

Sociology 160: Sociology of Culture

University of California, Berkeley
Summer 2017, Session A
May 22-June 30, MTWTh 2-4 pm
LeConte 251

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Barrows 460

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Music. Food. Fashion. Movies. Sports. Drugs. Toilets. Sesame Street. Pets. Tourism. Sex. Dating. Shopping. Gestures. Emotions. Time. Science. Identity. Culture exists everywhere. Think of the following examples from everyday conversation:

- “It’s important to build culture in a new startup, like they have at Google.”
- “We broke up because we just couldn’t get over the cultural differences.”
- “She just got back from the symphony. She thinks she’s so cultured.”

As these examples show, culture exists in a lot of different places. If we think of it as the meanings we give to objects, actions, and situations, then it is impossible to remove culture from social life. As the examples above suggest, it is an incredibly broad area that covers topics as diverse as art museums, scientific laboratories, and tattoos. To make sense of it, our exploration of culture will focus on three core questions:

- **What is it?** We will examine some of the ways sociologists have understood culture—starting with theoretical pieces, and then looking at examples of how they have been applied in empirical studies and are evident in contemporary cases.
- **What does it do?** Here, we will consider the ways in which culture relates to power and inequality. Again, we will cover both theories and examples.
- **How does it work?** Whatever understanding of culture you find most convincing, how does it work? We will look at culture existing in institutions, individuals, and interactions. Finally, we will consider how culture spreads across contexts and relates to social change.

These questions are very broad, and often overlap. We will continually bring them up and relate readings and discussions back to all of them. Keep them in mind as you read, and think about how convincing you find the answers in each selection. By the end of the course, you should be able to provide your own answers to these questions.

LEARNING GOALS:

- Gain an understanding of major perspectives in this subfield of sociology, how they complement each other, and how they challenge each other
- Analyze cultural products, practices, and experiences in your everyday life, identifying both social origins and implications
- Develop your analytic reading, writing, and speaking skills

COURSE COMPONENTS:

Class Meetings: You are expected to attend every class meeting having completed the readings listed on the syllabus for that day and prepared to actively participate. Most classes will combine lecture with interactive activities. Bring your readings to class.

Participation: There are multiple ways to demonstrate your engagement with class. I encourage you to try all of them, and push yourself to become more comfortable with things that you might be hesitant to try at first. I am happy to provide you with some strategies for gaining confidence and comfort. That said, you will receive credit for demonstrating your engagement in whatever way(s) you want:

- Participating in class discussions
- Being an active participant in class activities
- Contributing to the online community (see below)
- Coming to office hours

Readings: All readings are available via bCourses. No additional texts are required. Complete the readings listed on the syllabus before class each day, and come prepared to discuss them—that means provide your interpretation and address outstanding questions. Most days, you will not have more than 25 pages of reading. This is much less than many courses. This is because some pieces will require careful and multiple readings. You will receive an email shortly after class previewing the next day's reading, including relevant background, key questions to guide your reading, and important terms.

Written Assignments: For each unit, you will complete a short (2-5 pages) written assignment in which you develop your own answer to the key questions, using both course readings and real-life applications. You will receive detailed guidelines at least one week before the due date. All assignments are to be submitted through bCourses.

Mini Quizzes: Each week we will take a very short in-class quiz. The goal of these is for me as an instructor to identify any common points of confusion, and for you as a student to provide regular feedback on how the course is going, and to avoid any surprises on the final exam.

Final Exam: There will be a comprehensive final exam on the last day of the course. It will cover all material from the course, including readings and in-class discussions. There will be a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer, and very short essay questions. More detailed expectations will be provided before the exam.

Twitter and Online Community: Our course has its own Twitter feed (@CalSoc160). I will use this to share relevant articles, photos, experiences, and thoughts. You are encouraged to respond to tweets and to contribute your own thoughts using #CalSoc160. If you are not a Twitter user, you can set up a free account at Twitter.com. I will not follow any students' accounts out of respect for their privacy. If you prefer not to have an account, you can view the Twitter feed on the homepage of the bCourses page, and submit any contributions via email. Twitter will only be used for supplemental information and applications. All course-wide announcements will be sent out via bCourses and all individual communication via email.

Grade Breakdown:

Short Assignments (3)	30%
Mini-Quizzes (5)	25%
Final Exam	20%
Participation	25%

POLICIES:

Attendance: With such a condensed schedule, we will be moving very quickly and covering a lot of material in each session. Repeated absences will affect your participation grade. If you have to miss a class meeting, please check bCourses to access any handouts and ask a classmate for notes.

Computers and phones: It is my assumption that any device you have out you are using as a learning aid for class. If it becomes clear this is not the case, you and/or the device will have to go.

Email: I will respond to emails once per day, excluding weekends. If your question is answered in the syllabus or an assignment handout, I will not reply. If your question is better answered with a conversation, I will suggest a time to meet.

Assignment submission: All assignments will be submitted electronically through bCourses. Familiarize yourself with the site prior to the first deadline. Late submissions will be penalized one letter grade per day or portion thereof. Expect to submit all assignments from a laptop or desktop computer, not a mobile device.

Academic honesty: Always do your own work and provide appropriate citations. Adjusting to college-level work is daunting and there are plenty of chances to unknowingly make a mistake. If you want more information about campus policies, look at the Code of Academic Conduct. If you want more information about citing, check out the Student Learning Center or ask for help. We will go over appropriate use of sources as assignments are introduced. If it's 3 am the night before something is due and you're not sure if you should cite, you should cite.

Accommodations: Let me know as early in the session as possible if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

Technology: Unless you alert me otherwise, I assume you have regular access to and familiarity with:

- Your campus email account
- bCourses
- PDFs
- Online video clips (YouTube, vimeo, etc.)

Additionally, you are encouraged to follow the course Twitter feed and to participate in in-class polls via the mobile app. These are completely optional, though, and whether or not you participate does not affect your grade. If you would like help accessing or assistance using any of these technologies, please let me know right away so we can work out a solution.

Classroom atmosphere: Your success in the course depends on every student feeling comfortable sharing their ideas, interpretations, and questions. The more ideas we have, the more complex and nuanced an understanding we can all get. I also encourage you to meet up outside of lecture or section to hash over readings, debate your interpretations, and commiserate on your confusions. If you ever feel like you aren't getting enough opportunities to engage with course material, or have suggestions to make section a better learning experience for you, please let me know! Just as you are expected to be constantly making progress toward the course learning goals, I strive to constantly make your experience in the course more meaningful.

SCHEDULE:

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
May 22	Welcome!		
May 23	Dilemmas in Studying Culture	Alcoff, Linda. 1991. Excerpts from "The Problem of Speaking for Others." <i>Cultural Critique</i> 20:5-12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome survey • Share an example of culture
WHAT IS CULTURE?			
May 24	Classification	<p>Durkheim and Mauss. 1963. Exerpts from "The Problem" and "Conclusion" in <i>Primitive Classification</i>.</p> <p>Zerubavel, Eviatar. "The Social Division of the World." 53-67 in <i>Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology</i>. Harvard University Press.</p>	
May 25	Signification	<p>Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1993. "Arbitrary Social Values and the Linguistic Sign." Pp. 161-165 in <i>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</i> ed. Charles Lemert.</p> <p>Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Excerpts from "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." Pp. 412-453 in <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i>.</p>	Quiz 1
May 29		NO MEETING: MEMORIAL DAY	
May 30	Action	<p>Swidler, Ann. 1986. Excerpts from "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51:273-286.</p> <p>Becker, Howard. 1953. "Becoming a Marihuana User." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 59(3):235-242.</p>	Written Assignment 1 due
WHAT DOES IT DO?			
May 31	Culture and power	<p>Gramsci, Antonio. 1990. "Culture and Ideological Hegemony." Pp. 47-54 in <i>Cultural and Society: Contemporary Debates</i>, edited by Alexander and Seidman.</p> <p>Martin, Karin. 1998. Excerpts from "Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 63(4):494-511.</p>	

June 1	When culture hides differences	<p>Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno. 2002. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Pp. 39-46 in <i>Cultural Sociology</i> Ed. Lyn Spillman.</p> <p>Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. Pg. 1-25 of Chapter 1, "A Propaganda Model." <i>Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media</i>.</p> <p>hooks, bell. 1994. Pg. 165-169 of "Seeing and Making Culture: Representing the Poor." <i>Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations</i>.</p>	Quiz 2
June 5	When culture focuses on differences	<p>Lamont, Michele. 1992. Pp. 9-12 in <i>Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class</i>. University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Lareau, Annette. 2012. "Concerted Cultivation and the Accomplishment of Natural Growth." Pg. 153-162 in <i>Readings for Sociology</i>. Ed. Garth Massey.</p>	
June 6	When culture legitimates differences then	<p>Lareau, Annette. 2003. "Theory: Understanding the Work of Pierre Bourdieu." Pg. 275-278 in <i>Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life</i>.</p> <p>Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in <i>Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education</i>.</p> <p>Bourdieu, Pierre, 1984. Excerpts from <i>Distinction</i>.</p>	
June 7	When culture legitimates differences now	<p>Khan, Shamus. 2012. Excerpts from Chapter 5, "Learning Beowulf and Jaws." <i>Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School</i>.</p> <p>Rivera, Lauren. 2015. Excerpts from Chapter 4 and Conclusion, <i>Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs</i>.</p>	
June 8	Differences in reception	<p>De Certeau, Michel. 1984. Excerpts from "General Introduction." <i>The Practice of Everyday Life</i>.</p> <p>Shively, JoEllen. 1992. "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 57(6):725-734.</p>	Quiz 3

June 12	Culture as resistance	hooks, bell. 1990. "Marginality as a Site of Resistance." Pgs. 341-343 in <i>Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures</i> .	Written Assignment 2 Due
		Carter, Prudence. 2003. "'Black' Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for African American Youth." <i>Social Problems</i> 50(1):136-155.	

HOW DOES IT DO IT?

June 13	Institutions and the production of culture	Becker, Howard. 2002. "Art Worlds." Pp. 178-188 in <i>Cultural Sociology</i> ed. Lyn Spillman.	
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June 14		Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. Excerpts from "The Field of Cultural Production, or the Economic World Reversed." Pgs. 29-73 in <i>The Field of Cultural Production</i> .	
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June 15	Identity formation	Goffman, Erving. 1959. Excerpts from <i>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</i> .	Quiz 4
		Lamont, Michele, Jason Kaufman and Michael Moody. 2000. "The Best of the Brightest: Definitions of the Ideal Self among Prize-Winning Students." <i>Sociological Forum</i> 15(2):187-224.	
		Frye, Margaret. 2012. "Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 117(6):1565-1624.	

June 19		Simmel, Georg. 1971. Excerpts from "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality." Pgs. 251-293 in <i>On Individuality and Social Forms</i> . University of Chicago Press.	
		Simmel, Georg. 1971. Excerpts from "Fashion." Pgs. 294-323 in <i>On Individuality and Social Forms</i> . University of Chicago Press.	
		Davis, Fred. 1992. "Identity Ambivalence, Fashion's Fuel." Chapter 2 in <i>Fashion, Culture, Identity</i> . University of Chicago Press.	

June 20	Interaction	Blumer, Herbert. 1969. Pgs 2-8 in <i>Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method</i> . Milnar, Murray Jr. 2004. Pgs 3-8 in <i>Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption</i> . Routledge.	
June 21		Collins, Randall. 2004. Excerpts from <i>Interaction Ritual Chains</i> . Princeton University Press. Armstrong, Elizabeth, Laura Hamilton, and Paula England. 2010. Excerpt from "Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?" <i>Contexts</i> 9(3):22-27.	
June 22	Changing culture	Swidler, Ann. 1986. Additional excerpts from "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51:273-286. Sewell, William. 2002. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation." Pp. 324-328 in <i>Cultural Sociology</i> Ed. Lyn Spillman. Kaufman, Jason and Orlando Patterson. 2005. Excerpts from "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 70(2):82-110.	Quiz 5
June 26		King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1964. Excerpt from "The Quest for Peace and Justice." King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1957, Excerpt from "A Realistic Look at the Question of Progress in the Area of Race Relations." Whitman, Walt. 1855. Excerpt from Book XXIII of <i>Leaves of Grass</i> .	
June 27		Course summary	Written Assignment 3 Due
June 28		Final Exam review	
June 29		Final Exam	