

Soci 8010: Seminar in the Sociology of Culture
Fall, 2008
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Course Syllabus

There is no more important and exciting subfield within sociology today than the area of culture. Due to a number of factors, including global economic trends, the rapid inclusion of much of the world within integrative communications networks such as the internet, and the increasing migration of people across national borders, the world's cultures are coming increasingly in contact. There are both positive and negative consequences of this contact, including the potential for greater understanding among the world's diverse peoples but also the tendency for more powerful cultures to dominate and threaten cultures of less powerful social groups. American society is a particularly great case for sociologists of culture to study since we are not only the most ethnically and religiously diverse society in the world but also arguably the most McDonaldized, or standardized, society on the planet as well.

Like sociology itself, the sociology of culture is an extraordinarily broad and diverse field. Without a major sociological journal devoted to culture, and lacking a standard textbook for undergraduate use (Griswold's brief but excellent *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* provides a useful discussion of the cultural diamond but does not attempt to survey the entire field), the culture area has developed over the past fifteen years more in accordance with the capitalistic ideal of an entrepreneurial-driven free market rather than a socialist planned economy. This lack of codification makes it difficult if not impossible to map the complete range of the field. Even if we could sketch a map of the major research areas, traditions, literatures, and key unanswered questions, the fifteen weeks – 30 classes (2250 minutes!) – we have in this semester would still not allow us to cover the entire breadth of the map. As in most undertakings of any significance, the construction of this seminar necessitated that choices be made as to which topics to include and which to set aside for another time. For this particular seminar our focus will be on *culture and aesthetics*. We will begin the seminar with an overview of the development of the sociology of culture itself but, following this, we will devote the remainder of the seminar to a discussion of literature, film, music, art, and food.

"Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning"

- Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture," [The Interpretation of Cultures](#).

Required Reading:

The required reading for this seminar takes the form of published articles and chapters, many of which are available online through the library's Electronic Journal Locator. The chapters that are

not available through JSTORS or other electronic sources I have placed on e-reserve. The password is **culture**.

Seminar Requirements.

There are three basic requirements for this seminar. The first is the requirement to participate in our seminar's discussion of the assigned readings. Each week one of us will take the lead in presenting an overview of the assigned readings for that week and leading a discussion on points emerging from the readings. These discussion points will ideally be developed a day or two in advance of our meeting (and distributed by email) in order to provide other seminar members an opportunity to think through the issues and develop responses prior to our meeting.

The second requirement is to develop and present to the seminar a draft of a paper that could be submitted for inclusion on the program of a professional meeting (such as the ASAs or SSSs). The topic for the paper should be in one of the areas of emphasis of our seminar (art, music, film, literature, or food). The draft should be approximately 10-25 pages. Although the final version of this paper is not due until Thursday, December 1st, students will begin presenting their papers to the seminar beginning on Tuesday, November 18th.

The third requirement is a take-home final exam. The exam will include several integrative essay questions, from which students will choose two to answer.

The paper and seminar participation each counts 40% of the final course grade, with the exam making up the final 20% of the grade. Concerning the classwork part of the grade, this will be based on the student's overall contribution to the seminar, including the days in which the student leads the seminar discussion and, more important, the more typical days in which the student is participating in discussions led by others. With respect to participation, what I am looking for is regular attendance and a determined effort to contribute in a meaningful way during our discussions. At the end of each session, I will provide a brief overview of the readings for the following session and a framework for the discussion we will have of those readings. Careful reading, thoughtful reflection, and a willingness to participate in the discussion of the readings are sought from all who are enrolled in the class. I will provide two separate evaluations of participation, the first of which will be near the midpoint of the term and the second during the final week of class.

A final point concerning participation. Please feel free to speak your mind in class. You are free to disagree with and question my views, those of other seminar members and, needless to say, those of the writers we will be reading. Also, if there is anything on your mind that you would like me to address, please let me know either in person, through e-mail, or however you wish.

Course Calendar

Aug. 19. *Getting Started*.

Griswold, Wendy. 2005. "The sociology of culture." Pp. 254-266 in C. Calhoun, C. Rojek, and B. Turner (eds.). The Sage Handbook of Sociology. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Part One. General Theoretical Issues.

Aug. 21. *The Re-emergence of Culture in American Sociology*

Roger Friedland and John Mohr. 2004. "The cultural turn in American sociology." Pp. 1-39 in Matters of Culture: Cultural Sociology in Practice. N.Y.: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Sewell, William. 1999. "The concept(s) of culture." In Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds) Beyond the Cultural Turn. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

Aug. 26. *The Strong Cultural Program*.

Alexander, Jeffrey and Philip Smith. 2003. "The strong program in cultural sociology: Elements of a structural hermeneutics." Pp. 11-26 in The Meaning of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology. N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. And Jason L. Mast. 2006. "Introduction: Symbolic action in theory and practice: The cultural pragmatics of symbolic action." Pp. 1-28 in J. C. Alexander, B.Giesen, and J. L. Mast (Eds.). 2006. Social Performance, Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual. Cambridge Univ. Press.

Philip Smith. 1998. "The new American cultural sociology: An introduction." Pp. 1-17 in The New American Cultural Sociology. N.Y.: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Aug. 28. *Cultural Capital and Cultural Tastes*, Pt. 1.

Lamont, Michele and Annette Lareau. 1988. "Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments." Sociological Theory. 6: 153-168.

Peterson, Richard A. and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore." American Sociological Review. 61: 900-907.

Sept. 2. *Cultural Capital and Cultural Tastes*, Pt. 2.

Lizardo, Omar . 2006. "How cultural tastes shape personal networks." American Sociological Review. 71 (Oct.): 778-807.

Chan, Tak Wing and John H. Goldthorpe. 2007. "Social status and newspaper readership." American Journal of Sociology. 112: 1095-1134.

Emmison, Michael. 2003. "Social class and cultural mobility: Reconfiguring the omnivore thesis." American Journal of Sociology. 39: 211-230.

Sept. 4. *Performing Culture*.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy," Sociological Theory, 22 (4): 527-573.

Giesen, Bernhard. 2006. "Performing the sacred: A Durkheimian perspective on the performative turn in the social sciences." Pp. 325-367.

Part Two: Literature and Reading.

Sept. 9. Bourdieu's Influence.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "Flaubert's point of view." Pp. 192-211 in Randal Johnson (ed.) The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature. Cambridge: Polity.

Eastwood, Jonathan. 2007. "Bourdieu, Flaubert, and the sociology of literature." Sociological Theory. 25 (June): 149-169.

de Glas, Frank. 1992. "Authors' oeuvres as the backbone of publishers' lists: Studying the literary publishing house after Bourdieu." Poetics 25: 379- 397.

Sept. 11. Writers.

Blom, Mattias Bolk us. 2002. "Tracing literary careers: four case studies from the 1940 cohort of fiction debut writers in the United States." Poetics. 30 (Oct.-Dec.): 365-380.

Radway, Janice. 1990. "The scandal of the middlebrow: The Book-of-the-Month Club, class fracture, and cultural authority." South Atlantic Quarterly. 89 (Fall): 703-736.

Sept. 16. Novels

DeVault, Marjorie L. 1990. "Novel reading: The social organization of interpretation." American Journal of Sociology. 95 (Jan.): 887-921.

Corse, Sarah M. 1995. "Nations and novels: Cultural politics and literary use." Social Forces. 73: 1279-1308.

Griswold, Wendy. 1981. "American Character and the American Novel: An Expansion of Reflection Theory in the Sociology of Literature." American Journal of Sociology, 86 (Jan): 740-765.

Sept. 18. Critics.

Ekelund, Bo G.. 2002. "'The age of criticism': debating the decline of literature in the US, 1940-2000." Poetics. 30 (Oct.-Dec.): 327-340.

Witkin, Robert. 2006. "Chewing on Clement Greenberg: Abstraction and the Two Faces of Modernism." Pp. 35-50 in Ron Eyerman and Lisa McCormick (eds), Myth, Meaning and Performance. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Mallard, Gregoire. 2005. "Interpreters of the literary canon and their technical instruments: The case of Balzac criticism." American Sociological Review. 70 (Dec.): 992-1010.

Sept. 23. *More on Reading and the Novel*

Radway, Janice. 1989. "The Book-of-the-Month Club and the general reader: On the uses of "serious" fiction." Pp. 154-176 in P. Desan, P.P Ferguson, and W. Griswold (eds.). Literature and Social Practice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Radway, Janice. 1984. "Interpretive communities and variable literacies: The functions of romance reading." Daedalus. Summer.

Griswold, Wendy. 1989. "Formulaic fiction: The author as agent of elective affinity." Comparative Social Research. 1: 75-130.

Part Three. *Art*

Sept. 25. *Art Worlds*

Baumann, Shyon. 2007. "A general theory of artistic legitimation: How art worlds are like social movements." Poetics 35 (Feb.) 47-65.

Becker, Howard S. 1982. "Art worlds and collective activity." Pp. 1-39 in Art Worlds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sept. 30. *Modern and Postmodern Art*

Halle, David. 1992. "The audience for abstract art: Class, culture, and power." Pp. 131-151 in Michele Lamont and Marcel (eds.) Cultivating Differences. Chicago.

Witkin, Robert W. 1997. "Constructing a Sociology for an Icon of Aesthetic Modernity: Olympia Revisited." Sociological Theory. 15, No. 2. (Jul.): 101-125.

Jameson, Fredric. 1984. "Postmodernism and the cultural logic of late capitalism." New Left Review 146 (Jul/Aug): 53-92.

Oct. 2. *Bourdieu on Art*

Pierre Bourdieu. 1993. "Outline of a sociological theory of art perception." Pp. 216-237 in Randal Johnson (ed.) The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature. Cambridge: Polity.

Pierre Bourdieu. 1993. "Manet and the institutionalization of anomie." Pp. 238-253 in Randal Johnson (ed.) The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature. Cambridge: Polity.

Oct. 7. *Classifying and Marketing Art*

O'Neil, Kathleen M. 2008. "Bringing art to market: The diversity of pricing styles in a local art market." Poetics. 36 (Feb.): 94-113.

Dimaggio, Paul. 1987. "Classification in art." American Sociological Review. 52: 440-455.

Adams, Jacqueline. 2005. "When art loses its sting: The evolution of protest art in authoritarian contexts." Sociological Perspectives. 48 (Winter): 531-558.

Part Four: *Film*

Oct. 9. *Auteur Discourse*

Allen, Michael Patrick and Anne E. Lincoln. 2004. "Critical discourse and the cultural consecration of American films." Social Forces. 82: 871-893. Available at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social_forces/v082/82.3allen.html

Hicks, Alexander and Velina Petrova. 2006. "*Auteur* discourse and the cultural consecration of American films." Poetics. 34: 180-203.

Oct. 14. *Interpreting Film*

Fredric Jameson. 1992. "Reification and utopia in mass culture." In Signatures of the Visible. N.Y.: Routledge. Originally published in Social Text 1 (Winter, 1979).

Giroux, Henry A. 2002. "Brutalized bodies and emasculated politics: *Fight Club*, Consumerism and Masculine Violence." Pp. 258-288 in Breaking in to the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics. Blackwell Publishers.

Wartenberg, Thomas E. 1999. "Politics and race in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*." Pp. 111-130 in Unlikely Couples: Movie Romance as Social Criticism. Boulder, CO: Westview.

October 16. *Critics and Reviewers*

Baumann, Shyon. 2002. "Marketing, cultural hierarchy, and the relevance of critics: film in the United States, 1935-1980." Poetics 30 (Aug.): 243-262.

Dowd, James J. 2002. "Films and utopia: The Culture Industry Revisited." Current Perspectives in Social Theory. 22: 99-129.

October 21. *Film Genre*

Dowd, James J. and Nicole R. Pallotta. 2000. "The end of romance: The demystification of love in the postmodern age." Sociological Perspectives. 43 (Winter): 549-580.

Giroux, Henry A.. 1999. "Children's culture and Disney's animated films." Pp. 83-121 in The Mouse That Roared. Rowman & Littlefield.

Dowd, James J. 2008. "Patriotic Gore: War Movies and the American Flag." Under review.

Part Five: *Music*

Oct. 23. *Sociological Approaches to Music*.

Dowd, Timothy J. . 2004. "Production perspectives in the sociology of music." Poetics. 32 (June - August): 235-246.

Grazian, David . 2004. "Opportunities for ethnography in the sociology of music." Poetics. 32 (June - August): 197-210.

Oct. 28. *Blues and Jazz*

Becker, Howard. 2004. "Jazz places." Pp. 17-30 in Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson (eds.). Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Grazian, David. 2004. "The Symbolic Economy of Authenticity in the Chicago Blues Scene." Pp. 31-46 in Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson (eds.). Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Witkin, Robert. 2000. "Why Did Adorno Hate Jazz?" Sociological Theory. 18 (1): 145-170.

Oct. 30. *The Classical Canon*

Dowd, Timothy J., Kathleen Liddle, Kim Lupo and Anne Borden. 2002. "Organizing the musical canon: the repertoires of major U.S. symphony orchestras, 1842 to 1969." Poetics 30 (May): 35-61.

Glynn, Mary Ann. 2002. "Chord and discord: organizational crisis, institutional shifts, and the musical canon of the symphony." Poetics 30 (May): 63-85.

Nov. 4. *Beethoven's Vienna*.

DeNora, Tia. 2002. "Music into action: performing gender on the Viennese concert stage, 1790-1810." Poetics 30 (May): 19-33.

DeNora, Tia. 1991. "Musical Patronage and Social change in Beethoven's Vienna." American Journal of Sociology, 97 (2): 310-346.

DeNora, Tia. 2006. "Music as Agency in Beethoven's Vienna." Pp. 103-120 in R. Eyerman and L. McCormick (eds), Myth, Meaning and Performance: Toward a New Cultural Sociology of the Arts, Paradigm Press.

Part Six: Food

Nov. 6. Ferguson Defines the Field

Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst. 1998. "A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in 19th-Century France." American Journal of Sociology. Volume 104, No. 3, (November).

Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst and Sharon Zukin. 1995. "What's cooking?" Theory and Society 24 (2): 193-199.

Nov. 11. Identity and Authenticity

de la Pradelle, Michèle. 2006. "Pumpkins are rounder at the market;" and "Let me have some pâté, but your pâté." Chapters 7 & 8 in Market Day in Provence. University of Chicago press.

Lu, Shun and Gary Alan Fine. 1995. "The presentation of ethnic authenticity: Chinese food as a social accomplishment." Sociological Quarterly 36 (3): 535-553.

Rao, Hayagreeva, Philippe Monin, and Rodolphe Durand. 2003. "Institutional change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle cuisine as an identity movement in French gastronomy." American Journal of Sociology. 108 (Jan.): 795-843.

Nov. 13. Writers, Critics, and Classifiers.

Wei, Zhao. 2005. "Understanding classifications: Empirical evidence from the American and French wine industries." Poetics 33 (June-August): 179-200.

Johnston, Josée and Shyon Baumann. 2007. "Democracy versus distinction: A study of omnivorousness in gourmet food writing." American Journal of Sociology. 113 (July): 165-1204.

Part Seven. Presentations

Nov. 18-20. Presentations.

Nov. 24 – 28. No Classes: Thanksgiving break.

Dec. 2. – 4. *Presentations.*

Dec. 9. No class: M-W-F schedule in effect.