

Culture I

SOC6516H Graduate Seminar, Fall 2024

Department of Sociology, University of Toronto,

Professor Ann Mullen

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Class: Friday, 1 – 3, Room 17146

Office hours: after class or by appointment

This seminar introduces the principal approaches to the sociological study of culture. The course is designed to equip students with an overview of how sociologists conceptualize culture, the methodological approaches they use to study it, the major debates within the field, and an appreciation for how the field has evolved over the past few decades. We will consider culture in material, embodied, processual and conceptual forms and examine how it operates at the micro, meso and macro levels of society. Emphasis is on understanding how culture influences action, the relationship between culture, hierarchy and social inequality, how culture is produced and consumed, and how to operationalize and measure cultural meaning. Along the way, students will learn what the sociology of culture offers for studying cultural objects, such as food, music, art, and fashion, and social phenomena, like networking, poverty, and social interaction.

Course Schedule:

Session One, September 13: Introduction and Overview

Ahrens, Sönke. 2017. *How to Take Smart Notes: One Simple Technique to Boost Writing, Learning and Thinking: For Students, Academics and Nonfiction Book Writers*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace. Introduction, pp. 7 – 29.

Small, Mario Luis, David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont. 2010. "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629(1):6-27. NOTE: Only read to page 20.

Roy, William G. and Timothy J. Dowd. 2010. "What Is Sociological about Music?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 36(1):183–203.

Session Two, September 20: Culture as Symbols, Ideas and Objects

Schudson, Michael. 1989. "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory and Society* 18:153-180.

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

McDonnell, Terence E. 2023. "Cultural Objects, Material Culture, and Materiality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 49(1):195–220.

Session Three, September 27: Culture in Interaction

Fine, Gary Alan. 1979. "Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams." *American Sociological Review* 44 (5): 733-745.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Kathy J. Kuipers, and Dawn T. Robinson. 1998. "How Do Status Beliefs Develop? The Role of Resources and Interactional Experience." *American Sociological Review* 63(3): 331–50.

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

Session Four, October 4: Culture as Meaning, Practice and Action

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 E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51: 273-86.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(6):1675–1715.

Session Five, October 11: Culture as Capital

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital," In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson, 241–58. New York: Greenwood Press.

Carter, Prudence L. 2003. "'Black' Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and School Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth." *Social Problems* 50(1):136-155.

Accominotti, Fabien, Shamus Khan, and Adam Storer. 2018. "How Cultural Capital Emerged in Gilded Age America: Musical Purification and Cross-Class Inclusion at the New York Philharmonic." *American Journal of Sociology* 123:1743-1783.

Session Six, October 18: Culture and Consumption

Banks, Patricia A. 2010. *Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper-Middle Class*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 6, pp. 1 – 12, 55 - 96.

Thumala Olave, María Angélica. 2020. "Book Love. A Cultural Sociological Interpretation of the Attachment to Books." *Poetics* 81: 101440.

Session Seven, October 25: Culture and Boundaries

Lamont, Michèle and Virág Molnár. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:167-195.

Johnston, Josée, and Shyon Baumann. 2007. "Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):165-204.

Selka, Stephen. 2010. "Morality in the Religious Marketplace: Evangelical Christianity, Candomblé, and the Struggle for Moral Distinction in Brazil." *American Ethnologist* 37:291-307.

Session Eight, November 1: Culture and Connection

Pugh, Allison J. 2011. "Distinction, Boundaries or Bridges?: Children, Inequality and the Uses of Consumer Culture." *Poetics* 39(1):1-18.

Lizardo, Omar. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." *American Sociological Review* 71:778-807.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):999-1022.

Session Nine, November 8: Production of Culture

Becker, Howard. 2008. *Art Worlds, 25th Anniversary edition, Updated and Expanded*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapter one, pp. 1-39.

Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:311-334.

Rawlings, Craig M. 2001. "'Making Names': The Cutting Edge Renewal of African Art in New York City, 1985-1996." *Poetics* 29(1):25-54.

Session Ten, November 15: Reception of Culture

Benzecry, Claudio E. 2011. *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and chapters 3 and 4, pp. 1-14, 63-110.

Cerulo, Karen A. 2018. "Scents and Sensibility: Olfaction, Sense-Making, and Meaning Attribution." *American Sociological Review* 83 (2): 361-89.

Rawlings, Craig M., and Clayton Childress. 2019. "Emergent meanings: Reconciling dispositional and situational accounts of meaning-making from cultural objects." *American Journal of Sociology* 124.6: 1763-1809.

Session Eleven, November 22: Culture and Cognition

Leschziner, Vanina and Gordon Brett, G. 2019. "Beyond Two Minds: Cognitive, Embodied, and Evaluative Processes in Creativity." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 82(4):340-366.

Lizardo, Omar. 2017. "Improving cultural analysis: Considering personal culture in its declarative and nondeclarative modes." *American Sociological Review* 82: 88-115.

Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman and Peter Stamatov. 2004. "Ethnicity as Cognition." *Theory & Society* 33: 31-64.

Session Twelve, November 29: Worth and Valuation

Zelizer, Viviana. 1981. "The Price and Value of Children: The Case of Children's Insurance." *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 1036-56.

Fourcade, Marion. 2011. "Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of 'Nature'." *American Journal of Sociology* 116(6):1721-77.

Kharchenkova, Svetlana and Olav Velthuis. 2018. "How to Become a Judgment Device: Valuation Practices and the Role of Auctions in the Emerging Chinese Art Market." *Socio-Economic Review* 16(3): 459-477.

Course Requirements:

Slip-Box

Build a slip-box (following techniques developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann).

- Idea notes (zettels): after completing the reading for the week, write two to three idea notes (in complete sentences) for each reading. Each note contains only one idea (expressed in one paragraph) and allows you to collect insights and develop emerging analyses in a lightweight way through the course of the semester. You might begin by asking yourself what new ideas you are most excited about, what are the most interesting things about each study, what pressing questions the readings raise, what has most inspired, confused or troubled you about the work. (For further details, see the Quercus handout on “Slip-box entries.”)

Entries are due by 5 p.m. on the Thursday before each session via Quercus. No credit will be given for late entries. You will not submit idea notes for the week in which you are presenting. Entries will be marked as check (82%), check – (77%), and check+ (87%). You must complete idea notes on the readings in 8 sessions. Slip-box entries will be marked periodically through the semester.

Discussion Questions

Before each class, students will compose a minimum of three discussion questions for that week’s readings. Your questions help prepare you for class, give me a sense of how you are engaging with the course readings and help focus our discussions. Think carefully about what you want to ask. Good questions focus on core and critical issues or make connections between different readings. Avoid questions that focus on a small detail or tangential point, questions that can easily be answered in a sentence or two, that address only one reading, and yes/no questions. Feel free to draw on your idea notes in developing your discussion questions. Discussion questions are due by 5 p.m. on the Thursday before each session on Quercus. Students must submit questions on ten sessions to receive full credit. Questions will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis (calculated as 85%/75%).

Presentation, Analytical Essay, & Leading Discussion

Each student will prepare a short (10 – 15 minutes), in-class presentation to guide our discussions, based on the readings for the session. You may begin by *briefly* reviewing the main

points of the reading before turning to a critical, substantive presentation. This is an opportunity to share your critical assessments, emerging analyses and insights, and reflections on what you find particularly noteworthy, compelling, or troubling about the readings. The goal of the presentation is to motivate class discussion and provide a starting framework for the conversation to follow. Presenters will also prepare a handout (maximum 1 page) covering the main points of the presentation as well as the discussion questions (organized thematically or by readings and based on questions submitted by students) and will then lead class discussion (with my assistance). Presentations will be marked for sociological imagination, organization, clarity, comprehension of materials, and presentation style.

You will also write a 2 – 3 page, doubled spaced, analytical essay (750 words maximum) on the readings for the week in which you are presenting. In this essay, you will develop a synthesis of the reading for the week, bringing together your emerging analyses and critical reflections. The goal is to provide an assessment and critical analysis of the readings.

What to avoid:

- Avoid summarizing the readings. You may refer to specific points in the readings or include brief quotations or paraphrases but no broad or extensive summaries.
- Avoid personal reflection and the use of anecdotal evidence.
- Avoid focusing on only one reading. Try to address or build an argument across most or all of the assigned readings for that session.

List the word count for your essay and do not go above the word limit. Proofread carefully as essays will be marked down for typos, spelling and grammatical errors

Class Participation

Students are expected to do the reading thoroughly before each class meeting and to come to class prepared to actively discuss the readings. This means taking the time to reflect on what you've read before class. Working through the following questions for each reading will help prepare you:

- What is the central research question(s) the author is trying to answer?
- What is the author's main argument?
- How does the author define (implicitly or explicitly) culture? What are the other key concepts and how are they defined and measured?
- What kind of evidence does the author offer?
- How convincingly does the evidence support the conclusions?

- What are the main contributions and strengths of the work?
- What are the weaknesses, gaps or misconceptions?
- What is most surprising or puzzling to you about the reading?
- What questions are left unanswered by the reading?
- How does the work compare to other readings or streams of research?
- How do you find the author's work useful for your own scholarship?

Your class participation will be evaluated on the basis of your contribution to class discussion, the level of comprehension of the readings reflected in your contributions, and your ability to actively listen and engage with other members of the class.

If you must miss a class, please inform me beforehand. Unexcused absences or lateness will negatively impact your participation grade.

Final Essay

The final paper for this course gives you an opportunity to step back and consider the course as a whole and develop analyses and ideas that have been emerging in your slip-box. There are three options for this paper:

Option 1: Draft Research Paper (15 – 20 double-spaced pages, plus bibliography)

Write a draft research paper that includes data analysis (either qualitative or quantitative). To choose this option, you should have data in hand at the beginning of the course. The paper will follow a standard format, starting with a review of the relevant literature, the articulation of a research problem or question motivated by the literature, followed by a methods section detailing the data and analytic approach, and concluding with a discussion that summarizes key findings, outlines their implications for research and theory, and suggestions for future work. The goal is to produce a draft suitable for submission to a conference, to a peer-reviewed sociology journal, or as a draft dissertation chapter or MRP.

Option 2: Research Proposal (10 – 12 double-spaced pages, plus bibliography)

Drawing on the readings in this course, write a research proposal that addresses what you see as one of the most intriguing, pressing or promising areas for future research in the sociology of culture. It will include a review of previous studies, identifying their strengths, limitations, and highlighting the gaps in the literature. It will then present a clearly defined research question(s), motivated by the review of the literature, and detail the specific data collection

methods and analysis techniques that will be employed. It will conclude with a discussion of the project's contributions, explaining their significance and relevance.

Option 3: Analytical Essay (10 – 12 double-spaced pages, plus bibliography)

Write a critical, analytical essay that presents a well-developed argument that in some way synthesizes and takes stock of what you've learned in this class. You might choose to assess the sociology of culture field as a whole or to focus on a few subtopics, concepts or theories.

For all three papers, you will draw primarily on close readings of the work assigned in this course. You may also choose to bring in outside readings to supplement course readings.

Paper proposal: For whichever option you choose, you will submit a two-page, double spaced outline or proposal of your project by November 8th at 5 p.m. This will not be marked but provides an opportunity for me to give you guidance on your project.

Due Friday, December 6th, 5 p.m. on Quercus. Late papers will not be accepted without legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control.

Evaluation

Slip-Box	25%
Discussion Questions	10%
Class Presentation	10%
Analytical Essay	15%
Class Participation	10%
Final Essay	30%

Policies and Procedures

Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more

advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Equity and Diversity

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.

Copyright Statement

Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the *Copyright Act*, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

Course Extensions – Extenuating Circumstances

Students are expected to submit course work on time. Occasionally, students may not be able to make agreed upon deadlines due to extenuating circumstances. Students are required to make arrangements with their instructors about how to submit late course work. The graduate office highly recommends that course work extensions remain within the term dates in which the course was taught.

Note: submitting work beyond the term end date (not the last day of instruction but the actual

end of term, e.g., the last day of a winter term class may be April 3, but the term ends April 30) requires a discussion with the instructor and the graduate office, as well as completion of an SGS request for an extension of course work form. These forms will be considered by the graduate office and are not automatically approved.

Generative AI

The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of any assignment, will be considered an academic offense in this course. Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. Representing as one's own an idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated is considered an academic offense.