



SOCIOLOGY 220
SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

SPRING 2020

MONDAY & WEDNESDAY, 3:55-5:15PM

HICKMAN HALL, ROOM 216

INSTRUCTOR: HANA SHEPHERD

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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS 3:00-3:55PM (BY APPT—PLEASE EMAIL ME FIRST)

Course Description: In everyday speech, we use the term culture to describe and explain many different types of things. But what do we mean when we talk about “culture”? What does it mean to say there is a cultural difference between people? How does culture shape life outcomes and behavior, if at all? How do we understand the proliferation of cultural products and forms of culture in online and offline spaces? Using examples particularly from online social life and digital spaces, this class explores the fundamentals of culture – talk and interaction, social learning, language, symbols, relationships and networks, cultural objects – and how they arise from and shape our social worlds. We will explore what it means to make a cultural argument about the source of behavior, and how culture interacts with issues of economics, law, inequality, politics, and health. We will also use a selection of episodes from the podcast, *All Our Relations*, by Adrienne Keene and Matika Wilbur, to provide material for understanding and analyzing how culture is related to forms of power historically and currently in the case of Native peoples in the U.S. and Canada. The class provides a framework for thinking about what culture is and why it matters to everyday life in a diverse society and a digital, globalized world.

At the end of this course, students should come away with:

1. A familiarity with different conceptions of the concept of culture in social science and public discourse.
2. An ability to identify what a social scientific cultural argument is and how it is different from other types of explanations for social phenomena.
3. An ability to analyze aspects of everyday life in terms of the concepts covered in class.

Structure of the Course:

All readings/podcasts are REQUIRED and should be completed before class. In class, I will provide background information on the readings/podcasts and synthesize the themes of the week. We will also discuss the readings/podcasts and current events, so come ready to contribute to the discussion. This will be much more difficult, and the class will be far less productive and interesting, if you have not done the reading/listening. All material is either available on the Canvas site or online (links are provided below).

Requirements and Grading:

Attendance and Participation (12% of grade): Attendance and participation are required, mainly because the class will be more productive if everyone regularly contributes. We will be

doing in-class activities to spur thinking and discussion, so everyone will be able to contribute. You can contribute to a discussion in many ways: by asking questions, by providing facts, by stating opinions informed by readings and class discussion, by providing analysis of the readings.

Reading/Listening Journal (24% of grade): On Sunday OR Tuesday, a journal response will be due by midnight the night before a class via Canvas. You are required to complete a journal entry for eight of the weeks. You can pick whichever weeks you would like to skip responses. Please keep track of how many you have submitted, as you are responsible for completing eight.

You can use the reading/listening journal to reflect on the content of the material, make connections to other things in your life, and ask questions. What did this material make you think of? What was confusing or new? How might this material relate to something in your own life? The goal of the journals is to get you thinking more deeply about the materials, and about how to analyze the cases we examine.

Cultural Product Analysis Memo (10% of grade). At the end of the second section of the class, you'll write a 2-3 page (double-spaced) memo responding to a prompt asking you to critically analyze a cultural product of your choice using the concepts from the class (due March 23). Please use only your Rutgers ID and not your name on your document when you turn in the memo.

Guide to a Culture Project (Memo and Presentation/Video) (34% of grade): During the semester, you will choose a group about which you are a part. This group can be a sports team or a dorm, it can be your family, it can be however you want to define it. You should take notes connecting the concepts we learn about in class to your experiences as part of your group. In pairs or alone, you will complete a memo designed to provide someone who is not a member of that group with a guide to understanding the culture of the group. You will also turn your observations and memo into a brief (3-5 min) presentation or video for the class, to be presented the week of April 27.

Exam (20% of grade). This exam, held in class on May 4, will cover material from the final section of the class. This exam will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. The exam will ask you to develop an argument using the ideas from the class about something related to culture.

Summary of grading:

Attendance and Participation	12%
Reading/Listening Journal	24%
Cultural Product Analysis Memo (March 23)	10%
Guide to a Culture Memo (April 27)	20%
Guide to a Culture Presentation/Video (April 27)	14%
Exam (May 4)	20%
TOTAL	<hr/> 100%

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. **Texting, using social media, and using the internet for things unrelated to class** decreases the quality of the class for everyone, and are not permitted. You will get far more out of the class if you don't have your laptop in front of you during class except for looking at the readings (taking notes by hand increases comprehension anyway).

Week One Introduction: What is Culture?

Reading for Wednesday January 22:

- Article: "Merriam-Webster Names Culture Word of the Year" <http://news.yahoo.com/merriam-webster-names-culture-word-082532788.html>

Week Two What is Culture? & Cultural Explanations for Behavior

Reading for Monday January 27:

- Article: Lisa Stiffler. "Understanding Orca Culture." *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2011. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/understanding-orca-culture-12494696/>
- Article: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "A Culture of Poverty." *The Atlantic*, Oct. 20, 2010. <https://www.theatlantic.com/personal/archive/2010/10/a-culture-of-poverty/64854/>

Reading for Wednesday January 29:

- Article: David Harding. "Cultural Context, Sexual Behavior, and Romantic Relationships in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." *American Sociological Review* 72, 2007. SELECTION: pgs. 341-349.
- Listen: Radio Lab (25 mins), "Cut and Run" <http://www.radiolab.org/story/runners/>

Week Three Social Interaction

Reading for Monday February 3:

- Article: Gary Alan Fine. "Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams." *American Sociological Review* 44, 1979.

Reading for Wednesday February 5:

- Listen: All My Relations: All My Relations and Indigenous Feminism (Episode #1) <https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/32b0bd95/ep-1-all-my-relations-and-indigenous-feminism>

Week Four Language

Reading for Monday February 10:

- Listen: Radiolab (11:30 mins), "Words that Change the World" <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91728-words-that-change-the-world/>
- Selection: Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Fine Line*, Introduction and Chapter 1: Islands of Meaning

Reading for Wednesday February 12:

- Selection: Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, Chapter 9: Social Class, Language and Socialization

- Listen: All My Relations: Can Our Ancestors Hear Us? (Episode #9)
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/491847a3/ep-9-can-our-ancestors-hear-us>

Week Five Symbols

Reading for Monday February 17:

- Article: "Lost in Translation: Study Finds Interpretation of Emojis Can Vary Widely." npr.org
<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/12/473965971/lost-in-translation-study-finds-interpretation-of-emojis-can-vary-widely>
- Listen: All My Relations: Native Mascots: Really, Still? (Episode #3)
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/3313e307/ep-3-native-mascots-really-still>

Reading for Wednesday February 19:

- Article: Karen Cerulo. 1984. "Television, Magazine Covers, and the Shared Symbolic Environment: 1948-1970." *American Sociological Review* 49: 566-570.
- Short story: Percival Everett, "The Appropriation of Cultures."

Week Six Relationships

Reading for Monday February 24:

- Article: John W. Mohr. 1994. "Soldiers, Mothers, Tramps and Others: Discourse Roles in the 1907 New York City Charity Directory." *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Literature, The Media, and the Arts* 22: 327-357.

Reading for Wednesday February 26:

- Listen: All My Relations: Decolonizing Sex (Episode #5)
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/468a0a6b/ep-5-decolonizing-sex>

Week Seven Cultural Objects

Reading for Monday March 2:

- Selection: Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*.

Reading for Wednesday March 4:

- Article: Georg Simmel. 1957. "Fashion." *American Journal of Sociology* 62: 541-558.
- Video: "Crossfit versus Yoga: Choose a Side." https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/380437/crossfit-versus-yoga-choose-a-side/?utm_source=atlib

Week Eight Cultural Objects

Reading/viewing for Monday March 9:

- Article: Blake Hallinan and Ted Striphas. "Recommended for You: The Netflix Prize and the Production of Algorithmic Culture." *New Media and Society* 18, 2014.

Reading for Wednesday March 11:

- Selection: Bonnie A. Nardi, *My Life as a Night Elf Priest: An Anthropological Account of World of*

Warcraft

Week Nine Spring Break

Week Ten Law

Reading for Monday March 23:

- Listen: All My Relations: Beyond Blood Quantum (Episode #10)
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/49fcb76f/ep-10-beyond-blood-quantum>
- **Cultural Product Analysis Memo DUE**

Reading for Wednesday March 25:

- Article: Kitty Calavita, "Immigration, Law, and Marginalization in a Global Economy: Notes from Spain." *Law and Society Review* 32, 1998.
- Article: Amanda Hess, "Exhibit A: ; -)" Slate.com, Oct. 16, 2015.
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/users/2015/10/emoticons_and_emojis_as_evidence_in_court.html

Week Eleven Inequality

Reading for Monday March 30:

- Selection: Bethany Bryson, "Music and Symbolic Exclusion"
- Article: Todd Kilman, "Coding and Decoding Dinner," *Oxford American*, May 13, 2015.
 - Listen: "Andy Shallal on Creating an Inclusive Dining Experience"
<https://www.splendidtable.org/story/andy-shallal-on-creating-an-inclusive-dining-experience>

Reading for Wednesday April 1:

- Selection: Annette Lareau, "Families, Institutions, and Inequalities"

Week Twelve Inequality

Reading for Monday April 6: NO CLASS (Instructor away)

- Article: Candice West and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1, 1987.

Reading for Wednesday April 8:

- Listen: All My Relations: Native Appropriations (Episode #7)
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/46e6ef0d/ep-7-native-appropriations>

Week Thirteen Economics and Politics

Reading for Monday April 12:

- Selection: Viviana Zelizer, *The Purchase of Intimacy*
- Article: "The Confusing World of Venmo Etiquette," Kevin McAllister

Reading for Wednesday April 15:

- Selection: Andrew Perrin, “Political Microcultures”
- Interview with George Lakoff: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/01/george-lakoff-interview>

Week Fourteen Cultural Processes

Reading for Monday April 20:

- Article: Garry Shteynberg, “A Silent Emergence of Culture: The Social Tuning Effect.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99, 2010.
- Article: Cass Sunstein and Reid Hastie. January 19, 2015. “You don’t like what you think you like: Bad taste, manipulated choices, and the new science of decision-making.” *Salon*.
http://www.salon.com/2015/01/19/you_dont_like_what_you_think_you_like_bad_taste_manipulated_choices_and_the_new_science_of_decision_making/

Reading for Wednesday April 22:

- Selection: Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson “Cultural Diffusion”
- Article: Liz Reece-Jones, Katherine L. Milkman, and Jonah Berger, “The Secret to Online Success: What Makes Content Go Viral.” *Scientific American*, April 14, 2015. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-secret-to-online-success-what-makes-content-go-viral/>

Week Fifteen Student Presentations/Videos

Reading for Monday April 27:

- Student presentations of Guide to a Culture
- **Guide to a Culture Memo DUE**

Reading for Wednesday April 29:

- Student presentations of Guide to a Culture
- Exam review

Week Sixteen

Reading for Monday May 4:

- In-class essay exam, material from Week 10 onward