EMORY UNIVERSITY

Sociology 221

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Fall 2014
Monday / Wednesday
2:30 - 3:45
105 Tarbutton Hall

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
231 Tarbutton Hall (x6259)
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Office Hours: 3:00-4:30 (W)

Graduate Assistant: Trent Ryan; trent.ryan@emory.edu

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we survey major themes and questions in the sociology of culture. We do so in three broad sections. (1) We begin briefly by developing a “vocabulary” that is drawn from a variety of approaches. This new vocabulary allows us to address questions as “What is culture and what does it do?” (2) We then examine the classic treatments of culture found in the respective works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. This, in turn, allows us to see how issues that they each raised are treated today. Examples of these issues include the following: “How do media messages shape our view of reality?” and “How does religion fare in modern times?” (3) We finally focus on some issues that have commanded considerable attention among contemporary sociologists – particularly as they relate to cultural capital and social / symbolic boundaries. Thus, we will deal with such questions as “How can something as ephemeral as musical tastes matter for inequality?” and “How do people in one group define themselves as distinctive from others?”

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are strongly encouraged to attend class, especially because we use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings. Regular attendance, moreover, will raise your final grade. If you miss only one class during the semester, I will add two points to your final grade. If you miss only two classes, I will add one point.

You are required to complete four written assignments: one major paper and three short memos. The paper involves a research project that you will complete over the course of the semester. You may choose your paper topic from a list that I will circulate on October 8th or you may propose a topic of your own (subject to my approval) by October 20th. In either case, an outline of your paper is due on November 5th and the completed paper is due on December 15th (although it may be submitted before that date). This 8- to 10-page paper is worth 25% of your final grade. The memos will help you prepare for the examinations. In these 3-page assignments, you will synthesize the readings and the issues that emerge as the class progresses. The due dates for the memos, as well as the dates for when I distribute memo questions, are listed below. The memos will comprise 15% of your final grade (5% each). Note that I will distribute a total of four memo assignments, but you are required to complete only three.
You are also required to take two examinations – a midterm and a non-cumulative final. Both exams consist of short-answer and essay questions. Prior to each exam, I will distribute a handout that will help you prepare for the test. Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade. The midterm examination occurs on October 27th during class time. The final examination occurs on December 12th from 8:00 to 10:30 am.

Students are expected to adhere to the Emory Honor Code when completing both assignments and examinations (see http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html).

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COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., syllabus, overheads) will be posted on the Blackboard site for SOC 221 (see http://classes.emory.edu/).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available on our Blackboard site and at Woodruff Library's electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php; click on “Reserves Direct”).

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (see http://www.ods.emory.edu/)

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COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to revision)

SECTION ONE: DEVELOPING A VOCABULARY

August 27: Introductions and Logistical Matters

September 1: LABOR DAY (No Class)


SECTION TWO: CLASSIC ISSUES & CONTEMPORARY COUNTERPARTS

Marxian Issues: Commodification, Ideology and Resistance

September 10 (cont.): **MEMO QUESTION #1 DISTRIBUTED**


**MEMO QUESTION #1 DUE**


**Weberian Issues: Rationalization of the Economy, of Work, and of Evaluation**


**MEMO QUESTION #2 DISTRIBUTED**


**MEMO QUESTION #2 DUE**

**Durkheimian Issues: Rituals, Boundaries and Community**


**RESEARCH TOPICS DISTRIBUTED**

October 13: **FALL BREAK (No Class)**


**ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH TOPIC DUE**

**TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED**


October 27: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

**SECTION THREE: PROMINENT ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP**

**Cultural Consecration: Classification and Celebration**


November 5: Video: Thunder Soul

**RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE DUE**


**MEMO QUESTION #3 DISTRIBUTED**


**Cultural Capital: Consuming and Embodying the Consecrated**

November 17 (cont.): **MEMO QUESTION #3 DUE**


November 24: Video: Spellbound

**MEMO QUESTION #4 DISTRIBUTED**

November 26: **THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS MEETINGS)**


**MEMO QUESTION #4 DUE**


**TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED**


December 12: **FINAL EXAMINATION (8:00 to 10:30 am)**

December 15: **RESEARCH PAPER DUE**