Sociology 508: Sociology of Culture  
University of Arizona  
Fall 2011 (syllabus last updated 9/5/11)  
Fridays 2:00-4:30

Instructor: Jane Zavisca  
Office: Social Science 431  
Office Hours:  
• by appointment: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 or Fridays 4:30-5:30  
• drop-in: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 and Thursdays 3:00-4:00 (undergraduates have priority during drop-in times, but there are usually few visitors)  
Email: janezavisca@gmail.com

Description

This is a graduate level course on the sociology of culture. The course has two main goals: to survey key literature both within and beyond sociology, and to provide a forum for developing original research with a cultural component. The course treats the concept of culture broadly, as the symbolic dimension of social life. We will focus theoretically on cultural phenomena as cause, effect, and/or endogenous process.

The empirical readings emphasize culture and inequality, since this is my area of expertise. Readings are limited for culture-related topics that are routinely covered in other courses offered in this department, including economic sociology, organizations, social movements, political sociology, networks, and quantitative methods for cultural analysis.

Required Texts

The following books will be assigned (not available through the bookstore; should be ordered directly by students). All other readings will be posted online through the D2L system or hard copy provided on reserve basis.


Assignments and Assessment

Weekly memos on required readings: (25%)

Over the course of the semester, students will write brief analytical memos on the readings each week. Students should contribute *at least* 7 memos over the course of the semester.

Memos should be posted on the D2L discussion site **no later than 9am the morning of the class** (earlier would be appreciated). This will give me time to review the memos before class begins at 2pm. Memos submitted after the deadline will not be read or counted towards your 7 contributions. Feel free to comment on others’ memos on the discussion site.

Your memo should assume that your audience is familiar with the readings, and take an analytical point of view of some kind. For example, state what (and why) you agree or disagree with in the readings, critically relate them to one another, or discuss how you might apply ideas from the readings to your own research. Memos should be between 200-400 words. Please post memo as text directly into discussion thread; do not upload as attachments.

Class attendance and participation (25%)

Please come to class on time and plan to actively participate in discussions. Students who do not contribute to class discussions on a regular basis will receive no higher than a B in the course.

Research Paper or Mock Comprehensive Exam (50%)

1. Research Paper option: Papers should have a clearly stated research question and some original data analysis relevant to the question, and seriously engage the literature on the sociology of culture to motivate the question, hypotheses, and/or interpretation of findings. The paper should be written with the goal of submission to a professional conference or journal. Students planning to write a paper should meet with me in office hours no later than October 13 to discuss the proposed paper.

2. Mock comp option: Students may opt, in place of a research paper, to complete a take-home exam that will be structured like a written comprehensive examination in the sociology of culture. The exam will be given out in class on Friday, December 2.

The final paper or take-home exam will be due by Monday, December 12.
Schedule of Weekly Readings

Note: The reading list is subject to change; changes will be announced at least two weeks in advance. An asterisk (*) indicates the reading is on the 2011-12 comprehensive examination reading list for sociology of culture.

WEEK 1 (8/26): INTRODUCTION
Note: Due to Veteran’s Day and Thanksgiving Break both falling on Fridays, we have only 13 meetings this semester. I am asking you to do the first set of reading before the first class meets.


WEEK 2 (9/2) PRODUCTION


WEEK 3 (9/9) RECEPTION


WEEK 4 (9/16) IDEOLOGY

WEEK 5 (9/23) POWER

WEEK 6 (9/30): COGNITION

WEEK 7 (10/7): CLASSIFICATION
* Lakoff, Women Fire and Dangerous Things, Ch 6, pp. 91-114.


* Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Conclusion (pp. 466-484).

**WEEK 8 (10/14) BOUNDARIES**


**WEEK 9 (10/21) SIGNIFICATION & IDENTITY**


**WEEK 10 (10/28) RITUAL INTERACTION**


**WEEK 11 (11/4) EMBODIED PRACTICE**
* Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Chapter 3 (pp. 169-225).


**WEEK 12 (11/18): CULTURAL MECHANISMS**

**WEEK 13 (12/2) ENDOGENEITY**