SOCIIOLOGY OF CULTURE

This course addresses major themes and questions in the sociology of culture. It focuses on work that asks what shapes cultural meanings on the one hand, and how culture has its effects, on the other. We also examine the relationships between culture and institutions. Since recent advances in the study of culture have been methodological as well as conceptual and empirical, we will read important recent work that suggests central questions, problems for research, and innovative or particularly powerful methods. Throughout the course, we attempt to identify important research questions.

Course Organization and Requirements: The course requires extensive reading and class discussion; regular participation and reading of assigned materials are expected. There are two ways to fulfill the course requirements:

Plan A: Students who are using the course primarily for QE preparation or general background in the field should write a brief (2 page) memo each week (for a total of 10 out of 14 weeks) raising some question or issue concerning the readings. At least one of these memos should be a brief (3-5 pp.) suggestion for a research design that follows up on material from the course.

Plan B: Students who wish to plan research or to write a research paper need complete only three brief reading memos. The paper may be either a report of independent research or a fleshed-out research proposal drawing upon methods, approaches, or questions raised in the course. The paper is due the last day of the semester: Friday, December 11.

Starred (*) readings are available on bCourses. You should also purchase the following books (also on library reserve):

Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy
Rick Biernacki, The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914
Jane Collier, From Duty to Desire: Remaking Families in a Spanish Village
Amy Schalet, Not Under My Roof: Parents, Teens, and the Culture of Sex
Ann Swidler, Talk of Love: How Culture Matters [can buy discounted from me]
Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel
Will Wright, Sixguns and Society
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Week 1 (September 1)  INTRODUCTION: HOW CULTURE WORKS

Week 2 (September 8)  WHAT CULTURE IS AND WHAT IT DOES


Recommended:


**Week 3 (September 15) ACCOUNTING FOR MODERNITY: HOW CULTURES CONSTITUTE INDIVIDUALS AND COLLECTIVITIES**


Recommended:


Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," pp. 360-411 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. 


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**Week 4 (September 22) HOW CULTURE CONSTITUTES: INSTITUTIONS, PRACTICE AND DISCOURSE**


Recommended:


David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the
Week 5 (September 29) CULTURE AND TRANSFORMATION


Recommended:


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Week 6 (October 6)  HOW CULTURE AFFECTS ACTION


Recommended:
David J. Harding, Living the Drama: Community, Conflict, and Culture among Inner-City Boys (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).


Week 7 (October 13) HOW CULTURE STRATIFIES


Recommended:

Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Laura T. Hamilton, Paying for the Party: How College

Week 8 (October 20) COMMUNITIES, STATUS GROUPS, AND BOUNDARIES

*Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style (London: Methuen, 1979), Introduction and Chs. 4-8 (pp. 1-4 and 46-127).
*Paul DiMaggio, "Classification in Art," American Sociological Review 52 (August


Recommended:


Week 9 (October 27) HOW CULTURE SHAPES (INTER)ACTION:


Recommended:


Week 10 (November 3) CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES, CATEGORIES, AND BOUNDARIES

Appendix (pp. 1-55, 97-133, and 193-211).

Recommended:


Week 11 (November 10) MARKETS AND MEANINGS: INNOVATION, DIVERSITY, AND FASHION PROCESSES


*Paul M. Hirsch, "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of


Recommended:


Herbert J. Gans, *High Culture and Popular Culture*


Week 12 (November 17) SPECIFYING LINKS: PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURE (or WHERE DO GREAT INNOVATIONS COME FROM?)


Recommended:

Harrison White and Cynthia White, *Canvases and Careers* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), Chs. 3-4 and Conclusion (pp. 76-161).


Week 13 (November 24) THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF CULTURAL MEANING


Will Wright, Sixguns and Society: A Structural Analysis of the Western (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), Chs. 3-7, pp. 29-184.


Recommended:


Lucien Goldmann, "The Sociology of Literature: Status and Problems of Method," in
Albrecht, Barnett, and Griff (eds.), The Sociology of Literature, pp. 582-609.
Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, Movies: A Psychological Study (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950).

Week 14 (December 1) THE FORMAL CONSTITUENTS OF MEANING


**Recommended:**


