

Sociology 190: Cultural Production

The Institutional Underpinnings of the Arts and Media

Spring 2018

Instructor: Matt Rowe

E-mail: mrowe@berkeley.edu

Mailbox: 410 Barrows Hall

Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Class Time, Location

Wednesdays 12-2 pm

104 Barrows Hall

Course Overview

News and entertainment media are a constant presence in our everyday lives. Music, television, websites—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 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, cultural production can include any form of creative expression that is organized and commodified. In this course, we'll consider cuisine and advertising, along with fine art, film, television, music, and social media.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will: (1) Become proficient in applying the themes of the course—production processes and social inequalities—to contemporary arts and media; (2) Develop expertise in one specific area of art or media by developing a research paper and helping to facilitate in-class discussion on this topic. Reading responses, in-class discussions, and a series of assignments leading up to the paper will help students engage fully in the course and write a successful 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%
In-class facilitation	10%
Reading responses	25%
Final project	45%
Paper proposal	10%
Paper meeting	5%
Final paper	30%

Important dates

Paper proposal due: February 27

Final paper due: May 9

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. There are a variety of ways to participate, including in-class discussion, online discussions, and office hours visits.

In-class facilitation. Beginning in week 4, a small group of students will help to facilitate in-class discussion of the week's readings. You will sign up for a topic (and class date) in the first 2 weeks of class. Working together (and with my help) you should identify a few discussion questions. You may also plan activities, if you like, such as a small group discussion, a debate, a game, etc. You may introduce additional resources to use during class time, such as a short video or other visual display. You must meet with me as a group before class to get approval for your plan, and clear up any questions you have. You will be graded on how well prepared you are going into class, the facilitation of class itself, and how well you work together.

Reading responses. You are responsible for submitting 4 reading response papers during the semester. The responses are short essays, 1-2 pp. double-spaced. They should demonstrate an understanding of the week's readings, based on the prompt for that week that I distribute. Reading responses must be submitted online by midnight on Tuesday. Those that are turned in late will not be graded.

Final project

The paper is an opportunity for you to learn more about one of the forms of cultural production that we discuss in class. You will analyze your chosen topic using one or more of the course's themes (technology, uncertainty, identity, and opportunity), citing course readings and additional sources that you identify. You may write about the same

topic as your in-class presentation, but you do not have to. There are three steps in the preparation of the paper:

1. Paper proposal. The proposal should clearly identify your topic and the approach you will use to discuss it. It must be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and include a reference list. In other words, you should do most of the research required for the paper by the time the proposal is due.
2. Meeting: You must meet with me in office hours to discuss your paper. This is your chance to ask for help if you're having trouble finding sources, or to talk through any problems you're having in framing the essay.
3. Final paper: The paper must be 10-15 pages, double spaced. You should build on what we learned about the topic in class by citing at least three sources in your paper, in addition to sources from the course. At least one of these must be academic in nature (an article published in an academic journal or a book chapter published by an academic press). The paper will be due during finals week, in lieu of an exam.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance in class is mandatory. This is a seminar, which means participation is an important part of the grade. Come to class ready to discuss the readings.

Office hours appointments are on a drop-in basis (except for the mandatory group and paper topic meetings). 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 discussion, discuss grading, or any other topic related to the course. Please come to office hours with specific questions in mind.

I will use **bCourses** to post resources (readings and lecture slides), make announcements, 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 can add and contribute to a discussion topic at any time, as part of your participation grade.

You may use **laptops** 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. Extensions will only be given in extreme circumstances, with prior notification and appropriate 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, other students, or any other source. 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

January 17: Course Introduction [no readings]

January 24: Social Processes of Arts and Media Production

Becker, Howard S. 1974. "Art as Collective Action." *American Sociological Review* 39(6):767-76.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "The Logic of the Process of Autonomization," pp. 112-4 in *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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

Mayer, Vicki. 2011. "Introduction" from *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Industry*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

January 31: Power, Labor, and Exploitation

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

Mayer, Vicki. 2011. Chapter 1, "Producers as Creatives," from *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Industry*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bradford, K. Tempest. 2017. "[Cultural Appropriation Is, in Fact, Indefensible.](#)" National Public Radio, June 28.

February 7: Fine Art

White, Cynthia and Harrison White, "Institutional Change in the French Painting World." In R. Wilson, ed., *The Arts in Society*, 253-70. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

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

Ryzik, Melena. 2015. "[The Guerrilla Girls, After 3 Decades, Still Rattling Art World Cages.](#)" *New York Times*, August 5.

February 14: Library Visit [no readings]

February 21: Cuisine

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

Harris, Deborah A. and Patti Giuffre. 2015. "[Breaking the Culinary Ceiling.](#)" Work in Progress, June 16.

Bland, Alastair. 2015. "[The Stark Racial Divide in Pay for Restaurant Workers.](#)" National Public Radio, October 22.

Simón, Yara. 2016. "[Six Times Anthony Bourdain Has Spoken Out About Latinos' Struggles in the Food Industry.](#)" Remezcla, September 23.

February 28: Fashion

Mears, Ashley. 2010. "Size Zero High-End Ethnic: Cultural Production and the Reproduction of Culture in Fashion Modeling." *Poetics* 38(1):21-46.

Collins, Jane L. 2003. Chapter 6, "Local Labor and Global Capital" from *Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power in the Global Apparel Industry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

March 7: Hollywood, Part 1

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

Quinn, Eithne. 2013. "Black Talent and Conglomerate Hollywood: Will Smith, Tyler Perry, and the Continuing Significance of Race." *Popular Communication* 11(3):196-210.

Bowe, John, Marisa Bowe, and Sabin Streeter. 2001. "Film Development Assistant" and "Film Director" from *Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Waxman, Sharon. 2005. "[They're in on the Joke: Hollywood's Funniest Clique.](#)" *New York Times*, March 27.

March 14: Hollywood, Part 2

- 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.
- Turner, Matt. 2015. "[The Simple Reasons Movie Studios Keep Putting Out Blockbuster Franchise Movies](#)." *Business Insider*, December 21.
- Guida, John. 2015. "[Are Blockbusters Destroying the Movies?](#)" *New York Times*, January 6.
- "[Streaming on Screens Near You](#)." *Economist*, August 20, 2016.

March 21: Popular music

- Frith, Simon. 2007. "Art vs. Technology: The Strange Case of Popular Music" from *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
- Frenette, Alexandre. 2013. "Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern." *Work and Occupations* 40(4):364-97.
- Albini, Steve. 2014. "[Steve Albini on the Surprisingly Sturdy State of the Music Industry](#)." *Guardian*, November 16.

April 4: Advertising

- Grabher, Gernot. 2002. "The Project Ecology of Advertising: Tasks, Talents and Teams." *Regional Studies* 36(3):245-62.
- Fisk, Catherine. 2016. Chapter 7, "Pencils for Hire and Mad Men in Grey Flannel Suits" from *Writing for Hire: Unions, Hollywood, and Madison Avenue*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Maheshwari, Sapna. 2016. "[Brands to Ad Agencies: Diversify or Else](#)." *New York Times*, September 30.
- . 2017. "[An Ad Woman at the Top of an Industry That She Thinks Still Has Far to Go](#)." *New York Times*, April 24.

April 11: Journalism

- Klinenberg, Eric. 2005. "Convergence: News Production in a Digital Age." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597(1): 48-64.
- Ostertag, Stephen F. and Gaye Tuchmann. 2012. "When Innovation Meets Legacy: Citizen Journalists, Ink Reporters, and Television News." *Information, Communication & Society* 15(6):909-31.
- Alterman, Eric. 2008. "[Out of Print](#)." *New Yorker*, March 31.

April 18: Social Media

- Saxenian, AnnaLee. 1994. Chapter 2, "Silicon Valley: Competition and Community," from *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ross, Andrew. 2013. "In Search of the Lost Paycheck" from *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, T. Scholz, ed. New York: Routledge.
- Mundy, Liza. 2017. "[Why is Silicon Valley So Awful to Women?](#)" *The Atlantic*, April.

April 25: User-Generated Online Content

- Schradie, Jen. 2011. "The Digital Production Gap: The Digital Divide and Web 2.0 Collide." *Poetics* 39(2):145-68.
- De Kosnik, Abigail. n/d. "[Interrogating 'Free' Fan Labor.](#)"
- Kim, Jin. 2012. "The Institutionalization of YouTube: From User-Generated Content to Professionally Generated Content." *Media, Culture & Society* 34(1):53-67.
- Losey, Alexa. 2016. "[How to be Instagram Famous.](#)" YouTube video.
- . 2017. "[How to be Instagram Famous, feat. Brandon Woelfel.](#)" YouTube video.