

Sociology 190
Cultural Production
The Industrial Underpinnings of the Arts and Media
Fall 2015

Instructor: Matt Rowe

E-mail: mrowe@berkeley.edu

Mailbox: 410 Barrows Hall

Office: 496 Barrows Hall

Office Hours: Wednesday 4:30-5:30 pm

Class Meeting Time, Location

Wednesday 2-4 pm

203 Wheeler Hall

Course Overview

News and entertainment media are a constant presence in our everyday lives. Music, television, the Internet—all of the media we consume are potential cultural resources. They reinforce what we already know about ourselves, inform us about other people's experiences, and give us something to talk about.

In addition to being culturally vibrant, sociologists see the arts and media as particular modes of economic activity that share certain key features. Often studied in terms of “culture industries,” media are produced in particular ways, at particular times, for particular reasons. The purpose of this course is to understand those reasons. How are different kinds of cultural products created? How are these industries structured, and why? What is it like to work in these fields? What does their content tell us about the society that produces them?

In addition to studies of media industries, these questions extend to other forms of cultural production, as well. In this course, we'll consider cuisine (restaurant and beverage industries) and advertising, along with fine art, film, television, music, and digital media.

The objectives for this course are simple. By the end of the semester, students will become proficient in the two main theoretical frames for understanding cultural production—critical and institutional—and will be able to use them to interpret various cases. The course culminates in a research paper, giving students the opportunity to apply these lessons to an additional topic of their choice. Reading responses, in-class discussions, and a series of assignments leading up to the paper will help students understand the course material and write a successful research paper.

Required texts

The course reader is available at Copy Central, 2576 Bancroft Way. I will also post .pdfs of all readings on bCourses.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and participation: 20%
Reading responses: 10%
Paper proposal: 10%
Literature review: 10%

Outline and abstract: 10%
Research presentation: 10%
Final paper: 30%

Important dates:

Paper proposal due: Sept. 16
Literature review due: Oct. 7
Abstract due: Oct. 28

Outline due: Nov. 4
Presentation: Nov. 18 or Dec. 2
Final paper due: TBD

Class participation is an important part of your grade, for two reasons. First, with only one meeting per week, missing class will make it impossible for you to stay caught up. Second, you will not be able to achieve the learning objectives solely by reading the material—you must also verbalize the concepts, share ideas, and work together to do well in this course. I will assess participation qualitatively—that is, quality matters more than quantity. There are a variety of ways to participate, including in-class discussion, group activities, online discussions, and office hours visits.

Reading responses and comments. You will be required to submit a brief reading response every other week. This is to help you keep up with the readings and to reflect critically on them to prepare you for in-class discussions. Responses should be no more than 500 words (for reference, this paragraph contains 142 words) and will be graded on a pass/fail basis. They must be posted to bCourses by 5 pm on Tuesdays. On alternating weeks (when you are not writing a response) you will submit brief comments (50-100 words each) on THREE other students' reading responses for that week. Comments must be submitted by noon on Wednesdays and will also be graded pass/fail. You may skip one reading response and one set of comments during the semester without penalty. More detailed instructions will be provided on the first day of class.

Research paper. The majority of the grade in this course will be determined by your research project, consisting of a series of assignments culminating in a research paper and presentation. The paper must be 15-20 pages, double spaced. The paper is an opportunity for you to learn more about an additional area of cultural production of your choosing. You must use both of the conceptual frames discussed in class to analyze your topic. You must rely primarily on academic sources, with a complete citation list, but you can also use some non-academic sources (e.g., newspaper articles, blog posts).

1. Paper proposal: In two double-spaced pages or less, describe your research topic and the kinds of sources you expect to use.
2. Literature review: In five double-spaced pages or less, provide a concise review of existing research concerning your topic. You may cite course materials, but you must provide five additional citations. You should give an overview of what we know about your topic, and what remains to be learned.

3. **Outline and abstract:** Prepare a detailed outline of your research paper, explaining briefly what you will discuss in each section. The outline should be 2 single spaced pages or less. In addition, write a 500-word abstract giving an overview of your paper's main arguments.
4. **Presentation:** Prepare and give a brief presentation on your topic to the class.
5. **Final paper:** The paper is due during exam week; exact time and location TBD.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance in class is mandatory. If you think you will miss one day of class or more, you should consider taking another course. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining notes from another student and catching up on any in-class assignments.

Office hours appointments are on a drop-in basis. If you cannot make the regular time, please e-mail me to make an appointment at another time. During office hours, I can answer questions about the readings, clarify something from lecture, or discuss any topic related to the course. Please come to office hours with a specific question in mind.

I will use **bCourses** to post resources, report grades, and set up online discussions. You are responsible for checking the course's site on a regular basis. Please let me know if you have difficulty using bCourses.

You may use **laptops and other devices** during class for note-taking only. Please do not distract me or your classmates by using them for anything else. This excludes cell phones—please keep your phones off during class.

Late papers. Assignments must be turned in on time. If you are late for class that day—or miss the deadline for any other reason—your grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade. I will only accept a late paper if it is turned in by e-mail within 24 hours of the time it is due. Extensions will only be given in extreme circumstances, with documentation explaining the reason that the paper cannot be turned in on time.

Missed assignments. Except in the case of a real and verifiable emergency, students will not be allowed to make up missed assignments. In the case of a real and verifiable emergency, you must notify me within 24 hours after the time the missed class ends. All approved make-ups must be completed within one week of the original due date.

Plagiarism means representing the work of others as your own. This includes copying sentences, passages, or entire papers from the Internet or from other students. It also includes quoting class materials without using quotation marks and providing a citation. Any case of plagiarism will be taken seriously and will result in you failing the course.

Grading policy. I am happy to discuss your grade with you in office hours, to help you improve. If you want to dispute a grade, please follow these steps: (1) write a short memo describing the specific reason that you believe the grade is inaccurate or unfair; (2) e-mail the memo to me within two days after the work is handed back to you; (3) come to the

next office hours session to discuss the issue with me. Keep in mind that re-grading can result in a lower grade.

Students with disabilities who require any kind of accommodation should contact me as soon as possible so that I can make appropriate arrangements. Be sure to have an accommodation letter from the Cal's Disabled Students Program.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1, August 26: Course Introduction

Week 2, September 2: Institutional Perspectives

Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective" *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:311-34.

Christopherson, Susan. 2008. "Beyond the Self-Expressive Creative Worker: An Industry Perspective on Entertainment Media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(7-8): 73-95.

Week 3, September 9: Critical Perspectives

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 2002. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Pp. 39-46 in *Cultural Sociology*, L. Spillman, ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Schils, Edward. 2002. "Center and Periphery." Pp. 47-55 in *Cultural Sociology*, L. Spillman, ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Williams, Raymond. 2002. "Base and Superstructure." Pp. 56-62 in *Cultural Sociology*, L. Spillman, ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Watkins, S. Craig. 1998. Chapter 2, "Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism," in *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 4, September 16: Field-based Perspectives [**Paper proposal due**]

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

Week 5, September 23: Fine Art

Becker, Howard S. 2002. "Art Worlds." Pp. 178-88 in *Cultural Sociology*, L. Spillman, ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Thornton, Sarah. 2008. Chapter 3, "The Fair," in *Seven Days in the Art World*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Bain, Alison. 2005. "Constructing an Artistic Identity." *Work, Employment & Society* 19(1):25-46.

Week 6, September 30: Hollywood Film

Bielby, William T. and Denise D. Bielby. 1999. "Organizational Mediation of Project-Based Labor Markets." *American Sociological Review* 64(1):64-85.

Watkins, S. Craig. 1998. Chapter 4, "Producing the Spike Lee Joint," in *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blog post from *The Atlantic*:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/03/the-secrets-to-winning-an-academy-award/284158/>

Week 7, October 7: Television [**Literature review due**]

Bielby, William T. and Denise D. Bielby. 1994. "'All Hits are Flukes': Institutionalized Decision Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development." *American Journal of Sociology* 99(5):1287-1313.

Mayer, Vicki. 2008. "Guys Gone Wild? Soft-Core Video Professionalism and New Realities in Television Production." *Cinema Journal* 47(2):97-116.

Kim, Minjeong. 2013. "Missing Romance." *Contexts* 12(1):54-6.

Week 8, October 14: Popular Music

Peterson, Richard A. 2002. "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music." Pp. 164-77 in *Cultural Sociology*, L. Spillman, ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Rossmann, Gabriel. 2004. "Elites, Masses, and Media Blacklists: The Dixie Chicks Controversy." *Social Forces* 83(1):61-79.

Mayer, Vicki. 2003. Chapter 3, "Tensions in the Tejano Industry," in *Producing Dreams, Consuming Youth*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Week 9, October 21: Food

Fine, Gary Alan. 1992. "The Culture of Production: Aesthetic Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work." *American Journal of Sociology* 97(5):1268-94.

Blog post from “The Feminist Kitchen”:

<http://thefeministkitchen.com/2011/07/18/guest-post-a-sociological-study-of-why-so-few-women-chefs-in-restaurant-kitchens/>

New York Times Magazine article on celebrity chefs:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&&gwh=1A95B1E75717DC692486F2740343A246&gwt=pay

Caldwell, Mark. 2014. “The Rise of the Gourmet Hamburger.” *Contexts* 13(3):72-4.

Week 10, October 28: Advertising [**Abstract due**]

Frank, Thomas. 1997. Chapters 4 and 5 in *The Conquest of Cool*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Grabher, Gernot. 2002. “The Project Ecology of Advertising: Tasks, Talents and Teams.” *Regional Studies* 36(3):45-62.

Week 11, November 4: Digital Media [**Outline due**]

Christopherson, Susan. 2004. “The Divergent Worlds of New Media; How Policy Shapes Work in the Creative Economy.” *Review of Policy Research* 21(4): 543-58.

Gill, Rosalind. 2002. “Cool, Creative, and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Euro.” *Information, Communication & Society* 5(1):70-89.

New York Times Magazine article on Twine:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/magazine/twine-the-video-game-technology-for-all.html?_r=0&gwh=20EBFE10B5F80F2993C49A3575603BAF&gwt=pay&assetType=nyt_now

Weeks 12-13, November 18 and December 2: Student Presentations

FINAL PAPER DUE [day of final exam, TBD]