Sociology 160: Sociology of Culture
Spring 2025

INSTRUCTOR   Jill Bakehorn, Ph.D. (she/they)
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                    Office Hours: Tuesdays + Thursdays 3:30-4:30pm on Zoom;
                                Wednesdays 9:00-10:00am in person
                    Sign-up: https://calendly.com/bakehorn

CLASS MEETING   Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:59pm
                    101 Morgan

Course Description

Sociology of Culture is a broad field of study encompassing every aspect of our lives, not just those things we typically think of like music and art, but also our clothes, food, language, ideologies, rhetoric, technology, gestures, and symbols; culture is all things created by humans. Culture gives our lives shape, allows us to predict social action, informs our behavior and patterns of thought, and imbues our lives with meaning.

In this class we will be focusing on two major concepts within the sociology of culture: **cultural capital** and **symbolic boundaries**. We will explore the importance of these concepts in a few key areas:
❖ Cultural production
❖ The creation of symbolic distinctions
❖ Identity formation
❖ Issues of power, hegemony, and the reproduction of inequality

We will spend the bulk of the course focusing on the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and class within the educational system. We will examine two very different high school contexts—one a working- and lower-middle class rural school and the other an elite college-preparatory boarding school—before moving on to exploring the college experience. We will look at how **cultural knowledge, skills, and embodiment** impact not only educational experiences but future prospects. Further, we will see how we can, both knowingly and unknowingly, reproduce inequality through our engagement with culture by how we define and **distinguish ourselves through symbolic boundaries**.

We will use this framework to answer questions like the following:

✦ What is cultural capital and what role does it play in educational achievement?
✦ How do educational institutions perpetuate inequality through institutional structures and interactional dynamics?
✦ How does cultural capital intersect with gender, class, sexuality, and race?
✦ How do symbolic boundaries help reinforce gender, racial, and class inequality?

Keep in mind this is a <u>sociology</u> course. **Sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior.** Sociology is built upon empirical data, not opinions. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. (If this doesn't sound familiar to you, or if you are unclear about the *sociological perspective*, please refer to an introductory sociology text for a refresher.)

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but have an open mind, be ready to have your understanding deepened, and demonstrate an understanding of the sociological perspective.

Course Goals

✤ Introduce you to fundamental concepts in cultural sociology
✤ Critically examine the role cultural capital plays in educational attainment
✤ Explore how gender, race, sexuality, and class intersect with cultural capital to affect outcomes in education
✤ Discuss symbolic boundaries and their role in shaping inequality
✤ Provide tools for understanding the role culture plays in structural inequality

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

❖ Explain how cultural capital operates to perpetuate inequality
❖ Identify key aspects of cultural capital in your own experience
❖ Explain the importance of symbolic boundaries and how they operate within interactional contexts to perpetuate inequality
❖ Apply concepts to the workings of major social institutions
❖ Write succinct papers that effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

Required Texts

Bettie, Julie. 2014. *Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity.* Berkeley, CA:
    University of California Press.

Khan, Shamus Rahman. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's
    School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College
    Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

The books are available as PDFs on bCourses

Course Reader: Individual files are available digitally on bCourses and a printed or
digital reader is available from [Copy Central](#).

Assignments

Reading Responses: These reading responses test your comprehension of course
readings as well as your ability to explain concepts **in your own words.** Because you will
not be able to rely on direct quotations of the material, you must focus on your own
understanding and articulation of the texts. You will get the opportunity to make
connections between the course materials and your experience of the social world.

Essay Exams: Midterm and final exam. You will be responsible for course readings,
lectures, and any media presented in the class. These exams will focus on your ability to
apply theories and to synthesize and make connections between various readings.

All work must be original (you cannot recycle work from other courses).

Weekly Memos: These assignments are designed to keep you motivated and engaged
with the course and to provide opportunities for you to check your comprehension in
preparation for the graded assignments. Assignments will be due on Mondays at
11:59pm (exceptions made for Monday holidays-the due date will be Tuesday).

These assignments give you a space to practice the skills you will later be graded on.
Complete 10 of the 12 assignments in order to get full credit (the lowest two scores will
be dropped). **Please note that these submissions are graded for completion, not
proficiency. In other words, we are not grading the accuracy of your submissions.**

Grade Breakdown

Reading Responses (30%)
Midterm (25%)
Final Exam (30%)
Weekly Memos (15%)

Refer to the grade scale on the right. Scores correspond to the following degrees of competence:
A: Outstanding degree of competence
B: Good degree of competence
C: Fair degree of competence
D: Basic degree of competence
F: Failure to demonstrate basic degree of competence

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link "View Feedback."**

GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	50%	F

Course Format and Policies

Readings

Complete readings prior to class to better prepare you to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. You will get a lot more out of lecture if you come prepared and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Email

Please put the class number/name in the subject of the email. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient. Please note that **I will respond to emails during normal business hours**.

Names and Pronouns

You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected. You can update this information now via CalCentral. You can refer to me as Prof. Bakehorn, Dr. Bakehorn, or Jill. My pronouns are she/they.

Grading Policies

Extensions
Extensions are provided for those with this accommodation from DSP. Please contact me prior to the due date for each assignment to discuss extensions.

If you become ill, have an emergency, caregiving responsibilities, or another circumstance beyond your control to plan for, reach out for an extension. I do not provide extensions simply because you have assignments due for other classes—this is something for which you can plan and prepare.

TurnItIn
Assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well as searching the internet.

Re-Grades
To **request a re-grade** of an assignment: first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the <u>substance</u> of your work, not about effort. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so. **Request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a <u>lower</u> score than originally given for that work.

**Note that re-grades are likely not possible on final exams due to the tight grading timeline and university grade reporting deadlines.

Academic Dishonesty

The University defines academic misconduct as "any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community" (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on papers and exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret. I am happy to help.

Use of AI

Many uses of generative AI software or Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, fall under the umbrella of **academic misconduct** as it involves an "action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage" and is not a representation of your own thoughts, critical thinking, and work. Academic integrity is a critical component of being a member of the university community and our ability to evaluate your work. We are evaluating your ability to synthesize and apply sociological concepts, not how well AI does this.

The use of generative AI tools is permitted in this course for the following activities:
• Brainstorming and finding information on your topic
• Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts
• Checking grammar and style

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:
• Writing a draft of an assignment
• Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments (for instance, you may not simply enter the essay prompt, hit generate, and turn in the work, in whole or in part, as your own)
• Generating or modifying content to evade plagiarism detection

I expect all work students submit for this course will be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments to support your learning. Doing your own work, without artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your achievement of the learning objectives.

Do not assume the information or analysis you receive via AI is accurate, unbiased, sufficient for the assignment, or meets the standards of the course, even if you only incorporate it partially and after substantial paraphrasing, modification and/or editing. AI-generated content may *not* provide appropriate or clear attribution to the author(s) of the original sources.

Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty. For example, ideas generated using ChatGPT should include a citation such as:

"Describe the symbolism of the green light in the book The Great Gatsby" prompt. ChatGPT, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.

Failure to acknowledge your use of AI text-generation tools is a violation of UC Berkeley's honor code. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

Office Hours

Please see Page 1 or this link for information about my office hours. These office hours are specifically for you. We can discuss readings, assignments, post-college plans, existential dread, how to access resources, letters of recommendation, any issues you are having, what is bringing you joy, whatever.

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation. You do not need to be struggling or have course-specific questions to go to office hours.

Student Support Services

Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

Student Learning Center

"The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the [SLC]() helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals."

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: [Survivor Support](). **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate]() at the Path to Care Center.

Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [the Basic Needs Center](). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [Calfresh](). If you are in need of food immediately, please contact the UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](). More information on resources can be found [here]().

Mental Health Resources

All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning like strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. UC Berkeley offers many services like [Recalibrate]() and [Student Mental Health]() that could help.

Course Outline

Complete readings by the day listed below. Course schedule is subject to change.

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, 1/21   **Welcome + Introductions**

Thursday, 1/23   **Introducing the Sociology of Culture**

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Culture: A Sociological View." Pp 11-24 in *Doing Things Together: Selected Papers*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Plagiarism Primer

Weeks Two-Four: Distinction

Tuesday, 1/28   **Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2004. "The Forms of Capital" Pp 15-29 in *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Sociology of Education*, edited by Stephen J. Ball. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Thursday, 1/30 +   **Cultural Capital in Action**
Tuesday, 2/4

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67(5):747-776.

Richards, Bedelia Nicola. 2020. "When Class is Colorblind: A Race-Conscious Model for Cultural Capital Research in Education." *Sociology Compass* 14(7):e12789.

Thursday, 2/6   **Symbolic and Social Boundaries**

Castañeda, Ernesto. 2019. "Boundary Formation: Nationalism, Immigration, and Categorical Inequality between Americans and Mexicans." Pp 47-71 in *Building Walls: Excluding Latin People in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Tuesday, 2/11   **Creating Distinctions**

Levine, Lawrence W. 1991. "William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in
    Cultural Transformation." *The American Historical Review* 89(1):34-66.

Thursday, 2/13   **Crossing Distinctions**

Peterson, Richard A. and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob
    to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):900-907.

Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "'Anything But Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical
    Dislikes." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):884-899.

<u>**READING RESPONSE 1**</u> **DUE FRIDAY, 2/21 AT 11:59PM**

<u>Weeks Five-Eight: Women Without Class</u>

Tuesday, 2/18   **Introducing *Women Without Class***

Julie Bettie: Chapter 1: Portraying Waretown High in *Women Without Class*

Thursday, 2/20   **Women and Class**

Julie Bettie: Chapter 2: Women Without Class in *Women Without Class*
Whole chapter is recommended, but pages 41-56 are required.

Tuesday, 2/25 +   **Reproducing Class and Race Inequality**
Thursday, 2/27

Julie Bettie: Chapter 3: How Working-Class Chicas Get Working-Class Lives in *Women
Without Class*

Tuesday, 3/4   ***The Graduates* Film Screening and Discussion**

Thursday, 3/6   **Cultural Capital, Habitus, and Borderwork**

Julie Bettie: Chapter 4: Hard-Living Habitus, Settled-Living Resentment in *Women
Without Class*

Tuesday, 3/11   **Border Work and Mobility**

Julie Bettie: Chapter 5: Border Work Between Classes in *Women Without Class*

Thursday, 3/13   **Concluding *Women Without Class***

Julie Bettie: Chapter 7: Conclusion in *Women Without Class*

Week Nine: Midterm

Tuesday, 3/18   **Midterm Review in Class**

Thursday, 3/20   **Work on Midterm—NO CLASS**

Take Home Midterm DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 21 AT 11:59PM

Week Ten: Spring Break: No Class

Eleven-Twelve: Privilege

Tuesday, 4/1   **Democratic Inequality and the New Elite**

Shamus Rahman Khan: Introduction—***Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School***

Shamus Rahman Khan: Chapter 1: The New Elite in *Privilege*

Thursday, 4/3   **Finding One's Place of Privilege**

Shamus Rahman Khan: Chapter 2: Finding One's Place in *Privilege*

Secret, Mosi. 2017. "'The Way to Survive It Was to Make A's.'" *The New York Times Magazine*. September 7.

Tuesday, 4/8   **Making Privilege Easy + Gender**

Shamus Rahman Khan: Chapter 3: The Ease of Privilege in *Privilege*

Shamus Rahman Khan: Chapter 4: Gender and the Performance of Privilege in *Privilege*

Thursday, 4/10   **Cultivating Omnivorousness + Conclusions**

Shamus Rahman Khan: Chapter 5: Learning *Beowulf* and *Jaws* in *Privilege*

Shamus Rahman Khan: Conclusion in *Privilege*

Weeks Thirteen-Fifteen: Paying For The Party

Tuesday, 4/15   **Introducing *Paying For the Party***

Armstrong and Hamilton: Preface and Introduction in *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*

Thursday, 4/17   **Meeting the Women**

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 1: The Women in *Paying for the Party*

READING RESPONSE 2 DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 18 AT 11:59PM

Tuesday, 4/22   **The Party School + The Party Scene**

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 2: The Party Pathway in *Paying for the Party*

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 3: Rush and the Party Scene in *Paying for the Party*

Thursday, 4/24   **Social Status and Isolation + The Party Pathway**

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 4: The Floor in *Paying for the Party*

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 5: Socialites, Wannabes, and Fit with the Party Pathway in *Paying for the Party*

Tuesday, 4/29   **The Blocked Mobility Pathway**

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 6: Strivers, Creaming, and the Blocked Mobility Pathway in *Paying for the Party*

Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2019. "I Was a Low-Income Student. Classes Weren't the Hardest Part." *The New York Times*. September 10.

Thursday, 5/1   **Post-College Trajectories + Conclusions**

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 8: College Pathways and Post-College Prospects in *Paying for the Party*

Armstrong and Hamilton: Chapter 9: Politics and Pathways in *Paying for the Party*

Week Sixteen: Reading, Review, Recitation Week

Monday, May 5—Friday, May 9

Final Exam: Due Thursday, 5/15 at 6:00pm