

# Sociology 508: Sociology of Culture

*Term, Time, Place:*

Fall 2014

11am-12:15pm

Soc 415

*Instructor Information:*

Corey M. Abramson (Assistant Professor of Sociology)

Office Hours: Thursday 2-4pm (or by appointment)

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## Course Overview

*“There is no way out of the game of culture...”*

- *Pierre Bourdieu*

Debates about what constitutes “culture” and “how culture matters” abound in both scientific and popular accounts of social life. Even within the field of sociology the term “culture” is contested and frequently used in diverse ways to refer to vastly different phenomena—e.g. art products, values, group practices, semiotic systems, and symbolic resources. This course attempts to make sense of both this ubiquity and murkiness by focusing on three key questions that drive contemporary debates in the sociology of culture: 1. How can/should we conceptualize culture?, 2. How do various aspects of culture shape action and outcomes on the micro-, mezzo, and macro levels? and 3. How might social scientists examine these relationships empirically? In investigating these questions, students will gain both a general overview of ongoing debates in the sociology of culture and be poised to identify sites for new contributions.

## Requirements and Grading

This is an intensive graduate course. All students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class and to actively participate in seminar discussions. There are three additional requirements:

- (1) Each week students should bring a brief (<2 page) memo summarizing the argument, evidence, implications, and limitations of each reading. Each memo should conclude by synthesizing what the set of readings contributes to the topic for the week and where future research can contribute.
- (2) Each week 1 or 2 students will be assigned to make a brief 5-10 minute presentation on the readings and introduce key questions to help guide the discussion.
- (3) Two weeks after the last class, students will turn in a short research paper “without results.” The paper should be written up to the point where findings would be presented (i.e. intro, background/theory, data/case, research design, etc.). This paper should be roughly 12-15 pages double-spaced. The idea is to begin a paper that can be completed and submitted to a professional conference such as the American Sociological Association (ASA) annual meeting.

Grades will be based on participation and completion of the requirements above. To receive an A students must do the following:

- Miss no more than 2 seminars.
- Contribute to discussions every week.
- Miss no more than 2 memos.
- Complete a compelling final paper.

To Receive the equivalent of an A+ students must additionally:

- Demonstrate mastery of the material in discussions.
- Produce an exceptional paper.

### **Readings**

This course involves intensive reading and discussion. There are several required books, which can be purchased from various booksellers:

- \*Armstrong, Elizabeth A. 2002. *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \*Becker, Howard S. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Biernacki, Richard. 1995. *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Collier, Jane Fishburne. 1997. *From Duty to Desire: Remaking Families in a Spanish Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2000 (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1981. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge.
- Lamont, Michele. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sánchez-Jankowski, Martín. 2008. *Cracks in the Pavement: Social Change and Resilience in Poor Neighborhoods*. University of California Press.
- \*Stearns, Peter N. 1994. *American Cool : Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style*. New York: New York University Press.
- Swidler, Ann. 2001. *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Watt, Ian. 2007 (1957). *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. London: Kessinger Publishing.

All other readings will be posted online via D2L.

\*= Only select segments of the book will be read.

### **Academic Integrity, Absences, and Disability/Access Issues**

*Please see attached sheet.*

## Course Schedule

Topic		Readings
<b>Conceptualizing Culture</b>		
Week 1: 8/26, 8/28	Introduction: The Power and Peril of Culture	None
Week 2: 9/2, 9/4	Defining culture	Geertz (1973) "Thick Description" Swidler (1986) "Culture in Action" Sewell (1992) "A Theory of Structure" Sewell (1999) "The Concept(s) of Culture"
<b>Culture and Action</b>		
Week 3: 9/9, 9/11	Values and Motivations	Wuthnow (2008) "The Sociological Study of Values" D'Andrade (1992) "Schemas and Motivations" Vaisey (2009) "Motivation and Justification" Sánchez-Jankowski (2008) <i>Cracks in the Pavement</i> (Introduction and Chapter 1)
Week 4: 9/16, 9/18	Repertoires and Resources	Swidler (2001) <i>Talk of Love</i> Bourdieu (1986) "The Forms of Capital"
Week 5: 9/2, 9/25	Meaning Systems	Geertz (1973) "Religion as a cultural system" and "Ethos, Worldview, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols" Derné (1994) "Cultural Conceptions of Human Motivation" Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) "Culture in Interaction" Alexander and Smith (1993) "The Discourse of American Civil Society" D'Andrade (1984) "Cultural Meaning Systems"
Week 6: 9/30, 10/2	Culture and Cognition	DiMaggio (1997) "Culture and Cognition" Cicourel (2006) "The Interaction of Discourse, Cognition, and Culture" Goffman (1974) Selections from <i>Frame Analysis</i> Bergesen (2012) "Turning Durkheim on His Head" Lizardo (2009) "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's Habitus"
<b>How Culture Matters</b>		
Week 7: 10/7, 10/9	Culture, Institutions, and Markets	Biernacki (1995) <i>The Fabrication of Labor</i> (p 1-144, 313-347, and 436-497) Dobbin (1994) <i>Forging Industrial Policy</i> (chapter 1) Quinn (2008) "The Transformation of Morals in Markets"
Week 8: 10/14, 10/16	Constructing the Modern Individual	Collier (1997) <i>From Duty to Desire</i> (Ch. 1,2,5,6 Skim the rest) Stearns (1994) <i>American Cool</i> (Ch. 1,2,3,5, & 11. Skim 7 & 10.)

Week 9: 10/21, 10/23	Culture, Continuity, and Transformation	Armstrong (2002) <i>Forging Gay Identities</i> (Chapter 1, 5, and 10) Sánchez-Jankowski (2008) <i>Cracks in the Pavement</i> (Chapter 9) Sewell (1996) “Historical events as transformations of structures” Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz (1991) “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial”
Week 10: 10/28, 10/30	Culture and Stratification 1: Cultural Capital and the Distribution of Subjectivities	Abramson (2015) <i>The End Game</i> (Intro, ch. 3, 4 and conclusion) Bourdieu (1984) <i>Distinction</i> (p. 1-63; Conclusion) Sallaz and Zaviska (2008) Bourdieu in American Sociology
Week 11: 11/4, 11/6	Culture and Stratification 2: Identity and Boundaries	Lamont (2000) <i>The Dignity of Working Men</i> Beisel (1992) “Constructing a Shifting Moral Boundary” Mohr and Duquenne (1997) “The Duality of Culture and practice” Rivera (2012) “Hiring as Cultural Matching”
Week 12: 11/13 No Class 11/11	Boundary Work, Status Groups, and Subculture	Abramson and Modzelewski (2011) “Caged Morality” DiMaggio (1987) “Classification in Art” DiMaggio (1982) “Cultural Entrepreneurship in 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Boston” Hebdige (1981) <i>The Meaning of Style</i>
Week 13: 11/18, 11/20	Culture, Poverty, and Politics	Jindra (2014) “The Dilemma of Equality and Diversity” Sánchez-Jankowski (2008) <i>Cracks in the Pavement</i> (Chapters 10, 11, and conclusion) Small, Harding, Lamont (2010) “Reconsidering Culture and Poverty” Vaisey (2010) “What People Want”
Week 14: 11/25 No Class 11/27	Art and Cultural Production	Ian Watt (1957) <i>Rise of the Novel</i> (Ch. 1-3; 5,6) Becker (1982) <i>Art Worlds</i> (1,2,8,9) Hirsch (1972) “Processing Fads and Fashions” Lopes (1992) “Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry” Petersen and Berger (1975) “Cycles in Symbol Production”
Week 15: 10/2, 10/4	Cultural Consumption	Petersen and Kern (1996) “Changing Highbrow Taste” Lizardo and Skiles (2012) “Reconceptualizing and theorizing ‘omnivorousness’” Fishman and Lizardo (2013) “How Macro-historical Change Shapes Cultural Taste”

Connecting Culture		
Week 16: 10/9	Connecting the Facets of Culture	Abramson (2012) "From Either –Or to When and How" Frye (2012) "Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn" Lizardo and Strand (2010) "Skills, Toolkits, Contexts, and Institutions" Pachuki and Breiger (2010) "Cultural Holes"

*NOTE: We will not have class on November 11<sup>th</sup> (Veterans Day) or November 27<sup>th</sup> (Thanksgiving)*

## **Additional University and Departmental Policies**

### *Accessibility and Accommodations*

It is the University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also welcome to contact Disability Resources (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. For additional information on Disability Resources and reasonable accommodations, please visit <http://drc.arizona.edu/>.

If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

### *Student Code of Academic Integrity*

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>.

The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism available at: <http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>.

According to Section D (6) (a) of the University's Intellectual Property Policy (which is available at [http://www.ott.arizona.edu/uploads/ip\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ott.arizona.edu/uploads/ip_policy.pdf)), faculty own the intellectual property for their course notes and course materials. The instructor holds the copyright to his/her lectures and course materials, including student notes or summaries that substantially reflect them. Student notes and course recordings are for individual use or for shared use on an individual basis. *Selling class notes and/or other course materials to other students or to a third party for resale is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent.* Violations to the instructor's copyright are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy these copyrighted materials are subject to Code of Conduct Violations for misuse of student email addresses.

### **Confidentiality of Student Records**

Please see: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

### **Subject to Change Statement**

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

### **Officially Excused Absences**

1. All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion.
2. Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored.