

# Department of Sociology, University of Toronto

## SOC348H1S: Culture and Inequality

JANUARY-APRIL 2020, THURSDAYS, 3-6PM, VC212

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## Course information

Why are some individuals more likely to go to office hours, to feel comfortable in a doctor's office, or to get job interviews? Is Beyoncé high culture or low culture, and what does that mean for those who listen to her music, or who try to make music like her? How do political phenomena such as populism attain and maintain relevance? What's the difference between people who eat McDonald's and those who go to Michelin starred restaurants?

We can start to answer these questions at the intersection of culture and inequality. A lot of cultural sociology (or the sociology of culture — we can discuss the difference later) emerged in an attempt to explain inequality. This is because inequality is undoubtedly economic, but to chalk it up to money only is to miss a lot of the phenomenon. Decades of research has now shown us that we can signal advantage in ways that have little (directly) to do with money, and that inequality persists even when we have money (because we don't act in culturally legitimate ways). We also now know that everything from the food that we eat to the shoes that we wear can — willingly or unwillingly — render us members of particular groups with particular advantages, limitations, and interests.

All of this makes the study of culture and inequality both really exciting and quite tricky. It's exciting because we can study everything from Beyoncé to job interviews — and in the process, hopefully get a better understanding of all of these phenomena. And it's tricky because, well, where else would Beyoncé and job interviews have something in common? Bringing all of these threads together in order to understand the many ways in which culture affects thoughts, behaviours, and outcomes will be our goal for this class.

### Course objectives

- You will gain a greater familiarity with the main concerns and concepts within the sociology of culture.
- You will understand the extent to which inequality is not simply a material phenomenon, and begin to explore modes and methods for cultural change.
- You will learn how to design a research paper, and how to frame and situate it within ongoing academic debates on your subject of interest.
- You will learn how to critique and build on past research.

### Course format

SOC348H is a program-only course, with a smaller number of students, and a third hour of instruction. The course will include a significant research project, where you will apply the skills you learned in your earlier Sociology Major courses. In the third hour of instruction, we will often have skills-based workshops where we will explore the tools needed to be successful in this and other Sociology courses, and you will work on your research project.

### Prerequisites

SOC201H, SOC202H, SOC204H and 1.0 FCE (two) of SOC251H, SOC252H, and SOC254H.

### Reading materials

Unless otherwise noted, all readings can be found online through the University of Toronto Libraries: <https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca>.

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## Overview of community expectations

I am committed to making our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions as inclusive as possible. I believe that mutual respect, listening carefully and openly, and participating actively and thoughtfully will make our time together productive and engaging.

To this end, please give me feedback at any time throughout the course about things that are helping you learn, or things that aren't helping. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can use the following form: <https://forms.gle/s5hu7gPxJgwfByGQA>. And in general, please make sure to communicate with me or the TA if there are ways that we can improve the course to better support your learning.

### **Equity and 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.

### **Gender-inclusive language**

Respectful classroom etiquette includes using gender-inclusive language. Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

### **Classroom etiquette**

Mutual respect is critical for learning and teaching. Please be considerate at all times. This includes muting your cell phones and not talking during lecture (a few words are fine, but please do not continue to chat!).

If your behavior is distracting or disrespectful, you will be asked to leave.

### **A note on points of view**

The readings, lectures, and my comments in class will inevitably suggest a particular point of view. This perspective is my own and does not have to be yours! I encourage you to disagree with the ideas in the readings and lectures as well as the perspectives of your colleagues in the course. Please express yourself! A significant part of a university education is learning about the complexity of various issues; therefore, it is important that we listen and respect one another but we do not have to agree. A richer discussion will occur when a variety of perspectives are considered and discussed.

## How your learning will be assessed

### Assessments

Type	Description	Weight
Discussion topics	Each week, you will bring <u>two</u> questions or issues pertaining to <u>each</u> assigned reading (two-three sentences per question). <u>Due in hard copy at the beginning of each class, starting week 2.</u>	5%
Reading responses	Responses are a roughly 350-word analysis of articles. You must do three responses, on any week you choose. Each is worth 5%. They are due on Quercus <u>before the start of lecture.</u>	15%
Participation	Various, depending on the week's topics and activities. 1% per workshop for a total of 5% (note that there are more than five scheduled workshops, meaning that you can miss some without penalty).	5%
Test	In class, on <u>Feb 13.</u>	25%
Paper proposal	The course paper is a scaffolded assignment. This includes a short proposal due <u>February 27.</u> It is recommended you discuss your paper ideas with the course instructor in the weeks prior to the proposal being due.	10%
Course paper	Detailed instructions will be posted on Quercus and discussed in class. We will also use the applied seminars to work on various aspects of the paper. The final paper is due <u>April 2.</u>	40%
<i>Note: Please check Quercus for detailed instructions for each of the assignments.</i>		

Your success in this class is important to me. I know that we all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or that exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

To this end, given that some may struggle with weekly assignments, you have **the option to not do the discussion topics**. That 5% of the final grade would then be folded into the final paper, such that the final paper would be worth an extra 5% of your final grade. If you would like to take advantage of this option, you must let me know in writing, via email, by the third week of class (January 23).

### Due dates

*Time bank:* In this course, we will be using time banks. Our time bank is made up of three days. This means that you each have a three-day grace period for one assignment **or** three one-day extensions distributed across different assignments. If you are using your time bank credit for a particular assignment, please let the TA know when submitting the assignment (you can use the comment option on Quercus). Due to the nature of the assignment, you cannot use the time bank for the discussion topics (and of course same goes for the test, which will take place during class time).

*Quercus*: Please keep proof (using screenshots) of having submitted your assignments to Quercus. This prevents you incurring late penalties due to technical errors.

*Religious or cultural accommodations*: Individuals who have religious or cultural observances that coincide with this class should let the instructor know in writing by email by January 16. I strongly encourage you to honour your religious and cultural holidays! However, if I do not hear from you by January 16, I will assume that you plan to attend class and to submit your assignments on time.

*Make-up tests*: Anyone may take the make-up test with the required documentation (see below). Please submit a request to take the make-up via email within five days of missing the original test.

*Late penalties*: Late assignments without required documentation (see below) — and outside of the time bank limits — will be penalized 5% of the assignment marks per day. The penalty will run from the day the assignment was due until the day it is submitted via Quercus.

*Discussion topics*: Since discussion topics are meant to make sure that you do the readings before class, they will not be accepted late without documentation. If they are submitted during or after class, you will receive a grade of 0. There will, however, be one make-up opportunity towards the end of the semester (details TBA).

*Required documentation* if you miss a test or assignment deadline:

- In case of illness, you must supply a doctor's note OR a completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form, available at <https://illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. These should include the start and anticipated end date of the illness.
- If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you should contact your college registrar as soon as possible, and we will comply with their recommended accommodations. In cases with short turn-around, please reach out to your instructor and we can work together on accommodations until your registrar can be reached.

## **Grade appeals**

We do our best with grading, focusing on being thorough and fair. But grading errors can certainly happen. If it is a mathematical error in adding up the points, you can simply alert the TA.

*For substantive appeals*: Email the TA a written explanation on why you think your mark should be altered. Your explanation should take into account the comments you received on your test/assignment, and if applicable, the assignment's objectives or requirements. You should do this within one week of receiving your assignment. It's really helpful if you include examples from your assignment to illustrate the arguments you make in your appeal.

You can also, within one week of having received an appeal response from your TA, ask for a further appeal with the course instructor. Your email to me should include all correspondence regarding the initial appeal, and a written explanation responding to your TA's comments on the initial appeal.

Of course, it is important to note that we will typically regrade the entire assignment, and your mark could certainly go up, but it can also stay the same or even go down. However, we promise to never be unfair or in any way vindictive: mistakes do happen, and we're honestly happy to correct our own.

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## Resources and policies

### **Academic integrity**

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. For more information on academic integrity at the University of Toronto, including the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/UoTrules>.

### **Course communication**

We will use Quercus to share updates about the course; please check it regularly or set up email notifications in order to stay up-to-date with the course.

*Email guidelines:* All emails you send to your instructor or TA should include the course code (i.e., SOC348) in the subject line — we're all working on multiple courses, and this prevents confusion. It is good practice to treat emails as you would any other professional communication; opening statements such as "Hello Ioana" are always a good idea. We will do our best to answer emails within 48 hours of receipt.

### **Mental health and well-being**

We know that life is complicated, and university can be stressful. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and in need of support, services are available. For a listing of mental health resources available on and off campus, you can visit: <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed>.

### **Further resources**

I also strongly recommend making use of the many campus resources available for help, especially with coursework, and generally with keeping up with the demands of university life. This includes your **college registrar** in case of any unexpected events or crises, and **Academic Success** (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc>) for help developing strategies for doing well in your courses. **Office hours**, both my own and the TA's, are also an (underutilized!) resource for doing well in courses.

Everyone has the right to accommodations through **Accessibility Services** (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>), and if you are struggling, I strongly recommend you make an appointment with an accessibility counsellor as soon as possible. Remember that they tend to get extremely busy towards the end of semesters, so it's important to get in touch as soon as possible to make sure that you get accommodations in time.

A directory of student support resources at U of T can be accessed through the **Student Life app** (<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/ote/startuoft-book>).

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## Course schedule

Schedule and readings for each week \*\*\*subject to change during the semester

### JAN 9: INTRO

Fischer, Claude. 2019. "Fixing Inequality: More Opportunity is Not the Answer." <https://madeinamericathebook.wordpress.com/2019/03/04/fixing-inequality-more-opportunity-is-not-the-answer/>.

Lamont, Michèle. 2018. "Addressing Recognition Gaps: Destigmatization and the Reduction of Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 83(3):419–44.

Pitner, Barrett Holmes. 2019. "Viewpoint: Beyonce's Homecoming celebrates black culture and education." *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47982033>

### JAN 16: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS //Workshop: finding academic research

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.

*SKIM*: Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51(2):273-286.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2010. "What People Want: Rethinking Poverty, Culture, and Educational Attainment." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629(1): 75–101.

### JAN 23: AGENCY AND ACTION //W: critiquing research and writing a lit review

Auyero, Javier and Dora Swistun. 2008. "The Social Production of Toxic Uncertainty." *American Sociological Review* 73: 357-379.

Klinenberg, Eric. 1999. "Denaturalizing Disaster: A Social Autopsy of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *Theory and Society* 28(2):239–95.

### JAN 30: MEASUREMENT //W: deciding on a research strategy/methods

Mohr, John W. 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. New York: Oxford University Press.

AND your choice of one article out of the following, depending on the methods that interest you:

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

Hunzaker, M. B. Fallin and Lauren Valentino. 2019. "Mapping Cultural Schemas: From Theory to Method." *American Sociological Review* 84(5):950–81.

Kozlowski, Austin C., Matt Taddy, and James A. Evans. 2019. "The Geometry of Culture: Analyzing the Meanings of Class through Word Embeddings." *American Sociological Review* 84(5):905–49.

Lamont, Michèle and Ann Swidler, 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37: 153-171.

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.

Miles, Andrew, Raphaël Charron-Chénier, and Cyrus Schleifer. 2019. "Measuring Automatic Cognition: Advancing Dual-Process Research in Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 84(2):308–33.

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

Watkins, Susan Cotts and Ann Swidler. 2009. "Hearsay Ethnography: Conversational Journals as a Method for Studying Culture in Action." *Poetics* 37(2):162–84.

## **FEB 6: HOW DOES CULTURE MATTER FOR INEQUALITY? (1) CAPITAL**

SKIM: Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241–58. in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press. (Available online at [http://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu\\_forms\\_of\\_capital.pdf](http://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf))

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67(5):747–76.

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

## **FEB 13: TEST**

## **FEB 20: NO CLASS (READING WEEK)**

## **FEB 27: HOW DOES CULTURE MATTER FOR INEQUALITY? (2) BOUNDARIES //W:** writing abstracts and introductions

Pugh, Allison. 2011. "Distinction, Boundaries or Bridges?: Children, Inequality and the Uses of Culture." *Poetics* 39 (1): 1-18.

Sendroi, Ioana and Andreea Mogosanu. 2019. "Does Being Roma Matter? Ethnic Boundaries and Stigma Spillover in Musical Consumption." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(12): 2047–64.

### **MAR 5: HOW DOES CULTURE MATTER FOR INEQUALITY? (3) VALUATION AND CLASSIFICATION**

Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Michael Sauder. 2007. "Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):1–40.

Zelizer, Viviana. 2011. *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton University Press. Princeton: Princeton University Press. "Introduction" (pp. 1-12) AND CHOICE OF: "Human Values and the Market" (pp. 19-39), OR "The Price and Value of Children" (pp. 40-60).

### **MAR 12: THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE //W: citations**

Fine, Gary Alan. 2003. "Crafting Authenticity: The Validation of Identity in Self-Taught Art." *Theory and Society* 32(2):153–180.

Mears, Ashley. 2010. "Size Zero High-End Ethnic: Cultural Production and the Reproduction of Culture in Fashion Modeling." *Poetics* 38(1):21–46.

### **MAR 19: CONSUMPTION AND RECEPTION**

Childress, Clayton and Jean-François Nault. 2019. "Encultured Biases: The Role of Products in Pathways to Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 84(1):115–41.

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.

### **MAR 26: EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES //W: editing your own work**

Griswold, Wendy and Muhammed Bhadmus. 2013. "The Kano Durbar: Political Aesthetics in the Bowel of the Elephant." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1):125–51.

Wagner-Pacifici, Robin. 2010. "Theorizing the Restlessness of Events." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(5):1351–86.

### **APR 2: CULTURAL CHANGE? //W: culture, capital and academia — getting reference letters and beyond**

Lamont, Michèle. 2019. "From 'having' to 'being': Self-Worth and the Current Crisis of American Society." *The British Journal of Sociology* 70(3):660–707.

Maxim, Paul S., Jerry E. White, Dan Beavon, and Paul C. Whitehead. 2001. "Dispersion and Polarization of Income among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Canadians." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 38(4):465–76.

OR

Ramos, Howard. 2013. "From Ethnicity to Race in the Canadian Review of Sociology, 1964 to 2010." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 50(3):337–56.