

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

Sociology 160

*UC Berkeley, Fall 2012
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10-11 am
145 Dwinelle*

Syllabus version August 21, 2012

Professor contact information:

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I. Course description:

In 1871, Edward Tylor wrote that culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Over the subsequent century and a half, we have used the terms “culture” and “cultural” with a wide range of meanings: objects, genres, actions (especially conventional), mental representations, and even complex institutional structures are all part of culture. That is, although there is a distinct domain of explicitly cultural production, most of culture happens outside that domain. In this course, what unifies our study of culture is not its object as much as its approach: culture is about shared meaning, and it infuses all of social life. At the end of the course, students will have been introduced to many of the major theorists of culture, and will have a basic toolkit for understanding society “culturally.”

This course will also have a substantial writing component, with GSIs assisting students in improving their writing through several drafts of short papers. The writing assignments are intentionally “commonplace” rather than specifically academic: everyday genres (Commercial or magazine advertisement, restaurant review, Op-Ed) that students might need to use, and that demonstrate how intensely our commonplace experiences and activities are culturally shaped.

II. Format and practicalities:

This course consists of three 50-minute lectures a week, plus an intensive “practicum” (aka discussion section). The practicum is focused on helping you learn to write, and particularly how to write in a context-appropriate way. The lectures are largely focused on the readings, some of which are difficult, and all of which are important. You are expected to read in advance, and come prepared to engage the material. I will post lecture notes on bSpace, usually within a day or two of the lecture.

What readings are required? All the required readings are listed in this syllabus and will be available in two formats: as a reader for sale at Krishna Copy on Telegraph, and electronically though Bspace at <https://bspace.berkeley.edu/>. Optional readings are also listed here; these are available through bSpace only.

How to get your questions answered: The best time and place for questions about the material is in class. Office hours provide time for longer, more complicated, or more personal issues. Email should not be used for questions about the material; it is the “medium of last resort” when you cannot get to office hours for some reason. I check email not more than once a day, and often cannot respond right away.

Timely completion of assignments: We will not accept late work. Work turned in after the deadline will be returned ungraded. If you have a real emergency, email both JJH and your GSI at least 24 hours before the deadline, and we will work out an exception for you.

Academic Honesty Policy: You are expected to do your own work on assignments and exams and cite your sources. Anyone who submits plagiarized work will automatically receive a zero for that assignment. A serious case of plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the class and a referral to campus authorities. More information about campus policies is available at: <http://campuslife.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity/definition>.

Documented Disability Statement: I am happy to provide accommodation to any student with an accommodation letter from the Disabled Students Program (DSP). Any student with a disability who requires academic accommodations should contact DSP for assistance. Information is available at <http://dsp.berkeley.edu>. **Please notify me as soon as possible if the material presented in class is in a format not accessible to you.**

III. Course requirements and grading

Students will be expected to:

- ✓ **Read the assigned material** in time for the SECOND DAY OF LECTURE indicated in the syllabus, attend, and participate in lecture and section. **10%**
- ✓ **Demonstrate mastery of the course material through an in-class midterm and final exam.** The exams will be a combination of short-answer and essay questions. The final will be cumulative, but will emphasize the material in the last half of the course. (20% each) **40%**
- ✓ **Complete 2 drafts of each of 3 writing assignments.** Your first draft will be read by a classmate, the second by the GSI. (10% each) **30%**
- ✓ **Read and comment on the drafts of a classmate for each of the 3 writing assignments.** (3 ⅓ % each) **10%**
- ✓ **Complete a final paper.** This will consist of a 3rd draft of one of your 3 writing assignments (your choice), plus about 500 words of commentary on the piece and how it embodies ideas about culture you have learned in the course. **10%**

In general, course grades will follow the usual distribution (i.e. 94% is an A, 90% is an A-, etc.). However, grade cut-points may be altered slightly so that they fall at natural breaks in the point distribution (that is, A- may fall at 91% or 89%). This alteration will be done at the discretion of the professor and GSIs, depending on the performance of the class as a whole.

Regrading policy: If you believe that a grade on an assignment or exam question is inappropriate or unfair, submit the original paper with a written description of what you would like reconsidered. Please note that a regrade may result in either an increase or a decrease in your score.

IV. Tentative course schedule:

The following represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, it may be necessary or desirable to make changes to this schedule, add or change assigned readings, etc. If revisions are made, they will be announced in class and posted on Bspace.

Practical introduction: August 24 and 27

Miner, Horace. 1956. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist* 58: 503-507.

Origins: August 29 and 31

(NOTE: September 3 there is no class, Labor Day Holiday)

Boas, Franz. 1966 [1911] Introduction to the Handbook of American Indian Languages. Pp. 1-10 & 59-69.

Kroeber, Alfred and Talcott Parsons. 1958. "The concepts of culture and of social system." *American Sociological Review*. 23(5):582-583.

Tylor, Edward. 1871. Primitive culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom. Pp. 1-7.

Optional:

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

Culture, body, and the self: September 5, 7 and 10

DuBois, Cora. 1944. The People of Alor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 116-151.

Hallowell, A. Irving. 1955. "The Ojibwa self and its behavioral environment." In Culture and Experience. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp. 172-182.

Mauss, Marcel. 1973. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society*. 2(1):70-88.

Optional:

Turner, Terrence. 2007. "The social skin" In Beyond the Body Proper. M Lock and J. Fahrquar, eds. Duke University Press.

Culture and classification: September 12, 14 and 17

Durkheim, Emile. Elementary Forms of Religious Life. New York: Free Press. Pp 8-18.

Durkheim, Emile and Marcel Mauss. 1963 [1903] Primitive Classification. University of Chicago Press. Pp 3-9 and 67-88.

Zerubavel, Eviatar 1996. "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification." *Sociological Forum* 11: 421-33.

Optional:

Douglas, Mary. 1975. "Deciphering a meal" in Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology. London: Routledge and Kagan. . Pp. 249-275.

Culture as a system of signs: September 19, 24, 26, and 28

(NOTE: There will be no class on September 21)

Barthes, Roland . 1990. "The World of Wrestling". Pp87-93 in Jeffrey Alexander and Steven Seidman (eds.) Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates. Cambridge University Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" In The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 412-453.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. "The Science of the Concrete." In The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1-33.

Optional:

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1990. "Signs and Language," in: Alexander and Seidman, Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 55-63.

Reading across cultures: October 1 and 3

Bohannon, Laura. 1966. Shakespeare in the bush. *Natural History Magazine*, Aug-Sept.

Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology*. 92(5):1077-1117.

Optional:

Niyogi, Sanghamitra. 2011. Bengali-American Fiction in Immigrant Identity Work. *Cultural Sociology*. 5(2): 243-262

Review: October 5

In-class midterm: October 8

Class, power and culture: October 10 and 12

Small, Mario, Hardings and Michele Lamont. 2010. "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty." *Annals of American Association of Political Science*. 629:6-27.

Williams, Raymond. 2002. Base and Superstructure. In Cultural Sociology. Edited by Lyn Spilman. Malden: Blackwell.

Willis, Paul. 1990. "Masculinity and Factory Labor." In Jeffrey Alexander and Steven Seidman (eds.) Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates. Cambridge University Press. Pp 183-195

Social organization of taste and style: October 15, 17, and 19

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. Distinction: Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. Stanford University Press. Pp. 11-41.

Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "'Anything But Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review*. 61:884-899.

Optional:

Simmel, Georg. "Fashion", In Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms. Ed. Levine, Chicago.

Cultural production: October 22, 26 and 29

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. The Field of Cultural Production. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 29-73.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1987. "Classification in Art." *American Sociological Review*. 52:440-55.

Optional:

Lopes, Paul. 1992. "Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry." *American Sociological Review*. 73:697-718.

Doing, making, and learning culture: October 31, November 5 and 7

(NOTE: there will be no class on November 2)

Becker, Howard. 1953. "Becoming a Marijuana User." *American Journal of Sociology*. 59(3):235-242.

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

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

Optional:

Garfinkel, Harold. 1987[1967] "Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities." In Studies in Ethnomethodology. Oxford: Polity Press. Pp. 35-75.

From self to identity: November 9, 14 and 16

(NOTE: November 12 is a campus holiday – no class.)

Collier, Jane. 1997. "Identity: From Villagers to Andalusians." Pp 195-217 in From Duty to Desire. Remaking Families in a Spanish Village. Princeton University Press.

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. Subculture. The Meaning of Style. London: Methuen, 1979. Pp 47-70.

Kang, Miliann and Katherine Jones. "Why Do People Get Tattoos?" *Contexts* 6(1): 42-47.

Optional:

Joas, Hans. 2000. "The concept of self and its postmodern challenge," In The Genesis of Values. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Culture, reason, and action: November 19 and 21

(Note: November 23 there will be no class for Thanksgiving)

Swidler, Ann. 2001. Talk of Love: How Culture Matters. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 71-88 & 135-159.

Optional:

Frye, Margaret. 2012. Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity. *American Journal of Sociology*. 117(6): 1565-1624.

Conclusion and review: November 26 and 28

Final exam in class: November 30