

**Sociology 160**  
**Sociology of Culture – Spring 2020**  
Professor G. Cristina Mora  
T, TH VLSB 2060; 2:00-3:30

This is a Lecture-Only Course. There are no Discussion Sections

Office Hours – Thursdays 3:45-5:00pm  
498 Barrows Hall  
Signup at: <https://wejoinin.com/sheets/vbjif>  
Or by appointment – [cmora@berkeley.edu](mailto:cmora@berkeley.edu)

**NOTE: I will provide “IN-CLASS OH” on the following dates: 2/27; 3/18; 4/16; 4/30**

This class will introduce students to the sociology of culture. We will begin by examining the theoretical debates on what culture is, where it comes from, and how it works. We will then move on to examine empirical sites of cultural transmission – schools, immigrant communities, and religious institutions. We will end by examining the production of culture perspective and considering how mass media is produced and connected to social change.

Some of the questions this course will answer:

- What are the reasons for studying culture?
- What makes some ideas seem timeless and inherently “true”?
- How is action influenced by culture?
- How does culture reinforce inequality?
- How do ideas travel and become global?
- What effect does media and mass consumption have on identities?
- How can culture effect social change?

**Grading**

**Exams**

- Midterm #1 – 25%
- Midterm #2 – 15%
- Final Exam – 35%

**Quizzes**

- 4 pop quizzes (top 3 scores accepted) – 15%**
- 2 pop attendance – 10%**

**Extra Credit – 10%**

**Poster Presentations on the last week of class. The posters should also include a 3-5 min presentation that will be given in the last week of class. Posters should connect the class readings – on any week(s) – to contemporary events. I encourage you to be creative in your presentations!**

**Alternative EC – 10-12 page double-spaced (1 inch margin, 12 pt font) research paper that connects the class readings to any major contemporary or historical event of your choice.**

**Papers should be thoroughly edited, with APA citations. Students are required to have visited the writing center at least once. Also worth 10% of your grade. Students who chose the paper route may not also provide a poster and vice-versa.**

### **Grievances**

If you wish to contest a grade, you must first submit a one-page statement explaining why you think the grading is unfair. Please note that I will not change any grade without first discussing it with your reader. Also consider that your grade may move upwards or downwards should I decide to re-grade.

### **Academic honesty**

It is your responsibility to check the code of academic integrity at <http://students.berkeley.edu/sas/conduct.shtml>. The standard penalty for violations of this code will be an F grade for the course

### **VIDEO/RECORDING POLICY**

**Students are not allowed to video record lectures or class discussion. It is prohibited to do so for any reason. California Law prohibits surreptitious video recording.**

**Laptops are allowed. However please be mindful that they can be more of a distraction than a study aide. I strongly encourage you to use a notebook (old school) instead of a laptop. Consider the following research:**

Mueller, Pam and Daniel Oppenheimer 2014. "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard; Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking" *Psychological Science* 25(6)

Key Findings:

1. Laptops distract students *and* nearby peers
2. Students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual learning than those who took notes longhand
3. Laptop note-taking seems to inhibit information processing (while encouraging transcription).

**Late Arrivals/Early Departures:** Please be considerate of our class community. If you are going to be late or if you will have to leave early, please do not make it a habit. Instructors can **always, always** tell which students do this regularly – in large part because these actions are incredibly distracting. I will send you an email reminding you of class and stop and start times if I find that you do this regularly. A second email will entail a **drop in your grade**.

### **Readings**

There are no required books for the course. **All readings are available on BCourses.** Note that **you are required to bring the readings for the week to class.** This means you can either print them beforehand, purchase them beforehand, or bring your laptops. A reader for this course is available at Copy Central on Telegraph Ave.

## **Week 1 and 2. COURSE INTRODUCTION**

### **January 21 Introduction**

This first date will simply provide an introduction to the sociology of culture. I'll have you get together with folks in your row for a group activity, we'll discuss the importance for studying culture, and I'll go over the syllabus. We will also focus on what the dualism is between structure and culture. In the last part of the class, we'll also have a short lecture from one of our Sociology Graduate Students on a related topic.

### **January 23 – What is Culture?**

Williams, Raymond. "Culture" in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana 1988.

Jack, Anthony 2016. "(No) Harm in Asking: Class, Acquired Cultural Capital, and Academic Engagement at an Elite University". *Sociology of Education* 89 (1):1-19.

What is the relationship between structure and agency? What dictates human action? What role does culture play in the tension between the individual and society, or individual and the group? How does culture relate to social inequality – both past and present? These large questions are present in any study of culture. As you read these two very different texts I want you to think about the connections. How might Williams and Jack be writing about the same concept, "culture"? How are they different?

## **Week Two – Culture and Power**

### **Jan 28- Culture and Hegemony**

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels "The German Ideology" P. 172-174 in Robert Tucker's *The Marx Engels Reader* New York: W.W.Norton

The reading for today look at the role of power. For Marx, culture can be subsumed in ideology and the concept of hegemony. While dense, the reading points to the essential role of power and inequality when thinking about how common beliefs are developed. Now in what ways is Marx still relevant today? And in what ways is Marx's account incomplete? Or even outdated for today's times?

### **January 30 – Naming and Power**

Bourdieu, Pierre "Naming as Power." (Cultural Sociology by Wray)

How does Bourdieu's idea of Power and Culture differ from that of Marx? Is there an Elite? Who performs the labor of representation? How can we, if at all, reconcile the two versions and understandings of power and culture?

### **Week 3 – What is a Social Construct?**

#### **February 4 – Social Construction Grand Theory**

Berger, Peter 1967. *The Sacred Canopy*. New York: Anchor Books p. 3-25

#### **February 6 – Social Construction of Racial Categories**

Mora, G. Cristina. 2014 “Cross Field Effects and Ethnic Categorization: Hispanic Panethnicity 1960-1990” *American Sociological Review*

Berger’s piece provides an abstract, socio-historic theory of social constructionism. While dense, it was – for its time – a groundbreaking piece that coherently put together the idea that our world is socially constructed – everything from gender categories to parenting practices to ideas about what a stop sign means, is socially constructed. It was very controversial when it debuted, in part because, at its extreme, the argument suggested that biology and science were also constructs. Mora’s piece, on the other hand, is much more contemporary and focused. It focuses on the social construction of a single category and reveals the monetary, political, and cultural impetus for the term. As you read the pieces together for the week – think about 1) the role that categories play in society 2) how social construction reifies categorical boundaries (who belongs to what category and what categories exist in the first place) and 3) what category violations might mean. Also, think about the connections between the Berger, Mora, and Bourdieu pieces generally.

### **Week 4. CULTURE AND ACTION**

#### **Feb 11 – Thinking about Culture, Action and Tool Kits**

Swidler, Ann. 1986 “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 51(2):273-286

#### **February 13 – Thinking about Motivation and Underlying Action**

Vaisey, Stephen 2009. Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action, *American Journal of Sociology*

For this week, we revisit the question of agency culture. To what extent does culture determine what we do? Is it absolute? If so, what parts of culture determine our actions and when? These are extremely difficult questions that lay at the heart of many social problems today at grand theory more generally. Consider, for example the issue of poverty. Today it is still very (very) common for political figures to argue that the poor simply do not have the right values or grew up with an oppositional culture – and that this explains their impoverished state. Swidler and Vaisey take two different approaches to thinking about the issue of culture and action. How are their approaches distinct? In what ways might they be similar? How do they lead to different research designs? And what are the long-term implications of thinking about culture in action in either Swidler or Vaisey frameworks? Last, what might we think about the role of structure?!!

## **WEEK 5. Habitus and Cultural Capital**

### **February 18- Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu, Pierre 1986. "Forms of Capital"

### **February 20 – Preschools as sites of Embodied Cultural Capital (Habitus)**

Tobin, Joseph et. al *Preschool in Three Cultures*. Ch. 1-3

This week we go back to Bourdieu and think about the concept of cultural capital. Some of this we found in Jack's work in Week 1, but for the rest of this week I want you to think about how cultural capital and habitus maybe found in pre-school. Indeed, it is in these early learning stages that, some social scientists argue, that some of the most consequential schooling happens. Ever heard of the preschool-teacher salary debates?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/09/magazine/why-are-our-most-important-teachers-paid-the-least.html>

Although the readings for this week are vastly different, I would like for you to make links across the texts. Think: how might different national contexts impart different forms of cultural capital and encourage different forms of habitus?

## **WEEK 6. Habitus, Cultural Capital**

**Feb 25** Tobin, *Preschool in Three Cultures* – Conclusion

Feb 27 Midterm Review – **In class office Hours**

## **WEEK 7. Midterm and Immigration**

### **March 3 – Midterm 1**

The midterm will cover all course material from the first week of class until now. The midterm questions/prompts will be provided at 2 and you will have until 3:30pm (normal class frame) to turn in your exam. The midterm will include short and long essay questions. Late exams will be penalized (-5 points for 5-20 minutes late; -10 pts 20-45 minutes late; -20 pts 45-1 hour late; -30 pts 1-1.5 hour late). Accommodations will be made for DSP students.

### **March 5 – Immigration and Assimilation**

Gans, Herbert 1979 "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* v. 2

Alba and Islam "The Case of the Disappearing Mexican Americans"

In the second part of this week we continue looking at sites of cultural transmission and debate. Perhaps some of the most potent cultural debates on the issue today have to do with who belongs

in the nation, and what immigrants represent to US culture. At the heart of this is the question of who assimilates and who does not. Gans provides one argument about how assimilation works this week. Alba, looking at Latinos specifically provides another. Over the next week we will read others that tackle different understandings of the culture, immigration and assimilation issue.

## **WEEK 8. CULTURE and IMMIGRATION.**

### **March 10 Immigration and Racial Stereotypes**

Chavez, Leo “Latino Threat” select pages

Claire Kim “Racial Triangulation”

### **March 12 – Adaptation and Identity**

Jimenez, Tomas 2008 “Mexican Immigrant Replenishment and the Continuing Significance of Race and Ethnicity” *American Journal of Sociology* 113:6 pg. 1527-56

Ng, Kwai 2002. “Seeking the Christian Tutelage: Agency and Culture in Chinese Immigrants’ Conversion to Christianity” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 63(2): 195-214

As you read these weeks together think about how culture, the way that they are manifested in stereotypes are reinforced throughout history. This provided the broad cultural background, often, against which individual identity is developed among racial minorities. Given these readings, how, then, should we think about identity formation? How should we think about the issue of nationalism and minority cultures in the context of historically embedded power relationships? Does Marx’s concept of Hegemony shed any light for us here?

## **WEEK 9 GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE – RELIGION**

### **March 17– How does culture become global? IN CLASS OH**

Schuerkens, Ulrike “The Sociological and Anthropological Study of Globalization and Localization”

### **March 19 – the Case of Global Pentecostalism**

Chesnut, Andrew 1997. *Born Again in Brazil: the Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press Ch. 1, 3, 5

What is so important about the globalization of culture? How consequential is this ubiquitous phenomenon? While the readings at the beginning of the week are a bit abstract they actually speak to fundamental issues of life and death for many today. Religion is just one site where the globalization of culture can lead to prosperity, poverty and/or even death for some. As you read

Schuerkens think about how localization can lead to unexpected consequences and the long-term effects of the spread of ideas.

## **Week 10. SPRING BREAK**

## **Week 11 Global Pentecostalism**

**March 31-**

**GOD SAVES UGANDA – KANOPY (Watch before Lecture/Review)**

Midterm Review

**April 2 - Midterm 2**

This week we will have lecture and I expect you to have read “God Saves Uganda” beforehand. As you contemplate the movie, I would like you to connect it to the Chesnut readings. Then I want you to think about the answer to the question: What is important about the study of culture? Could we have understood the ban on Uganda’s Same Sex Marriage without it? What are the consequences of the globalization of conservative Christian rhetoric.

## **WEEK 12 Marketing, Consumption and Social Media**

**April 7 Targets and Markets –**

Turow, Joseph 2005 “Audience Construction” AAPS

Lamont and Molnar “How Blacks Use Consumption to Shape their Collective Identity”

Henderson and Kelly 2011. “Food Advertising in the Age of Obesity”

What is the relationship between Capitalism, Markets, and Culture? Does what we sell/buy make who people are? Or are our identities driving what we sell/buy? Turrow has a complicated answer to this, and as you read him think about how much consumer goods have shaped us. Now is this about corporations or is this about people?

**April 9 - Social Media and Consumption**

Iquani and Schroeder #Selfie

Why is it important – at all – to study selfies? The authors argue that understanding selfies provides a window into how media has changed contemporary culture. Selfies then provide a window to understand how identity is developed, how capitalism is reinforced, and how

consumption is transformed. Now think about Bourdieu and his forms of capital – can selfies and social media be a form of capital? Think about Marx – what would Marx say about selfies?

### **Week 13. Constructing Reality: MAKING NEWS**

#### **April 14 – News, Objectivity and Neutrality**

Tuchman, Gaye 1972. “Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen’s Notions of Objectivity” *American Journal of Sociology* 70(4): 660-679

Thorenson “WikiNews”

Marchi. 2012 “Teens and the News”

#### **April 16 – News and Race – IN CLASS OH**

Entman, Robert and Andrew Rojecki 2000 *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* Chicago: University of Chicago Press p. 60-78

Dixon and Williams 2015. “The Changing Misrepresentation of Race and Crime”

How do you know what you know? Almost all theories on representative democracies and citizenship contend that an informed, active, and engaged citizenry is best for society. The news is part of this formula. But...in our contemporary era how do you know that what the news is providing is objective “truth”??? How do we stay informed and engaged citizens in this era? What is objectivity? And how does the social construction of the news coincide with deep inequalities, especially racial ones?

### **WEEK 14 - MEDIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

#### **April 21. Music and Social Movements**

Bianchi “Istanbul sounding like a revolution”

Roscigno, Vincent and William F. Danaher 2001. “Media and Mobilization: the Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency 1929-1934” *American Sociological Review* 66(1):21-48

Brooks, Daphne 2016. How #BlackLivesMatter Started a Music Revolution

#### **April 24. Social Media and Social Change**

Groschek and Koc-Michalska “Helping Populism Win? Social Media Usage, Filter Bubbles, and Support for Populist Candidates in the 2016 US Election Campaign.”

Sherman et. al “Student and Environmental Protests in Chile”



This week we are thinking about social change and culture – or the powerful ability of culture to make a fundamental difference in society. We will think about this in two ways – through the role of music and social movements and through the role of social media. Does music (and for that sake – art) really matter for social change? How can we tell? And in what ways can we measure that impact? Similarly, how can social media as a platform be an impetus for change?

### **Week 15 – TBD and Extra Credit Poster Presentations**

**April 28 – Lecture Catch Up; Extra Credit Poster Presentations**

**Final Review, In class OH – April 30**

This week will be mainly to tie up loose ends, elaborate on lectures that we might have cut short throughout the semester, and provide an overall view of the course. We will also reserve time in class to hear about the EC poster projects. They will be “pitched” to us as audience members. I will also assign a small, limited number of readings for further discussion based on class preferences.

**Final Exam due May 11**

The final exam prompt will be provided at the start of RRR week (May 4 @ 12 pm) and the exam will be due 12pm on May 11.

