

CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

Graduate Seminar SOCI 5321-01; CRN # 82110; 3 Credit Hours; Fall 2017

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COURSE FORMAT

This is an online course with no class meetings. This course is a graduate seminar, so discussion is its major learning format. All the discussions, as well as quizzes and projects' submissions occur via Blackboard. You are expected to meet with the instructor online via Skype whenever you need or instructor requests. For this class, you need a web camera.

COURSE DISCRIPTION

The course examines culture from the sociological perspective and has two foci with regard to culture: a subject and a conceptualization frame. First, it examines phenomena traditionally categorized as culture from both, micro and macro-sociological perspectives. Second, it examines phenomena not usually categorized as cultural by framing them in terms of constructionism and symbolic interactionism. The course addresses elements of culture and cultural hierarchy, culture events and artifacts in their relation to social structure and social change. It briefly takes students through the classic and modern theories of culture, introduces them to major sociological methods of cultural analysis, and helps them learn to apply those theories to analyze a variety of socio-cultural phenomena with relation to the patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand cultural mechanisms in the functioning of society.
2. Utilize concepts of cultural sociology in assessing societal issues.
3. Recognize and articulate cultural premises and dimensions of current global concerns.

READINGS

Navigation to the readings and multimedia materials are provided via Blackboard, except for the following book:

David Grazian. "Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society". W. W. Norton & Company. 2010. SBN-13: 978-0393929522 ISBN-10: 0393929523

ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING

Discussions. There are seven major discussions 30 points each during the following weeks: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13. Each discussion involves writing and brainstorming. Discussions (except for the introductory and closing forums) open Monday and close Sunday night. In the introductory forum, worth 10 points and held during the first week, students make their input into the course design and subjects selection. Closing forum is worth 10 points and held during the last week of class. Discussions are not available for makeup.

Projects. There are two mini-research papers worth 60 points each, a “Vocabulary” worth 50 points, and a reflection paper worth 20 points. There is no final paper. Projects are to be submitted **via** Blackboard by the deadlines (all 11:59 pm):

Project 1: October 8 (Sunday)

Project 2: October 15 (Sunday)

Reflection paper: October 22 (Sunday)

Vocabulary: November 21 (Tuesday)

Late submission policy: there are several days after the deadline specified for each paper in the prompts, when you can still submit your paper for a partial (50%) credit. Prompts for all the projects can be found on Blackboard under “Projects”.

Quizzes. There are four formalized (multiple choice, multiple answer, T/F) quizzes over assigned videos worth 20 points each. Quizzes are open for a week, Monday through Sunday (11:59 pm) and are timed.

Participation (e/c). Students, who demonstrate exceptional time management skills through the semester, such as staying on top of their work, meeting all the deadlines, and making discussion posts early enough for other students to read and react (by Wednesday night) receive up to ten points of extra credit for participation.

Discussions: 230 points

Projects: 190 points

Quizzes: 80 points

Participation: e/c: 10 points

Thus, it is possible to get up to 500 (+10 e/c) points for a rating of 100%. Passing grades for a graduate seminar are an ‘A’, a ‘B’, and a ‘C’, although you might want and need to earn an ‘A’ or a ‘B’.

A: 450 or more points

B: 400 – 449 points

C: 350 – 399 points

F: 349 and below

COURSE / INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Toward the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete the course and instructor evaluation. Any suggestions and feedback are also appreciated any time during the semester.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs, nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered, and helpful

procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

Academic Dishonesty: All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>, or <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Technical support

For all technical issues that might occur during the semester, contact university technical support. You can find detailed instructions and all the needed contact information on Blackboard. Keep it handy in a hard copy format.

Library

As an SHSU student, you have an access to the Newton Gresham Library resources and services, including the interlibrary loan (ILL). If you need an assistance with identifying and locating the library resources, consult with the library website <http://library.shsu.edu/>, or contact a librarian via the NGL webpage; you will find there links to an “Ask a librarian” chat and to “Help”.

Writing Center

The Writing Center at SHSU offers on-line students assistance on any aspect of the writing process, from generating ideas to using citations correctly. It provides individualized, immediate feedback on writing assignments by Skype tutoring sessions with Writing Center tutors. Skype appointments are available during regular hours and last 30 minutes to an hour. Appointments can be made by calling the Sam Houston Writing Center at 936-294-3680, and directions for conducting a Skype session will be provided at that time. For more details: www.shsu.edu/wctr.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 Aug 23–25. Course introduction

Introductory forum; students contribute to the themes selection and the format of the course.

Week 2, Aug 28–Sep 1. On the meanings of culture

Readings:

White, Leslie. Symbol: the basic element of culture. 19

Williams, Raymond. Culture is ordinary. 1958.

Geertz, Clifford. Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture. 1973.

Miner, Horace. Body rituals among the Nacirema. 1956

Discussion 1 “Dinner table: questioning cultural assumption”

Week 3, Sep 4–8. The social construction of reality.

Readings:

Berger, P., Luckmann, T. The social construction of reality. 1966

Blumer, H. Society as symbolic interaction. 1962

Anderson, B. Imagined communities: nationalism’s cultural roots. 1983

Video TBA. Quiz 1

Discussion 2 “The Thomas Theorem”

Week 4, Sep 11–15. The construction of race and gender

Readings:

Goffman, E. Gender advertisements. 1976

Foucault, M. The history of sexuality. 1978

Anderson, The code of the street. 1999

Video TBA. Quiz 2

Discussion 3 “The construction of race in Census 2010”

Week 5, Sep 18–22. The construction of body

Readings:

Foucault, M. The birth of the clinic. 1963

Rothman, B. Recreating motherhood. 1983

Phelan, M. Prison gang members' tattoos as identity work: the visual communication of moral careers. 1998

Lev, D., Cibriwsky, R. Urban graffiti as territorial markers. 1974

Discussion 4 “The dynamics of gender”

Week 6, Sep 25–29. The construction of identity

Readings:

Goffman, E. Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. 1963

Alexander, J. Toward the theory of cultural trauma. 2004

Cribblez, A. Parading patriotism: Independence Day celebrations in the urban Midwest, 1826-1876. 2013

Bellesiles, M. The origins of national gun culture. 2000

Discussion 5 “The construction of national identity. Key metaphor”

Week 7, Oct 2–6. Culture as a weaponry: social engineering

Readings:

Dobb, L. Goebbels' principles of propaganda. 1950

Jones, Ron. The Third Wave. 1981

Thompson, A. The media and the Rwanda genocide. 2014

Video TBA. Quiz 3

Project 1 “Media exercise”

Week 8, Oct 9–13. Mass/popular culture

Readings:

Baudrillard, J. The system of objects. 1991

Baudrillard, J. Symbolic exchange and death. 1976

Grazian, D. Mix it Up: Popular culture, mass media, and society. 2011. Chs.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Project 2 “Music genres”

Week 9, Oct 16–20. Consumption and identity

Readings:

Grazian, D. Mix it up: popular culture, mass media, and society. Chs. 8, 9, 10

Bagwell, L., Bernheim, D. Veblen effects in a theory of conspicuous consumption. 1996

Sundie, J. at al. Peacocks, porches, and Thorstein Veblen: conspicuous consumption as a sexual signaling system. 2011

Wang, Y., Giskevicius, Y. Conspicuous consumption, relationships, and rivals: women’s luxury products as signals to other women. 2014

Reflection paper “Consumption patterns”

Week 10, Oct 23–27. Cultural consumption and social class

Readings:

Bourdieu, P. How one can be a sports fan. 1999

Witte, M. The Redneck haiku. 2005

Goad, J. The redneck manifesto: how hillbillies, hicks, and White trash became America's scapegoats. 1998

Grazian, D. Mix it Up: Popular culture, mass media, and society. 2011. Ch. 7

Video TBA. Quiz 4

Week 11, Oct 30–Nov 3. The call of Halloween: Death in culture

Readings:

Simmel, G. The metaphysics of Death. 1910

Huizinga, J. *The waning of the Middle Ages*. 1914

Bakhtin, M. *The Rabelais and his world*. 1965

Bataille, G. *The tears of Eros*. 1961

Discussion 6: “Culture of the Walking Dead”

Week 12, Nov 6–10. American celebrations: on the meanings of Christmas

Readings:

Levi-Strauss, C. *Father Christmas executed*. 1968

Nissenbaum, S. *The battle for Christmas. A Social and Cultural History of Our Most Cherished Holiday*. 1997

Whiteley, S. *Christmas, ideology, and popular culture*. 2008

Harriss, A. *Santa Claus Should Not Be a White Man Anymore*. 2013

Week 13, Nov 13-17. The social media

Readings:

Haraway, D. *A cyborg manifesto*. 1984

Asur, S., Huberman, B. *Predicting the future with social media*. 2000

Sergeant, P. (ed) *The Language of social media: identity and community on the Internet*. 2014

Allcott, H., Gentzkow, M. *Social media and fake news in the 2016 election*. 2017

Discussion 7: “Chasing the reality: spatial and temporal characteristics of culture”

Week 14, Nov 20, 21

The “Vocabulary” submission deadline. Thanksgiving

Week 15, Nov 27–Dec 1. The velocity of culture

Closing forum

The syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified of any change.