



SOCIOLOGY 572: SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

FALL 2014

THURSDAY, 1:00-2:50PM

INSTRUCTOR: HANA SHEPHERD

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OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAY 3-4PM, DAVISON HALL ROOM 126

Course Description The topics of study in the sociology of culture are incredibly vast—meaning, symbols, classification, narratives, beliefs, inequality, organizations, cultural products and more— and these topics and approaches to them cluster into subgroups. The sociology of culture also interfaces with other disciplines—anthropology, psychology, economics, even ecology— in more and less productive ways. This course will familiarize you with many, but not all, of the subfields in cultural sociology. I'll try to make clear what kind of work is missing from this syllabus and what conceptualizations of culture I find most useful. We'll focus particularly on empirical work in the sociology of culture, and the theoretical traditions most responsible for that empirical work. One of the challenges of the field is that people use very different conceptualizations of culture and/or focus on very different types of cultural elements. There is also enormous methodological variation in the field. We'll try to sort through all of these differences in our readings.

There are also many ways to organize and group readings together; many of our readings could fit in multiple categories. Keep in mind that this is only one way among many to think about the readings; considering other possible groupings of readings may help you make sense of this literature. Please pay particular attention to the definitions of culture being used in the empirical examples.

Learning Goals

In this course, you will:

- Think theoretically and critically about the use of the concept of culture in sociological explanations
- Assess the validity of different methodological approaches to the empirical study of culture
- Develop opinions on the approach to culture you find most compelling and useful
- Learn the contours of the field of the sociology of culture and its intersections with other disciplines
- Identify significant and novel research questions related to the sociology of culture or applying cultural approaches to other literatures

You will work towards these goals by:

- Participating in in-depth weekly discussions of assigned readings
- Generating discussion by doing short presentations and helping to lead the class for a session or two
- Writing memos that critically assess and synthesize the readings and generate new research ideas
- Writing a final research paper or research proposal

Structure of the Course All readings are required and should be completed before class. I recommend doing the readings in the order indicated on the syllabus, if at all possible. While you are doing the readings, keep in mind: a) what question is addressed by the author(s)? b) what is the significance of that question for key issues in the field?, c) what are competing answers to that question?, d) how well does the author address that question, in terms of logic and methodology?, e) what would be a different, valid and maybe preferable way of addressing the same question?

I'll provide an overview of the readings and the theme for the week at the beginning of class and the rest of the class will be discussion that everyone is expected to contribute to. I'll also have you trade off doing mini-presentations each week: when presenting, individuals will be responsible for short summaries and a couple of discussion questions to start the conversation.

All reading material is either available on the Sakai site or will be shortly. For every reading I chose, there are a dozen others I could have selected. To give you a sense of the breadth of the field, take a look at the document on Sakai: "Sociology of Culture Additional Readings." If you are particularly interested in a type of reading or topic, let me know and I can point you to more readings.

Before each class, you'll submit a 600-800 word memo on the readings. Please discuss at least three of the readings in your memos. The memos are a chance for you to consolidate your thoughts on the readings, so please don't use the space for summaries. Instead, make connections between readings or themes, point out conflicts or convergences, discuss implications for research, try out theoretical arguments. You'll submit these via Sakai. You can choose which weeks you skip, but please complete 10 memos during the semester. I'll have you turn in a draft or very detailed outline of your proposal before it is due so I can provide feedback.

Summary of Grading

Discussion Participation	25%
Response Memos (10)	40%
Research Proposal (due Dec. 15)	35%
TOTAL	100%

Class Policies Because much of this class is discussion-based, to encourage the free exchange of ideas, the classroom should be safe, supportive, and productive. To facilitate such an environment, all class participants, students and faculty, must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Please come talk with me about these issues at any point.

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an

atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

READINGS

Week One Perspectives on Culture and Cultural Explanation

The first three readings provide theoretical perspectives on the concept of culture, and the final two readings are examples of “lay understandings” of culture or forms of cultural explanation. As you do these readings, keep in mind what these readings suggest about what a cultural explanation is NOT: what are the alternatives to cultural explanations?

Reading for Thursday September 4:

William H. Sewell. 1999. “The Concept(s) of Culture,” in Victoria Bonnell and Lynn E. Hunt (eds.) *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 35-61.

Kevin N. Laland and Bennett G. Galef. 2009. “Introduction” in K. N. Laland & B. G. Galef (eds.) *The Question of Animal Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-18.

Clifford Geertz. 1973. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-33. READ: Sections 1 & 2, skim the rest.

Benjamin Weiser and Michael Schwirtz. Aug. 4, 2014. “U.S. Inquiry Finds a ‘Culture of Violence’ Against Teenage Inmates at Rikers Island.” *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/nyregion/us-attorneys-office-reveals-civil-rights-investigation-at-rikers-island.html>

Bruce McCall, May 20 1985, “In the New Canada, Living is a Way of Life.” *New Yorker*, p.36.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1985/05/20/in-the-new-canada-living-is-a-way-of-life>

Week Two Culture and Behavior

We’ll talk about theories and empirical examples attempting to explain behavior and action, and the role of culture in shaping behavior. The first two readings are theoretical perspectives and the other three readings are empirical examples. Pay attention to the authors’ conceptualization of culture in each of these.

Reading for Thursday September 11:

Ann Swidler. 1983. “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies.” *American Sociological Review* 51 (2): 273-286.

Michael Schudson. 1989. “How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media studies on the Efficacy of Symbols.” *Theory and Society* 18: 153-80.

Margaret Frye. 2012. "Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity." *American Journal of Sociology* 117: 1565-1624. [This article is very long—make sure you read the intro and discussion well and skim the evidence parts.]

Karin Martin. 1998. "Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools," *American Sociological Review* 63: 494-511.

Howard Becker. 1953. "Becoming a Marihuana User," *American Journal of Sociology* 59: 235-242.

Week Three Culture and Interaction

Reading for Thursday September 18:

Georg Simmel, "The Web of Group Affiliations." Trans., Reinhard Bendix. Selection: Pp. 127-43 in *Conflict and The Web of Group Affiliations*. N.Y.: Free Press, 1955.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
SELECTION.

Gary Alan Fine. 2012. "Group Culture and the Interaction Order: Local Sociology on the Meso-Level." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 159-79.

Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 735-94.

Zou, Xi, Kim-Pong Tam, Michael W. Morris, Sau-lai Lee, Ivy Y. Lau, and Chi-yue Chiu. 2009. "Culture as Common Sense: Perceived Consensus Versus Personal Beliefs as Mechanisms of Cultural Influence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97: 579-597.

Week Four Elements of Culture: Attitudes, Morals, Scripts, Frames, Emotions

Reading for Thursday September 25:

Paul DiMaggio. 1997. "Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 263-287.

Stephen Vaisey. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Theory of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114: 1675-1715.

Jonathan Haidt, Koller, S., & Dias, M. (1993). Affect, culture, and morality, or is it wrong to eat your dog? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 613-628.

Arlie Hochschild. 1979. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 85:551-75.

Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot. 1999. "The Sociology of Critical Capacity." *European Journal of Social Theory* 2: 359-77.

Polletta, F. and M. Kai Ho. 2006. "Frames and Their Consequences." In *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Studies*, edited by R. E. Goodin and C. Tilly. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ferree, Myra Marx. 2003. "Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debate in the United States and Germany." *American Journal of Sociology* 109: 304-44.

Week Five Rituals and Classification

Reading for Thursday October 2:

Durkheim, Emile. 1995[1912]. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press. SELECTIONS.

Randall Collins. 2004. "The Program of Interaction Ritual Theory." Chapter 1 in *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Daniel McFarland. 2004. "Resistance as a Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters." *American Journal of Sociology* 109: 1249-1318. [This is another very long one—again make sure you read the intro carefully and skim the evidence.]

Douglas Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Pp. 1-10, 20-23, 36-38, 42-44, 51-58.

Eviatar Zerubavel. "The Social Division of the World," Pp. 53-67 in *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Martin, John Levi. 2000. "What Do Animals Do All Day? The Division of Labor, Class Bodies, and Totemic Thinking in the Popular Imagination." *Poetics* 27: 195-231.

Week Six Inequality and Tastes

Reading for Thursday October 9:

Gramsci, Antonio. 1990. "Culture and Ideological Hegemony." Pp. 47-54 in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, edited by Jeffrey Alexander and Steven Seidman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pierre Bourdieu. 1987 [1979]. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Selections: Introduction, pp. 1-7; Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles, pp. 165-222.

Lamont, Michèle, and Annette Lareau. 1988. "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Development." *Sociological Theory* 6: 153-168.

Paul DiMaggio and Toqir Mukhtar. 2004. "Arts Participation as Cultural Capital in the United States, 1982-2002: Signs of Decline?" *Poetics* 32: 169-94.

Lauren Rivera. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77: 999-1022.

Nicole M. Stephens, Stephanie A. Fryberg, Hazel Rose Markus, Camille S. Johnson, and Rebecca Rovarrubias. 2012. "Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic Performance of First-Generation College Students." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102 (6): 1178-1197.

Bernstein, Basil. 1975. "Social Class, Language and Socialization." Pp. 170-189 in *Class, Codes, and Control: Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*. New York: Schocken Books.

Week Seven Networks

Reading for Thursday October 16:

Mark A. Pachucki and Ronald L. Breiger. 2010. "Cultural Holes: Beyond Relationality in Social Networks and Culture." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 205-24.

Omar Lizardo. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." *American Sociological Review* 71:778-807.

Paul McLean. 1998. "A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks, and Political Culture." *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 51-91.

Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro. 2005. "Collaboration and Creativity: Exploring the Small World Problem." *American Journal of Sociology* 111: 447-504.

Week Eight Economic Exchange

Reading for Thursday October 23:

Viviana Zelizer. 1981. "The Price and Value of Children: The Case of Children's Insurance." *American Journal of Sociology* 86: 1036-56.

Viviana Zelizer. 2000. "The Purchase of Intimacy." *Law & Social Inquiry* 25: 817-48.

Olav Velthuis. 2003. "Symbolic Meanings of Prices: Constructing the Value of Contemporary Art in Amsterdam and New York Galleries." *Theory and Society* 32: 181-215.

Alya Guseva, and Akos Rona-Tas. 2001. "Uncertainty, Risk, and Trust: Russian and American Credit Card Markets Compared," *American Sociological Review* 66: 623-46.

Alena V. Ledeneva. 2008. "Blat and Guanxi: Informal Practices in Russia and China," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50: 1-27.

Week Nine Organizations and Institutions

Reading for Thursday October 30:

Klaus Weber and M. Tina Dacin. 2011. "The Cultural Construction of Organizational Life: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Organizational Science* 22 (2): 287-298.

Dobbin F. 1994. Cultural models of organization: the social construction of rational organizing principles. In *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. D Crane, pp. 117-42. Cambridge: Blackwell.

John W. Meyer, John Boli and George M. Thomas. 1994. "Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account." Pp. 9-27 in *Environment and Organizations: Structural Complexity and Individualism*, ed. W. Richard Scott and John W. Meyer. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Lynn Zucker. 1977. "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence." *American Sociological Review* 42: 726-743.

Clemens, Elisabeth. 1993. "Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women's Groups and the Transformation of U.S. Politics, 1890-1920." *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 755-98.

Week Ten Cultural Production and Reception

Reading for Thursday November 6:

Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 311-34.

Becker, Howard. 1974. "Art as collective action." *American Sociological Review*, 39: 767-776.

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 Sociological Review* 59: 1287-1313.

C. Clayton Childress and Noah Friedkin. 2011. "Cultural Reception and Production: The Social Construction of Meaning in Book Clubs." *American Sociological Review* 1-24.

Pescosolido, Bernice, Elizabeth Grauerholz, and Melissa Milkie. 1997. "Culture and Conflict: The Portrayal of Blacks in U.S. Children's Picture Books through the Mid- and late-Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 62: 443-64.

JoEllen Shively, "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films Among American Indians and Anglos," *American Sociological Review* 57 (1992): 725-34.

Griswold W. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology* 92: 1077-1117.

Week Eleven Cultural Change

Reading for Thursday November 13:

Hannerz, Ulf. 1995. *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431-454.

Lieberson, Stanley. 2000. *A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. SELECTIONS.

Kaufman, Jason. 2004. "Endogenous Explanations in the Sociology of Culture." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 335-57.

Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson. 2005. "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket." *American Sociological Review* 70: 82-110.

Week Twelve Cultural Analysis

Reading for Thursday November 20:

John Mohr. 1998. "Measuring Meaning Structures." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 345-70.

Ron Jepperson and Ann Swidler. 1994. What Properties of Culture should We Measure? *Poetics* 22: 359-71.

Michele Lamont. 2002. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. SELECTIONS.

King-to Yeung. 2005. "What Does Love Mean? Exploring Network Culture in Two Network Settings." *Social Forces* 84: 391-420.

Dov Cohen, Richard E. Nisbett, Brian F. Bowdle, and Norbert Schwarz. 1996. "Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An 'Experimental Ethnography.'" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70: 945-960.

Week Thirteen No Class (November 27) – Draft of Research Proposal or Paper Due

Week Fourteen Culture and Action Debates

Reading for Thursday December 11:

Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 43: 178-209.

Plus responses from: Doug Maynard, Karen Cerulo, Steve Vaisey, Paul DiMaggio, and Jerolmack and Khan's reply (all in same volume)