

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology
Winter 2023

Course: Sociology 244: Cultures and Societies
Instructor: Dr. Peter Mallory
Email: pmallory@stfx.ca
Office: Nicholson Tower 610
Lecture Schedule: E5 Tuesdays 6:30-9:30

In-Person Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:00PM; Tuesday 1:00-4:00PM
Wednesday 10:00-12:00 Noon. Online and phone appointments are also available.

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
30% Final Exam
20% Reading Analyses (4 at 5% each)

Mid-term Test:

There will be an in-class test on February 14. 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 April 4, the last day of the course.

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 details will be provided in class.

Weekly Reading Analyses:

You will be expected to write short analytical discussions of the week's readings four 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 by 6PM on the day the readings are discussed. 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 and upload it to the weekly submission folder on Moodle. 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 January 17, 24, and 31). 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

January 10. What is Cultural Sociology? Why study it?

- Welcome to Sociology 244. 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.

January 17. 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.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description." Pp. 275-284 in *Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reader*, edited by M. Wray. New York: Norton.

January 24. 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.

January 31. Cultural Repertoires: Two Ways of Talking about Love

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

February 7. 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.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. "Civil Inattention." Pp. 83-88 in *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press.
- Horgan, Mervyn, Saara Liinamaa, Amanda Dakin, Sofia Meligrana, and Meng Xu. 2020. "A Shared Everyday Ethic of Public Sociability: Outdoor Public Ice Rinks as Spaces for Encounter." *Urban Planning* 5(4):143-54.

February 14. Mid-term Exam

- In-class test. No readings this week.

February 21. Winter Study Break

- No classes – Enjoy!

February 28. Ideology and Mass Media

- Mark, Karl and Frederick Engles. 2012 [original 1846]. “The German Ideology.” Pp. 142-145 in *Classical Social Theory*, edited by C. Calhoun et al. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- 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. 2019 [original 1982]. “The Rediscovery of ‘Ideology’: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies. Pp. 94-123 in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, edited by J. Storey. New York: Routledge.

March 7. 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.

*Friday, March 10—Last day to drop second-term three-credit courses

March 14. 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.
- Sachs, Willa, and Jeffrey C. Alexander. 2022. “Presidential versus Civil Power: Public Opinion, Second-Wave Feminism, and Party Politics in the USA.” *Cultural Sociology*. Advance online publication.

March 21. Culture and Classification

- Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1996. “Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification.” *Sociological Forum* 11(3):421–33.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis* [Selections]. New York: Harper Colophon Books.

March 28. 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.

April 4. Conclusion to the course

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

COURSE INFORMATION AND POLICIES

A Note on Course Content

We will deal with difficult and sometimes upsetting topics in this course. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom where we can engage with serious issues of justice and injustice in a way that is sensitive to people's experiences. We will approach all topics in a way that uncovers what sociologists have to offer in understanding them.

Attendance

Attending all classes is the best way to ensure you do well in the course. Please let me know if you will be absent from class.

If you are unable to attend our class because of a requirement for another course (such as a mandatory class, public lecture, quiz, exam, or class project that is scheduled outside normal class hours), then please contact me.

Office Hours

I hold regular student office hours throughout the week, and you do not need an appointment. You can come to my office if you wish to meet in person. If you prefer to meet online or talk over the phone, contact me by email and we can schedule an appointment.

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 can develop a plan to help you complete the course.

Other Accommodations

If you are a student with physical, learning, or psychiatric disabilities that require reasonable accommodation in teaching style or evaluation you should contact the Tramble Centre for Accessible Learning so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance.