

# CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

## 920: 571/703:01

*Professor Karen A. Cerulo, Department of Sociology*

*Tuesday –1:00PM-3:40PM  
Davison Hall Seminar Room—Rm. 127*

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday: 3:45-4:45PM ...*and by appointment*

### OBJECTIVES

Welcome to Cultural Sociology, one of the most vibrant and steadily growing subfields in sociology! This course is designed to familiarize you with the field and review the various perspectives and approaches within it.

We begin the course by asking: What is culture? The question may seem straightforward, but there is enormous variety in how scholars identify the concept of culture and its components. The same is true for the scholars who theorize and measure culture and we will discuss these varying ideas. Most importantly, we will ask: How does culture apply? By doing so, we can explore ways to productively use cultural sociology in sociological research more generally, making it relevant in fields that may not currently consider culture a core building block in research.

By examining a wide variety of approaches to cultural sociology, you will get a sense of the most important theorists, questions and debates driving the field. While the course will attend to the theoretical roots of the field, I will prioritize contemporary works to help familiarize you with the current pulse of this exciting and ever-changing subfield.

### BOOKS

All readings for this course will be posted on Sakai or available on the web (link included in the syllabus). To access Sakai readings:

- Go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in. Our course site, identified by our course number, should immediately pop up as one of your Sakai locations.
- Look at the bar on the left side of the screen and click on “Resources.”
- Look for the reading using the author’s last name. If I use an author more than once, I’ll have name and topic listed.

**Note:** If you have trouble accessing the Sakai site, please contact them at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or **848.445.8721**. Sakai Help Desk representatives are available **Monday through Friday 8:00AM-6:00PM**. Limited evening, night, and weekend coverage is also provided by NBCS Operations Staff outside of our help desk hours. Anything that the Operations Staff cannot answer is forwarded to OIRT Staff.

## CLASS ENVIRONMENT

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.

Knowing this, our classroom should be considered a “safe place” for everyone. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion and debate related to the readings and topics scheduled for the class provided that one’s views are not intended to provoke, insult, or damage another member of the class or the instructor. To facilitate such an environment, all of us (students and instructor) must act with mutual respect and common courtesy.

### Some additional things to note:

- *All reading and comments must be completed prior to class.* Our classes revolve around discussion. Therefore, familiarity with the material is essential.
- We are here to constructively support one another. Please take care to refrain from cruel, thoughtless or sarcastic feedback in your written or oral comments. Think of it this way ... you do not enjoy thoughtless feedback, so don’t give it to others.

## LEARNING GOALS

In this course, you will:

- Master various definitions and theories of culture
- Become familiar with different ways of measuring culture
- Consider ways to apply culture in sociological explanations
- Consider the ways in which cultural sociology intersects with other sociological subfields and other disciplines

## ACHIEVING THE LEARNING GOALS-- DESIGN OF THE CLASS

There are several requirements for the course:

- 1) Read the works assigned for the course. *All reading and comments must be completed prior to class.* Our classes revolve around discussion. Therefore, familiarity with the material is essential.
- 2) Each week, you must produce a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced reaction to the readings. The assignment should briefly summarize the themes of the readings and the debates the readings raise; you should also share your critiques of the readings and provide one or two questions that you will raise in class discussion. Your comments must be emailed *to me* by Monday at noon—again, *please be on time*. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 20% of your grade.**

*Achieving the Learning Goals, on the next page*

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3) Each class will have an “applications” portion. Over the course of the semester, each student is expected to lead a class discussion on that week’s application reading. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 20% of your grade.**

4) You are expected to attend every class and fully participate in class discussions of the paper. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 10% of your grade.**

5) Each student must propose a research topic and write a research proposal. The topic may be in any substantive area, but the project must utilize theories/concepts from the course.

The proposal should follow this structure:

- a) State your topic and unfold its relevance to cultural sociology. What contemporary themes does your question address ... what gaps in the literature does it fill ... what puzzles does it solve? (This section should be about 2-3 pages in length)
- b) Discuss 6-10 relevant articles or books that inform your topic of inquiry. You may use readings we have covered in class or create a list of readings on your own. (This section of your proposal should be about 6-10 pages in length.)
- c) Explain the method you will use to study your topic—i.e. interviews, focus groups, survey method, content analysis, ethnography, etc. Explain how you will execute the project. I will be especially impressed if you can identify a viable funding source for your project. (This section should be about 2-4 pages in length)
- d) Provide a reference list at the end of your proposal.

Overall, you can see that your final product will be about 10-18 pages in length. If you are taking the course for credit, **this portion of the course will account for 50% of your grade.**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### **MTG. 1/JAN. 22:** *Introduction to the Class*

*First, we'll do some "bookkeeping": review the syllabus, schedule presentations, etc. Then, we will discuss some basic definitions of culture and familiarize ourselves with different types of culture: nondeclarative or "know how" culture, declarative or "know that" culture (both of which are elements of personal culture), and public culture which includes codes, contexts, and institutions.*

#### **Assignment:**

- ✓ Make sure you are registered on the Sakai site. If you cannot access the site, please contact Sakai personnel at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or 848.445.8721. Sakai Help Desk representatives are available **Monday through Friday 8:00AM-6:00PM**.

Read the following two articles for our first meeting:

Sewell, William H. 1999. "The Concept(s) of Culture," Pp. 35-61 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. *(This is a nice summary of the cultural sociology literature.)*

Lizardo, Omar. 2017. "Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in Its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes." *American Sociological Review* 82(1): **Read pages 88-100 only**. *(This article provides a new approach—one around which I will organize the course.)*

Oh ... one more thing:

- ✓ Friday is my birthday. Make sure to tell me how youthful I look.

### ***Topic I: Personal Culture***

### **MTG. 2/JAN. 29:** *Nondeclarative Culture—"Know How" or Procedural Knowledge*

*Personal Culture has two elements: nondeclarative culture and declarative culture. Nondeclarative culture is akin to procedural knowledge—that is, the skills and "know how" we acquire from our experiences. To fully understand nondeclarative culture, we have to consider the role of cognition and embodied experience in its acquisition. Today, we will explore some of the works that bring these ideas alive.*

#### **Assignment:**

Read (in this order):

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: Pp. 80-97.

Wacquant, Loïc J. D. 2005. "For a Sociology of Flesh and Blood." *Qualitative Sociology* 38(1): 1-11.

Lande, Brian. 2007. "Breathing Like a Soldier: Culture Incarnate." *The Sociological Review* 55(1\_suppl): 95-108.

*Applications:*

Twine, Richard. 2015. "Understanding Snacking through a Practice Theory Lens." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 37(8): 1270-1284.

**MTG 3/FEB. 5:** *Components of Nondeclarative Culture: Schemas and Distributed Cognition*

*What constitutes nondeclarative culture? Two answers to this question routinely emerge: schemas and distributed cognition. In this class, we will review definitions of schema and distributed cognition and then examine ways in which cultural sociologists apply these concepts in research.*

**Assignment:**

Read (in this order):

Paterson, Orlando. 2014. "Shared Schemata and Reasonings: The Cognitive Basis of Culture." **Pp. 8-10** in "Making Sense of Culture." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40:1-30.

Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. 2004. "Ethnicity As Cognition." *Theory and Society* 33(1): 31-64.

Hutchins, Edwin. 2006. "The Distributed Cognition Perspective on Human Interaction." *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction* 1: 375-394.

Acord, Sophia Krzys. 2010. "Beyond the Head: The Practical Work of Curating Contemporary Art." *Qualitative Sociology* 33(4): 447-467.

*Applications:*

Williams, Joan C., Mary Blair-Loy, and Jennifer L. Berdahl. 2013. "Cultural Schemas, Social Class, and the Flexibility Stigma." *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2): 209-234.

**MTG 4/FEB. 12:** *Declarative Culture—“Know That” Knowledge or Discursive Consciousness*

*Declarative culture is a component of personal culture as well; it builds on what Giddens calls “discursive consciousness”—the things that people are able to verbally express about the social world around them. The primary symbolic medium via which persons “declare” culture is spoken or written language. However, non-linguistic symbolic systems (e.g., image, sound, smell, etc.) are part of declarative culture as well.*

**Assignment:**

Read (in this order):

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. "The Analysis of Strategic Conduct." Pp. 288-293 in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structure*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hall, Stuart. 2006. "Encoding/decoding." Pp. 91-103 in (M. G. Durham and D. M. Kellner, eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*. London: Routledge.

Lamont, Michèle, and Sada Aksartova. 2002. "Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms: Strategies for Bridging Racial Boundaries among Working-Class Men." *Theory, Culture & Society* 19(4): 1-25.

*Applications:*

Tewksbury Doug. 2013. "Online-Offline Knowledge Sharing in the Occupy Movement: Howtooccupy.org and Discursive Communities of Practice." *American Communication Journal*. 15(1): 11-23.

## ***Topic II: Relationship between the Elements of Personal Culture***

### **MTG. 5--FEB. 19: *The Interaction between Nondeclarative and Declarative Culture: Dual Process Models***

*The two elements of personal culture—nondeclarative and declarative knowledge—have been central to contemporary theories of culture. In such theories, a number of debates arise. Does nondeclarative culture, as some suggest, dominate meaning-making and subsequent behavior? Or, as competing works suggest, is there an interaction or simultaneity between nondeclarative and declarative culture in meaning-making and behavior? What role does social context play in the dominance of one cultural type versus the interaction or simultaneous operation of both types of personal culture? And when both declarative and non-declarative processes occur, what are the implications for meaning-making and behavior?*

#### **Assignment:**

#### Read (in this order):

- Leschziner, Vanina. Forthcoming. "Dual Process Models in Sociology." (W. Brekhus and G. Ignatow, eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of sociology*, 114(6), pp.1675-1715.
- Winchester, Daniel. 2016. "A Hunger for God: Embodied Metaphor as Cultural Cognition in Action." *Social Forces* 95(2):585–606.

#### *Applications:*

- Stets, Jan E. 2016. "Rationalist vs. Intuitionist Views on Morality: A Sociological Perspective." Pp. 345-366 in (C Brand, ed.) *Dual-Process Theories in Moral Psychology*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden.

## ***Topic III: Public Culture***

### **MTG. 6—FEB. 26: *What is Public Culture?***

*Public Culture is culture externalized in the form of public symbols and codes, frames and narratives, and institutions. In the first half of this class, we will review the definition of the concept. In the second half of the class, we will review work addressing the elements of culture.*

#### **Assignment:**

#### Read (in this order):

- Swidler, Ann. 2001. *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. Pp. 160-180. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Hariman, Robert, and John Louis Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. University of Chicago Press, 2007. Chapter 2.
- Polletta, Francesca, and M. Kai Ho. 2006. "Frames and Their Consequences." Pp. 187-209 in (R. E. Goodin and C. Tilly, eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Assignment continued on the next page*

*Application:*

Fligstein, Neil, Jonah Stuart Brundage, and Michael Schultz. 2017. "Seeing like the Fed: Culture, Cognition, and Framing in the Failure to Anticipate the Financial Crisis of 2008." *American Sociological Review* 82(5): 879-909.

**MTG. 7—MAR 5:** Individual Meetings: Talking through your proposals

***Topic IV: The Relationship between Personal and Public Culture***

**MTG. 8—MAR 12:** *Public Culture and Nondeclarative Culture*

*The thing that is so important about the Cultural Triangle is that it lets us view the elements of culture relationally. Today, we look at work devoted to the relationship between Public Culture and Nondeclarative Culture.*

**Assignment:**Read (in this order):

Wood, Michael. L., Stoltz, Dustin.S., Van Ness, Justin. and Taylor, Marshall .A., 2018. "Schemas and Frames." *Sociological Theory*

Cerulo, Karen A. 2000. "Packaging Violence: Media, Story Sequencing and the Perception of Right and Wrong." Pp. 153-176 in (M. Gottdeiner, ed.), *New Forms of Consumption: Consumer, Culture and Commodification*. Lanham, Md.: Rowan and Littlefield.

Shepherd, Hana. and Marshall, Emily A., 2018. "The Implicit Activation Mechanism of Culture: A Survey Experiment on Associations with Childbearing." *Poetics* 69(1): 1-14.

*Applications:*

Sonnett, John., Kirk A. Johnson, and Mark K. Dolan. 2015. "Priming Implicit Racism in Television News: Visual and Verbal Limitations on Diversity." *Sociological Forum* 30: 2: 328-347.

***Cut Loose—Spring Break!***

**MTG. 9—MAR 26:** *Public Culture and Declarative Culture*

*Today, we look at work devoted to the relationship between Public Culture and Declarative Culture.*

Read (in this order):

Alexander, Jeffrey, and Philip Smith. 2001. "The Strong Program in Cultural Theory: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics." Pp. 135-150 in (J. Turner, ed.) In *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Boston: Springer.

Eliasoph, Nina, and Paul Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(4): 735-794.

Mische, Ann. 2014. "Measuring Futures in Action: Projective Grammars in the Rio+20 Debates." *Theory and Society* 43:437-464.

*Assignment continued on the next page*

### *Applications*

Alexander, Jeffrey. 2018. "The Societalization of Social Problems: Church Pedophilia, Phone Hacking, and the Financial Crisis." *American Sociological Review* 83: 6: 1049-1078.

### **MTG 10—APR. 2:** *Applying the Cultural Triangle in Its Totality*

*The Cultural Triangle presents us with multiple elements of culture. Is it possible to simultaneously apply all of these elements in analysis? Today's readings represent people who have taken a stab at just that.*

#### **Assignment:**

#### Read (in this order):

Leschziner, Vanina, and Adam Isaiah Green. 2013. "Thinking about Food and Sex: Deliberate Cognition in the Routine Practices of a Field." *Sociological Theory* 31(2):116–44.

Cerulo, Karen A. 2018. "Scents and Sensibility: Olfaction, Sense-making and Meaning Attribution." *American Sociological Review* 83(2): 361-389.

Schwarz, Ori. 2015. "The Sound of Stigmatization: Sonic Habitus, Sonic Styles, and Boundary Work in an Urban Slum." *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 1 (2015): 205-242.

#### *Applications:*

Vaidyanathan, Brandon, Simranjit Khalsa, and Elaine Howard Ecklund. 2018. "Naturally Ambivalent: Religion's Role in Shaping Environmental Action." *Sociology of Religion*  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx043> .

## ***Topic 5: Measuring Culture***

### **MTG. 11—APR 9:** *Measuring Culture*

*Culture is multifaceted and, often, difficult to capture. Today, we look at some very diverse ideas on how one goes about measuring it.*

#### **Assignment:**

#### Read (in this order):

Pugh, Allison J. 2013. "What Good Are Interviews for Thinking about Culture? Demystifying Interpretive Analysis." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1): 42-68.

Shuster, Stef M. 2017. "Punctuating Accountability: How Discursive Aggression Regulates Transgender People." *Gender & Society* 31(4): 481-502.

Jerolmack, Colin, and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(2): 178-209.

Bail, Christopher A. 2014. "The Cultural Environment: Measuring Culture with Big Data." *Theory and Society* 43(3-4): 465-482.

*Assignment continued on the next page.*



*Assignment, con't*

DiMaggio, Paul, Manish Nag, and David Blei. 2013. "Exploiting affinities between topic modeling and the sociological perspective on culture: Application to newspaper coverage of US government arts funding." *Poetics* 41(6): 570-606.

Ging, Debbie, and Sarah Garvey. 2018. "'Written in These Scars are the Stories I Can't Explain': A Content Analysis of Pro-ana and Thinspiration Image Sharing on Instagram." *New Media & Society* 20(3):1181-1200.

*No Applications this week.*

### ***Topic 6: Production and Reception***

**MTG 12—APR. 16:** *The Production and Reception of Culture*

*Much has been written on the organizations that produce culture, the collectives that receive and interpret it, and the patterns of cultural production and reception. Today, we explore a selection of this very large literature.*

#### **Assignment:**

Read (in this order):

Lena, Jennifer C. 2015. "Culture, Production of: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century." Pp. 608-613 in Kees van Rees and James Wright (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2nd Edition. Elsevier.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." *Media, Culture & Society* 4(1) 33-50.

McDonnell, Terence E., Christopher A. Bail, and Iddo Tavory. 2017. "A Theory of Resonance." *Sociological Theory* 35(1): 1-14.

Childress, C. Clayton, and Noah E. Friedkin. 2012. "Cultural Reception and Production: The Social Construction of Meaning in Book Clubs." *American Sociological Review* 77(1) 45-68.

*Applications*

Rosino, Michael L., and Matthew W. Hughey. 2017. "Speaking through Silence: Racial Discourse and Identity Construction in Mass-mediated Debates on the "War on Drugs"." *Social Currents* 4(3): 246-264.

**MTG 13—APR. 23:** *Producing What? Cultural Objects and Materialism*

*Today, we look at literature analyzing the substance of cultural objects.*

#### **Assignment:**

Read (in this order):

Molnár, Virág. 2016. "The Power of Things: Material Culture as Political Resource." *Qualitative Sociology* 39(2): 205-210.

*Assignment continued on the next page.*

*Assignment, con't*

- Griswold, Wendy, Gemma Mangione, and Terence E. McDonnell. 2013. "Objects, Words, and Bodies in Space: Bringing Materiality into Cultural Analysis." *Qualitative Sociology* 36(4): 343-364.
- Winchester, Daniel. 2017. "'A Part of Who I Am': Material Objects as 'Plot Devices' in the Formation of Religious Selves." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56(1): 83-103.
- Sabelli, Alessandra Maria, and Takayuki Kanda. 2016. "Robovie as a Mascot: A Qualitative Study for Long-term Presence of Robots in a Shopping Mall." *International Journal of Social Robotics* 8(2) 211-221.

*Application*

- Harkness, Geoff. 2019. "Hijab Micro-practices: The Strategic and Situational Use of Clothing by Qatari Women." *Sociological Forum* 34(1)

**MTG 14—APR. 30: Culture in Action**

*How does culture and the context in which it resides enable or constrain action? Today's articles are a sampling of the literature addressing this question.*

**Assignment:**Read (in this order):

- Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action" *American Sociological Review* 51(2): 273-286.
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6): 999-1022.
- Miles, Andrew. "Addressing the Problem of Cultural Anchoring: An Identity-based Model of Culture in Action." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2014): 210-227.

*Application*

- Rosen, Eva. 2017. "Horizontal Immobility: How Narratives of Neighborhood Violence Shape Housing Decisions." *American Sociological Review* 82(2): 270-296.