Christopher A. Bail, Margaret Frye, Jennifer C. Lena, Omar Lizardo, Terence E. McDonnell, Ann Mische, Iddo Tavory, and Frederick F. Wherry. 2020. *Measuring Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press. Intro and chapters 1 – 3.

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

Session Four, February 2: 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. 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.

Session Five, February 9: Culture and Inequality

Michèle Lamont, Stefan Beljean and Matthew Clair. 2014. "What is missing? Cultural processes and causal pathways to inequality." *Socio-Economic Review* 12(3): 573–608.

Carter, Prudence L. 2003. "'Black' Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and School Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth." *Social Problems* 50(1):136-155.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):999–1022.

Session Six, February 16: Culture in Action

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.

Session Seven, February 23: 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.

Harkness, Geoff. 2012. "True School: Situational Authenticity in Chicago's Hip-Hop Underground." *Cultural Sociology* 6(3):283–298.

Session Eight, March 2: 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.

Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:311-334.

Baumann, Shyon. 2007. *Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 5, pp. 1-20, 161-178.

Session Nine, March 9: Reception of Culture

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

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.

Rodriquez, Jason. 2006. "Color-Blind Ideology and the Cultural Appropriation of Hip-Hop." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35(6):645–668.

Session Ten, March 16: Reception of Art

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

Banks, Patricia A. 2010. *Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper-Middle Class*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 6, pp. 1 – 12, 55 - 96.

Acord, Sophia Krzys. 2015. "Learning how to think, and feel, about contemporary art." Pp. 219-231 in *Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Art and Culture,* edited by Laurie Hanquinet and Mike Savage. New York: Routledge.

Session Eleven, March 23: Guest Speakers

Gordon Brett, doctoral candidate, University of Toronto
The Embodied Dimensions of Creativity

Paul Nelson, doctoral candidate, University of Toronto
Scaling-Up Local Food Systems: The Role of Cultural Intermediaries in Shaping Value and Transmitting Ideas about "Alternative" Food Production

Session Twelve, March 30: Culture and Materiality

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.

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

Miller, Daniel. 2008. *The Comfort of Things*. Cambridge: Polity Press. "Prologue," "Empty," and "Full." Pp. 1-31.