Course description

This class will introduce students to sociological approaches to the question of culture. We will start by discussing important theoretical perspectives (culture as system of classification, as an instrument of power, as embodied practices linked to social positions, as a product of social interaction, as a system of signs) and then move on to specific empirical topics (artistic production; culture and organization; identity). The last part of the course will explore in depth the question of cultural difference through an analysis of national culture in comparative perspective, with a special focus on “American” culture. Throughout the semester, we will use empirical examples close to us (from Silicon Valley and its ecosystem of tech companies) when studying themes such as gentrification, innovation, anti-tech mobilizations, high-technology capitalism, and inequality.

Logistics

Communication: 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.

Office Hours: Office Hours will be held on Thursdays, 2:30-4:30pm at the International House Café. Don’t forget to cancel online if you cannot make it so that someone else can have your spot. Please reserve one time slot only on the same day.
Sign up at: http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/mfofp

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 AZ and your GSI at least 24 hours before the deadline. Exceptions will be granted only after a careful review of your situation, and not on an automatic basis.

Academic honesty: You must in no way misrepresent your work or be party to another student’s failure to maintain academic integrity. It is your responsibility to know university policies and abide by the student code of academic integrity (http://asuc.org/honorcode/). The standard penalty for violations of academic integrity in this course will be an F grade for the course.
Readings: There is no required book for this class. All the readings are available electronically on bSpace XX (https://bspace.berkeley.edu/).

Reading tip: Try to practice active reading. This means that instead of using a highlighter, try to take notes in the margins summarizing the key idea, explaining why you agree/disagree with it, and what other text this brings to mind.

Lecture notes. I will post slides twice a week on the course website, usually shortly in advance of class.

Assignments and grading

Your grade in this class has four parts. The first part (25%) is based on a series of six reading quizzes. Most of these will come on Mondays and cover the material from that week (and usually only that week). The quizzes are meant to give you an incentive to do the reading. They will all follow the same format: 10 multiple-choice questions of a straightforward nature. The quizzes will be graded as follows:
7 or more correct out of 10 = 1 point.
6 or fewer correct out of 10 = 0 points.

At the end of the semester, I will take the five highest scores out of the six and multiply that number by five (e.g., 5/6 becomes a “perfect” 25%, i.e. full credit). Put differently, you get one “freebie.”

The second and third parts of your grade are in-class exams: the mid-term exam and final exam. They will both be cumulative, asking you to reflect on and analyze material covered since the beginning of the semester. They will be composed of short answers (to see how much you have retained from the readings and lecture content) and essay questions (to give you a chance to express your own voice as a critical thinker in relation to the material covered).

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<th>%</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>reading quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>mid-term exam</td>
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<td>40%</td>
<td>final exam</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>Your total grade</td>
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Re-grading policy: If you wish to contest a grade, you must come first to your Graduate Student Reader and submit to him/her a one-page statement explaining why you think the grading is unfair. Only if you are still dissatisfied should you come to me. Please note I will not change any grade without first discussing it with your Graduate Student Reader. Also bear in mind that a re-grade may result in either an increase or a decrease in your score.

What if I miss taking an exam?
Make-up exams will not be given. Exceptions to this rule are made only in dire, unavoidable circumstances (e.g., serious illness or emergency) that are fully documented (e.g., with official correspondence from physicians) and preferably with advance arrangements made directly with the GSR.
SYLLABUS

**September 3. Introduction.**
What is culture and why does it matter?


RECOMMENDED:

**PART I. SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CULTURE**

**September 8 and 10. Culture as a system of classification**

RECOMMENDED:
September 15 and 17. Culture as embodied practice linked to systems of classification & objective position

Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED:

September 22 and 24. Culture, body and the self

Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED
September 29 and October 1. The construction of Masculinity

RECOMMENDED

October 6 and 8. Culture as a system of signs
Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED

Review (Oct 13) and Midterm (Oct 15)
PART II. US AND THEM

October 20 and 22. Looking (critically) around us: Silicon Valley as a culture of innovation

Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED:

October 27 and 29. The Spatial dynamics of culture

Neighborhood revitalization, gentrification, contestation.


RECOMMENDED:
Development without displacement : resisting gentrification in the Bay Area / written by Causa Justa--Just Cause ; with health impact research and data and policy analysis contributed by the Alameda County Public Health Department, Place Matters Team.
Jean Tepperman. Gentrification is not inevitable: a new report on displacement in Oakland and San Francisco also provides a roadmap for how to stop things from getting worse. http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b21261873~S1


November 3 and 5. Culture meets Tech. How are our lifestyles, our values and social norms influenced by technology?


RECOMMENDED:


Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: Chicago University Press. (Use 2nd and 3rd editions with postscript)

November 10 and 12. Who Are We? The Problem of Identity. From self to identity


RECOMMENDED:


PART III. CULTURAL PRODUCTION

November 17 and 19. Art Worlds / cultural production

Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED:

November 24 and 26. “American Culture”.

Reading Quiz

RECOMMENDED:

**December 1 and 3. Conclusion/Review**

**Final exam: Friday, December 19, 2014  3-6P**