

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE
JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 4, 2022**

You are required to answer THREE (3) QUESTIONS (ONE QUESTION FROM EACH OF PARTS A, B & C). Each answer should be 10-12 pages (12-point font and double-spaced) in length. The complete exam should not total more than 36 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font), not including references. THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT READ PAST THE 36TH PAGE.

Part A

1. One of the enduring topics of interest within the sociology of culture has been that of the audience, or consumer. Provide a critical review of how the field has conceptualized cultural reception and consumption. Compare and contrast these areas. What do you see as the major advances or strengths in these areas? What weaknesses remain? What kinds of studies might best push these areas further?
2. Studies on culture and cognition represent some of the most recent conceptualizations of what culture is. How do conceptualizations of culture in this area compare and contrast with classic understandings of culture? Make a case for what you think is gained or lost in studies of culture and cognition in terms of how culture is conceptualized relative to classic understandings.

Part B

3. What does the sociology of culture contribute to standard sociological accounts of social inequality? Comparing these two streams of research, you might consider differences in the conceptualization of inequality, causes of inequality, processes or consequences of inequality (e.g. how inequality is transferred across generations), and understandings of multiple forms of inequality (such as those based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race). Or, instead of or in addition to these suggestions, there may be other differences you find important to address.
4. Why should the sociology of culture be concerned with the study of boundaries? What is particularly cultural about the study of boundaries? What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying inequality through a focus on boundaries? Which authors have done very well or less well in studying inequality through boundaries, and why?

Part C

5. The research in the section on defining and conceptualizing culture present a range of insights and perspectives. Assess how well these insights and perspectives are applied within

the section on cultural capital. Do authors who study cultural capital define and conceptualize culture, even if implicitly, in ways that comport with, or are at odds with, the studies in the section on defining and conceptualizing culture? How could the study of cultural capital benefit from or go in different directions by further integrating the insights and perspectives from the section on defining and conceptualizing culture?

6. The production of culture perspective was developed in the 1970s as a counterpoint to vague arguments about culture as a reflection of social structure. Describe how the articles in this section have developed further arguments, beyond this starting point, about how culture is “produced,” and the strengths and weaknesses of these studies. How well do the concepts and arguments developed in these articles apply to contemporary cultural production in the digital age, in your view?