

SOC280H1F: SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE
Professor Vanina Leschziner
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Fall 2023

Time: Tuesday, 11:10AM-1PM

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Brief Overview of the Course

This course introduces students to the sociology of culture, understood as an area of study that examines (one) social influences on cultural developments, and (2) cultural influences on social processes. While there is a distinct set of objects, practices, and organizations that are explicitly “cultural” (e.g., art, music, food, fashion) most of what we call “culture” happens beyond those domains. Thus, in this course, we will examine culture not as those narrow domains, but as an approach to the study of social processes; that is, as shared meanings, shared orientations to the world, shared repertoires of action, or socio-cognitive schemas that shape social life.

The focus of this course is on the role of culture, the widely shared values, beliefs, logics of action, and practices that create patterns in the social world. This course is organized around theoretical approaches rather than substantive areas of research, with the goal of providing students with analytical tools to understand the social world, instead of with sets of examples about how “culture” works here or there. We will consider the role of culture in large societal contexts, as well as in small, delimited settings (e.g., occupations).

The course will begin with an overview of the sociology of culture, with attention paid to what defines this area of study and how it differs from other academic approaches to the study of culture. From the general overview, the course will move to focus on some of the most prominent theories and perspectives in the sociology of culture of the past few decades. By the end of the course, students will have been introduced to several of the major perspectives in the sociology of culture, and should have gained a basic understanding of how culture shapes social processes.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The prerequisite to take this course is SOC100H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time they are discovered.

Class Format, Requirements, and Grading

- 1- in-class test, October 24 25%
- 2- take-home test, due November 21 40%
- 3- in-class test, December 525%
- 4- in-class quizzes10%

Attendance

Attendance is expected. Students are responsible for all material presented in class. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements that may have been made in class as well as notes on the material covered from their classmates. Make sure you have classmates who can share this information with you if you are unable to attend.

Deadlines: Late work will not be accepted unless submitted with proper documentation. See below for details.

Documentation from your Physician or College Registrar

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor unless you have followed the steps described here.

Students who miss a test or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). Students who miss a test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. You can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI. For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Readings

BOOK SELECTIONS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES Book selections and all journal articles will be available on the Quercus course website, under “Course Materials.”

Students are solely responsible for obtaining and reading all required materials before class. Give yourself enough time to deal with any problems or delays accessing the readings that may arise so you can be sure to come to class prepared to discuss the materials. Problems accessing readings will not excuse failure to demonstrate having done the required readings.

Assignments

In-class Quizzes

There will be a short quiz during each class meeting, except the first class and when there are in-class tests, so this amounts to 9 quizzes in total. Each quiz will consist of one question based on the day’s readings. Each quiz is worth 1%, but you get to choose one quiz -- *at the time of writing it in class* -- that will amount to 2%. There is no make-up for quizzes. If you did not come to class, you get 0% on the day’s quiz, unless you have official documentation (as noted above).

In-class Test

There will be two in-class closed-book tests on October 24 and December 5.

Make-up Test

Students who miss the test for a valid reason and wish to take a make-up test must give the instructor a written request for special consideration -- no later than 5 days after the date of the test -- which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by proper documentation (see above). A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test, and the mark assigned for the test will be a zero.

Take-home Test

The take-home test is due on November 21, and it should be no more than 2,000 words (double spaced, 12 point type). Students will receive the questions by the beginning of Reading Week. Take-home tests are to be submitted at the beginning of the class on the due date in TWO forms: as hard copy, and electronic copy to be submitted to Quercus. Take-home tests are not to be submitted via email or fax, or to the receptionist at the Department of Sociology.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool 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 tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting

plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Assignments not submitted through Quercus to the plagiarism detection tool will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their exams, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the exam they submit is truly their own. This alternative is in place because, strictly speaking, using a plagiarism detection tool is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Plagiarism: Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using somebody else's ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else's ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Use of Generative AI Tools

In this course, you may use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT and GitHub Copilot, as learning aids and to help complete assignments. You will not be permitted to use generative AI on the midterm test or final test. While some generative AI tools are currently available for free in Canada, please be warned that these tools have not been vetted by the University of Toronto and might not meet University guidelines or requirements for privacy, intellectual property, security, accessibility, and records retention. Generative AI may produce content which is incorrect or misleading, or inconsistent with the expectations of this course. These tools may even provide citations to sources that don't exist—and submitting work with false citations is an academic offense. These tools may be subject to service interruptions, software modifications, and pricing changes during the semester.

Generative AI is not required to complete any aspect of this course, and you are cautioned to not rely entirely on these tools to complete your coursework. Instead, it is recommended that you treat generative AI as a supplementary tool only for exploration or drafting content. Ultimately, you (and not any AI tool) are responsible for your own learning in this course, and for all the work you submit for credit. It is your responsibility to critically evaluate the content generated, and to regularly assess your own learning independent of generative AI tools. Overreliance on generative AI may give you a false sense of how much you've actually learned, which can lead to poor performance on the assignments, in later courses, or in future work or studies after graduation.

If you choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as you work through the take-home test in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for the test. The

documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used (including the prompt used to generate the content), and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>).

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: _disability.services@utoronto.ca_ or [_http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_](http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_).

Class Schedule

September 12

INTRODUCTION

CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS: CULTURE, MEANING, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

September 19

WHAT IS “CULTURE”?

Lyn Spillman, “Introduction,” chapter 1 in *What is Cultural Sociology?* (Polity Press, 2020), pp. 1-21.

September 26

THE CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF CULTURE

Jason Kaufman, “Endogenous Explanation in the Sociology of Culture,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 335-357.

October 3

CULTURE AND MEANING

Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” chapter 1 in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

October 10

HOW DO WE STUDY CULTURE?

Wendy Griswold, “A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture,” *Sociological Methodology* 17 (1987): 1-35.

October 17

CULTURAL REPERTOIRES

Ann Swidler, selections from “Finding Culture,” chapter 1, “Repertoires,” chapter 2, “Conclusion: How Culture Matters” in *Talk of Love* (The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 11-23, 24-34, 160-180.

October 24

In-class Test

October 31

CULTURE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Loïc Wacquant, “A Concise Genealogy and Anatomy of Habitus,” chapter 24 in *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, edited by Thomas Medvetz and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 528-536.

David L. Swartz, “Metaprinciples for Sociological Research in a Bourdieusian Perspective,” chapter 1 in *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, edited by Philip S. Gorski (Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 20-35.

November 7

Fall Reading Week

November 14

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURAL TASTE

Omar Lizardo and Sara Skiles, “Cultural Consumption in the Fine and Popular Arts Realms,” *Sociology Compass* 2 (2008): 485-502.

November 21

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF CULTURAL WORK

Howard S. Becker, “Art Worlds and Collective Activity,” chapter 1 in *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, [1982] 2008), pp. 1-39.

Take-home Test due

November 28

THE COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

Eviatar Zerubavel, “Introduction: In the Beginning,” “Islands of Meaning,” chapter 1, and “The Great Divide,” chapter 2, in *The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life* (The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 1-32.

December 5
In-class Test

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!