

Sociology 244: Cultures and Societies
St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology
Fall 2019

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Office Hours: Tues. 11:00-12:00;
Wed. 2:00-4:00; Thurs. 11:00-12:00

Time and Location

Tuesday 6:30-9:30pm MULH 3024

Course Description

This course introduces students to the central concepts, perspectives, and problems taken up by cultural sociology, a broad subfield in sociology that addresses the place of culture in all social institutions and at all levels of society, from face-to-face interactions to large-scale historical transformations. Culture is one of the most difficult words in the English language, and the meaning of the term is heavily debated in the social sciences. Sociologists treat culture as the symbols, meanings, and forms of knowledge that people use to interpret and act in the world. Culture includes not just ways of thinking, but also material objects and practices such as ceremonies, rituals of daily life, and everyday practical knowledge and skills.

The central aim of the course is to show how cultural sociology offers you intellectual resources—various concepts and theoretical perspectives—that you can use to better understand any aspect of the social world. We will focus on the place of culture in important institutions such as the media, capitalist economies, politics, education, families, small groups, and personal and intimate relationships. Most important, we will look at the relation of culture to power, and we will consider how culture can not only reinforce existing social inequalities, but also play a role in undoing them and bringing about social change.

Course Evaluation

20% Mid-term Exam
20% Essay
10% Participation
25% Final Exam
25% Reading Analyses (5 at 5% each)

Mid-term Test:

There will be an in-class test on **October 8**. The purpose of the test is to give you feedback on your progress in the course.

Essay:

There will be one essay assignment, and a handout outlining the assignment will be distributed during class. Completed papers will be around 8 pages in length (250 words per page, 12-point standard font, double spaced). It will be due no later than November 26, the last day of class.

Class Participation:

Active participation is an important part of this course. Participation comprises attendance, active listening, giving other students an opportunity to speak, raising and answering questions, and providing relevant comments on the material discussed in lecture and the class readings. Please bring the readings to class and be prepared to offer your questions and insights.

Exam:

An exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period. It will be closed book and consist of short answer and essay questions.

Weekly Reading Analyses:

You will be expected to write short analytical discussions of the week's readings five times throughout the term. Each reading analysis will consist of a concise and careful examination of the readings assigned for the week and will be due in class on the day the readings are discussed. You must be present in class to submit the assignment, and late papers will not be accepted.

There is a template posted to Moodle that you will use to complete each reading analysis. Each time you want to submit a reading analysis, fill out the template, print it, and bring it to class to hand in. In total, your analysis should not exceed 2 double-spaced pages. You must submit at least one reading analysis during the first three weeks of readings (i.e. on September 10, 17, or 24); the rest of the submission dates are up to you, but I encourage you not to leave them to the end of term.

The main purpose of the reading analyses is to help you prepare for lectures and class discussions. For this reason, you will receive comments on your first submission, but after that, only a grade will appear. However, if you have concerns about how you are doing on these assignments, please do not hesitate to see me in my office.

Course Texts

Most readings will be available on the course Moodle Page.

Late Policy

Late papers submitted without prior permission will incur a late penalty of 5% of the total assignment per day, including weekends.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Since this course requires you to complete a written assignment, you should familiarize yourself with standards for proper referencing of all materials cited (i.e. books, journals, newspaper articles, internet resources etc.). Students who attempt to pass off someone else's work as their own (plagiarism) will be dealt with through the university policy on academic honesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this policy (see section 3.8 in the calendar).

Classroom Technology

If you use a laptop for note taking, please do so in a way that does not distract others. Audio or video recording of this class is not permitted.

Special Accommodations

If you develop a prolonged illness or encounter a personal crisis that will impact your progress in the course, please contact me as soon as the problem becomes apparent. If you contact me early, we will have a better chance of developing a plan to help you complete the course in a way that is satisfactory to you.

Other Accommodations

If you are a student with physical, learning, or psychiatric disabilities that require reasonable accommodation in teaching style or evaluation, you should speak with me early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

September 3 What is Cultural Sociology? Why study it?

Welcome to SOCI244. In this class we look ahead to the major course themes and begin to outline the core concepts you will need for the readings ahead.

September 10 Classics in Culture and Society: Can we define culture?

Sewell, William H. 1999. "The Concept(s) of Culture." Pp. 35-61 in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, edited by Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

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

Williams, Raymond. 1983. "Culture." Pp. 87-92 in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

September 17 Double Doubles or Americanos? Class, Habitus, and Cultural Capital

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

Bookman, Sonia. 2013. "Coffee Brands, Class and Culture in a Canadian City." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16(4): 405-423.

September 24 Cultural Repertoires: Two Ways of Talking about Love

Swidler, Ann. 2001. *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [selections]

October 1 Ritual and Interaction in Everyday Life

Collins, Randall. 2013. "Interaction Ritual Chains." Pp. 75-90 in *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 3rd Edition, edited by C. Calhoun, J. Gerteis, J. Moody, S. Pfaff, and I. Virk. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

October 8 Mid-term Exam

In-class test. No readings this week.

October 15 Fall Study Break

No classes – Enjoy!

October 22 Ideology and Mass Media

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. 2002 [original 1944]. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Pp. 39-46 in *Cultural Sociology*, edited by Lyn Spillman. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Hall, Stuart. 1993. "Encoding, Decoding." Pp. 477-87 in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During. London: Routledge.

October 29 Cultural Structures: Jeffrey Alexander and Cultural Sociology

Alexander, Jeffrey and Philip Smith. 2003. "The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics." Pp. 11-27 in *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Woods, Eric. 2013. "A Cultural Approach to a Canadian Tragedy: The Indian Residential Schools as a Sacred Enterprise." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26(2):173–87.

November 5 Solidarity and The Civil Sphere

Alexander, Jeffrey and Philip Smith. 2014. "The Enduring Structure of Civil Discourse." Pp. 199-217 in *Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reader*, edited by Matt Wray. New York: Norton.

Horgan, Mervyn. 2014. "Durkheim, Development and the Devil: A Cultural Sociology of Community Conflict." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 39(4):741–64.

November 12 Cognitive Sociology

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1996. "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification." *Sociological Forum* 11(3):421–33.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper Colophon Books. [Selections]

November 19 Markets, Intimacy, and Consumer Culture

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. "The Commercial Spirit of Intimate Life and the Abduction of Feminism: Signs from Women's Advice Books." Pp. 13-29 In *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Rottenberg, Catherine. 2014. "The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism." *Cultural Studies* 28(3):418-37.

November 26 Conclusion to the course

No readings. Come to class prepared to talk about what you learned in the course.