Culture I

SOC6516H Graduate Seminar, Fall 2022

Department of Sociology, University of Toronto,

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Class: Thursday, 1 – 3, Room 240
Office hours: after class or by appointment

This seminar introduces 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. We will consider culture in material, embodied, processual and conceptual forms and examine how it operates at the micro, meso and macro levels of society. Emphasis is on understanding how culture influences action, the relationship between culture, hierarchy and social inequality, how culture is produced and consumed, and how to operationalize and measure cultural meaning. Along the way, students will learn what the sociology of culture offers for studying cultural objects, such as food, music, art, and fashion, and social phenomena, like poverty, educational success, and gender segregated occupations.

Course Schedule:

Session One, September 15: Introduction and Overview

Small, Mario Luis, David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont. 2010. "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629(1):6-27. NOTE: Only read to page 20.

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

Session Two, September 22: Culture in Interaction

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

Martin, Karin A. 1998. "Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools." *American Sociological Review* 63(4): 494-511.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Kathy J. Kuipers, and Dawn T. Robinson. 1998. "How Do Status Beliefs Develop? The Role of Resources and Interactional Experience." *American Sociological Review* 63(3): 331–50.

Session Three, September 29: Culture as Symbols and Ideas

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

Hallett, Tim, Orla Stapleton, and Michael Sauder. 2019. "Public Ideas: Their Varieties and Careers." *American Sociological Review* 84: 545 – 576.

McDonnell, Terence, Christopher Bail and Iddo Tavory. 2017. "A Theory of Resonance." *Sociological Theory* 35:1-14.

Session Four, October 6:   Conceptualizations of Culture

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.

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

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

Session Five, October 13: 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.

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

Session Six, October 20: Culture as Boundaries

Edgell, Penny, Joseph Gerteis and Douglas Hartmann. 2006. "Atheists As 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71(2):211–34.

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.

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

Session Seven, October 27: Culture and Classification

Guest Speaker: Professor Timothy Dowd, Emory University

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

Fitzmaurice, Connor. 2017. "How Rosé Became High Class: Categorical Divestment and Evaluation." *Poetics* 61: 1–13.

Dowd, Timothy J. "The Dynamics of Musicking: Classifications, Careers, and Connection."

Session Eight, November 3: Culture and Cognition

Guest Speaker: Gordon Brett

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

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

Leschziner, Vanina and Gordon Brett, G. 2019. "Beyond Two Minds: Cognitive, Embodied, and Evaluative Processes in Creativity." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 82(4):340-366.

Session Nine, November 10: Reception of Culture

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

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.

Cerulo, Karen A. 2018. "Scents and Sensibility: Olfaction, Sense-Making, and Meaning Attribution." *American Sociological Review* 83 (2): 361–89.

Session Ten, November 17: Culture in Organizational Context

Becker, Penny Edgell. 1998. "Making Inclusive Communities: Congregations and the 'Problem' of Race." *Social Problems* 45(4): 451–72.

Harding, David J. "Cultural Context, Sexual Behavior, and Romantic Relationships in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." 2007. *American Sociological Review* 72(3):341–64.

Mullen, Ann L. 2014. "Gender, Social Background, and the Choice of college Major in a Liberal Arts Context." *Gender and Society* 28(2): 289–312.

Session Eleven, November 24: 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.

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

Session Twelve, December 1: Worth and Valuation

Zelizer, Viviana. 1981. "The Price and Value of Children: The Case of Children's Insurance." *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 1036–56.

Kharchenkova, Svetlana and Olav Velthuis. 2018. "How to Become a Judgment Device: Valuation Practices and the Role of Auctions in the Emerging Chinese Art Market." *Socio-Economic Review* 16(3): 459–477.

Gualtieri, Gillian. 2021. "Discriminating Palates: Evaluation and Ethnoracial Inequality in American Fine Dining." *Social Problems: 1 – 25.*

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 two to three idea notes (in complete sentences) for each reading. Each note contains only one idea and allows you to collect insights and develop emerging analyses 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 or troubled you about the work. (For further details, see the Quercus handout on "Slip-box entries.")

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

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

Discussion Questions

Before each class, students will compose a minimum of three discussion questions for that week's readings. Your 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, that address only one reading, and

yes/no questions. Feel free to draw on your idea notes in developing your discussion questions. Discussion questions are due by 5 p.m. 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%).

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. You may begin by *briefly* reviewing the main points of the reading before turning to a critical, substantive presentation. This is an opportunity to share your critical assessments, emerging analyses and insights, 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 (maximum 2 pages) covering the main points of the presentation as well as the discussion questions (organized thematically or by readings and based on questions submitted by students) and will then lead class discussion (with my assistance). Presentations will be marked for sociological imagination, 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 central research question(s) the author is trying to answer?
- What is the author's main argument?
- How does the author define (implicitly or explicitly) culture? What are the other key concepts and how are they defined and measured?
- What kind of evidence does the author offer?
- How convincingly does the evidence support the conclusions?
- What are the main contributions and strengths of the work?
- What are the weaknesses, gaps or misconceptions?
- What is most surprising or puzzling to you about the reading?
- What questions are left unanswered by the reading?
- How does the work compare to other readings or streams of research?
- How do you find the author's work useful for your own scholarship?

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 analyses and 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, December 9th, 5 p.m. via e-mail. 10-12 pages, double-spaced, plus bibliography. Late papers will not be accepted without legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control.

Evaluation

Slip-Box	40% (bibliographic notes, 20%; idea notes & index 20%)
Discussion Questions	10% (pass/fail)
Class Presentation	15%
Class Participation	10%
Final Essay	25%

Policies and Procedures

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* (https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019) 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.

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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.

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