

EMORY UNIVERSITY
Sociology 221-OLA
CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Summer 2017
Synchronous Sessions
4:30 – 6:00 T/Th

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
tdowd@emory.edu
(404) 727-6259

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we survey major themes and questions in the sociology of culture. We do so in six “modules” distributed across as many weeks. We begin by developing a “vocabulary” that is drawn from a variety of approaches (*Module 1*). This new vocabulary allows us to address such questions as “What is culture and what does it do?” We then examine the classic treatments of culture found in the respective works of Marx (*Module 2*), Weber (*Module 3*) and Durkheim (*Module 4*). 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?” We finally focus on some issues that have commanded considerable attention among contemporary sociologists. Thus, we will deal with such questions as “How can something as ephemeral as musical tastes matter for inequality?” (*Module 5*) and “How has the Internet altered patterns of behavior (e.g., music consumption) while also reinforcing other patterns, such as those revolving around inequality?” (*Module 6*).

AN EXPLANATORY NOTE: THE ONLINE ASPECT

Culture and Society is a foundation course for our majors. As a result, it is a course that covers a fair amount of material. When this course is taught in the summer, it still covers most of this material, but in a compacted schedule.

However, in this summer session, Culture and Society has been transferred to an online format. While it still must address the usual material, it does so by only having the class meet online for 3 hours per week (over six weeks). These “real-time” meetings (or synchronous sessions) will serve an important role for this class—allowing the usual give and take found in a traditional classroom.

Yet, the relatively short time devoted to synchronous sessions (and the limited material they can cover) means that a substantial portion of the course will involve work that you will do on your own. This work will, of course, involve the usual class readings, but it will also involve the digesting of videos that I have prepared and posted on Blackboard sites. These videos cover much of the substantive topics typically addressed in Culture and Society but topics that can’t be squeezed into the limited synchronous sessions. Hence, videos, documentaries, readings and assignments – these are the “asynchronous” portion of the online class.

As you see in the schedule below, there are quite a few asynchronous items to cover in six weeks. But be of good cheer: I've worked hard to make them as friendly and as palatable as I can for you. To that end, I ask that you do the asynchronous materials in the order that I placed them. There's a logic to how things will progress, and following that logic should make the learning process go more smoothly than if you did the various asynchronous items out of order.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Given how few synchronous sessions we have for this summer session, I expect regular attendance at those. Unexcused absences at synchronous sessions can have a negative impact upon your final grade.

You will complete 12 VoiceThread assignments. These are relatively short and easy tasks in which you post informed spoken comments in response to a specific question. As you will see, some of these VoiceThread assignments will be much easier (e.g., opinion-based to stimulate conversation) than others (e.g., those requiring some gathering of evidence). All of these VoiceThread assignments will be graded "qualitatively" in terms of satisfactory-plus, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. Please see the Blackboard site for instruction on how to make a VoiceThread comment. These assignments will comprise 20% of your final grade.

You will complete four memos during this summer session. They will help you master the substantive material of the class, while also preparing you 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 20% of your final grade (5% each).

You are also required to take two examinations—a midterm and a non-cumulative final. Both exams consist of short-answer and essay questions. They will also be "take-home" exams and, hence, open books and notes are allowed. Prior to each exam, I will distribute a study guide. Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade. The dates for both exams are listed below.

Students are expected to adhere to the Emory Honor Code when completing both assignments and examinations. For reference, please consult:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.

COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., asynchronous materials, lecture presentations) 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>).

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the summer session and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Equity and Inclusion website; see <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html>).

COURSE SCHEDULE OF ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS

(subject to revision)

MODULE 0—PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

The materials in this section are essential, as they will help you negotiate the logistics of this online course. Please consult them before proceeding to Module 1.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Title</i>
Video	Welcome to SOC 221
Video	Navigating the SOC 221 Blackboard Site
Video	Using Voice Thread in SOC 221
Link	Join the SOC 221 VoiceThread Group
Video	Using Adobe Connect for the Synchronous Sessions

MODULE 1—DEVELOPING A VOCABULARY

Any survey of cultural sociology should begin by addressing a key question: “How are we to conceptualize and study culture?” In this module, we deal with the conceptualization of culture in two ways. First, we develop a working definition of culture; second, we gain an appreciation for what social theory is and does. We then move on to the “study” of culture by giving special attention to methods and research designs—moving from quantitative approaches (such as that found in the Schmutz reading) to qualitative ones (such as that in the Pugh reading). In developing this vocabulary, you will gain an appreciation for how one “does” cultural sociology.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
VoiceThread #1	May 15, 5:00 pm	Introductions
Video	May 15	What Is Culture?
Video	May 15	Constructing a Working Definition of Culture
Barbie Nation	May 15	<i>Barbie Nation</i>
VoiceThread #2	May 15, midnight	<i>Barbie Nation</i> , Culture and Social Structure
Reading	May 16, 4:30 pm	<i>Culture & Societies in a Changing World</i> , Chapter One
Video	May 16, 4:30 pm	What Is Social Theory and Why Does It Matter?
Video	May 16, 4:30 pm	A Quick Primer on Social Research Methods
Video	May 17	What in the World Is Logistic Regression?

Reading	May 17	“Retrospective Cultural Consecration in Popular Music: <i>Rolling Stone’s</i> Greatest Albums of All Time”
Link	May 17	<i>Rolling Stone’s</i> 500 Greatest Albums of All Time
VoiceThread #3	May 17, midnight	Gender and Cultural Consecration
Reading	May 18	“Distinction, Boundaries or Bridge? Children, Inequality and the Uses of Consumer Culture”
Memo #1	May 21, midnight	

MODULE 2—MARXIAN ISSUES: IDEOLOGY, COMMODIFICATION AND RESISTANCE

Among early sociologists who explained how the world works, Karl Marx towers above many of them. He famously argued that modern society (modern for him) is marked by much inequality—as markets proliferate and become dominated by a few, and as ideology blinds most people to this situation. Yet, as we’ll see, he also had an optimistic streak, seeing history as ultimately headed in a positive direction.

Marxian ideas have proven influential for subsequent cultural sociologists. The early Frankfurt School used his ideas to show how media industries are sources of the blinding ideology—and, in the process, they adopted a less optimistic view than Marx. Meanwhile, others have explored the limits of Marxian ideas—such as revealing that commodification need not always be only about money, it can also be about cherished ideals (as Zelizer shows with life insurance). Others show that large media firms are not so powerful and adept as Marx (and the Frankfurt School) would have suggested. Instead, uncertainty abounds for large media firms, and small media firms and their fans can resist the fare of the large firms. We get at these latter points by consider the examples of fashion models and rap music.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
Reading	May 22	<i>Cultures and Societies in a Changing World</i> , pp. 29-34
Video	May 22	The Marxian Take on Materialism
VoiceThread #4	May 22, midnight	Newspaper Front-Page Coverage
Video	May 23, 4:30 pm	Putting the History in Historical Materialism
Reading	May 23, 4:30 pm	“Human Values and the Market: The Case of Life Insurance and Death in 19 th Century America”
Video	May 24	The Frankfurt School and Mass Media
Video	May 24	Fashion Houses and Model Selection: The Role of Uncertainty
Reading	May 24	“Size Zero High-End Ethnic: Cultural Production and the Reproduction of Culture in Fashion Modeling”
VoiceThread #5	May 24, midnight	Fashion Models and Their Markets
Video	May 25, 4:30	Mainstream vs. Underground
Reading	May 25, 4:30	“(Un)conscious (Popular) Underground: Restricted Cultural Production and Underground Rap Music”

Memo #2	May 28, midnight	
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MODULE 3—WEBERIAN ISSUES: RATIONALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, OF WORK, AND OF EVALUATION

A well-known aphorism states that Weber argued with the ghost of Marx. Like Marx, he saw inequality as a prominent feature of modern society. However, unlike Marx, he wasn't so optimistic about the path of history, especially as he saw inequality emerging not only in the economic realm but also in terms of lifestyle (i.e., status). Another reason for his pessimism was what he called "rationalization"—justifications for action that are increasingly based on calculable and systematic criteria rather than on mystical or *ad hoc* criteria. His *Protestant Ethic* illustrates the theme of rationalization, including the famous "iron cage" passage. Scott addresses aspects of this Protestant ethic (e.g., the calling) by considering the impact of religion on contemporary notions of work, while also heeding the role that gender plays. Lareau deals with issues of class and status, while also seeing how affluent parents are getting more "rationalized" in how they raise their children, which is likewise evident in the documentary, *Spellbound*. Finally, Espeland and Sauder approach the topic of rationalization via a consideration of law school rankings—and the uneasiness that some have about reducing the quality of law schools to a single number on a scale.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
Video	May 30, noon	Tutorial on the Using the American Community Survey
Link	May 30, noon	American Community Survey
VoiceThread #6	May 30, noon	The Percentage of College-Educated in Your Hometown or Nearest American City
Reading	May 30, 4:30 pm	<i>Cultures and Societies in a Changing World</i> , pp. 37-41
Video	May 30, 4:30 pm	Weber and the Ghost of Marx
Video	May 30	The Protestant Ethic Summarized
Reading	May 31	"Choices and Constraints: Protestantism, Gender, and the Meaning of Work"
Reading	May 31	"Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families"
Documentary	May 31	<i>Spellbound</i>
VoiceThread #7	May 31, midnight	Parenting Styles and Extracurricular Activities
Video	June 1, 4:30 pm	Weber and Rationalization
Reading	June 1	"Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds"
Examination #1	June 4, midnight	

MODULE 4—DURKHEIMIAN ISSUES: RITUAL, BOUNDARIES AND COMMUNITY

If Marx and Weber emphasized inequality and the conflict that occurs in society, Durkheim focused on what holds societies together—what provides their “solidarity.” Among other things, Durkheim showed the cohesive role that religion can play. Yet, he also noted that some other things can play a similar role to religion — drawing their own types of boundaries between the “sacred” and “profane.” Much contemporary scholarship has drawn on these Durkheimian ideas in intriguing ways. Lacy inspects the boundaries that middle class African Americans negotiate in daily life. Meanwhile, others focus on how the “sacred” can reveal itself at basketball games, Mardi Gras celebrations, and war memorials.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
Reading	June 5	<i>Cultures and Societies in a Changing World</i> , pp. 51-55
Video	June 5	Durkheim and the Division of Labor
VoiceThread #8	June 5, midnight	What Constitutes “Worthy?”
Video	June 6, 4:30 pm	Durkheim and Religion
Reading	June 6, 4:30 pm	“Black Spaces, Black Places: Strategic Assimilation and Identity Construction in Middle Class Suburbia”
Video	June 7	The “Sacred” in Other Realms: Home Court Advantage
Reading	June 7	“Ritual Disrobement at Mardi Gras: Ceremonial Exchange and Moral Order”
VoiceThread #9	June 7, midnight	Mardi Gras and the “Sacred”
Link	June 8, 4:30	Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial 1982
Reading	June 8, 4:30	“The Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past”
Memo #3	June 11, midnight	

MODULE 5—CULTURAL CAPITAL: CONSUMING AND EMBODYING THE CONSECRATED

Scholars working in the Weberian tradition have developed the concept of “cultural capital” to demonstrate how lifestyle contributes to inequality. Bourdieu's work is an important touchstone for this literature—which we’ll discuss in this module. DiMaggio provides another touchstone by not only documenting how cultural capital can shape educational success, but also by showing how cultural capital is linked to ongoing efforts to uphold “high culture”—the celebrated music, etc. upon which cultural capital is based. Aschaffenburg & Mass rigorously assess the cultural capital accounts offered by both Bourdieu and DiMaggio. The remaining works enrich, if not critique, cultural capital research by problematizing certain aspects. All of them show that something as innocuous as musical taste and familiarity can have tremendous implications for how one does later in life, with the documentary *Thunder Soul* making that point especially.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
Video	June 12	Cultural Capital: An Overview
Video	June 12	The Institutionalization of High Culture
Reading	June 12	“Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America”
VoiceThread #10	June 12, midnight	Symphonic Repertoires
Video	June 13, 4:30 pm	Cultural Capital and Educational Success: Key Studies
Reading	June 13, 4:30 pm	“Cultural and Educational Careers: The Dynamics of Social Reproduction”
Reading	June 14	“Confucius or Mozart? Cultural Wealth and Upward Mobility among Children of Chinese Immigrants”
Documentary	June 14	<i>Thunder Soul</i>
VoiceThread #11	June 14, midnight	Thunder Soul, Music and Educational Success
Video	June 15, 4:30 pm	Habitus and Educational Success
Video	June 15, 4:30 pm	Cultural Capital, Omnivorism and Beyond
Reading	June 15, 4:30 pm	“The Gendered Transition to College: The Role of Culture in Ego-Network Evolution”
Memo #4	June 18, midnight	

MODULE 6: THE SOCIAL NATURE OF TECHNOLOGY

It’s not unusual to hear the claim, “New technologies change the world.” In this module, we take a less gushing approach—considering how it is that some (but not all) new technologies eventually are positioned in a way that promotes change. In other words, we won’t see change as automatically occurring—but, rather, sometimes occurring. Relatedly, we’ll also examine how new technologies can reinforce existing patterns of life rather than overthrow or transform them. We get at these issues by way of telephones, TVs, music and the Internet.

<i>Format</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
Video	June 19	Technological Determinism vs. Embeddedness
Video	June 19	The (Evolving) Uses of the Phone
Reading	June 19	“Pathways to Musical Exploration in a Digital Age”
VoiceThread #12	June 19, midnight	The Discovery of New Music
Video	June 20, 4:30 pm	The “First” Digital Divide
Video	June 20, 4:30 pm	The Internet and Earnings
Reading	June 20, 4:30 pm	“The Digital Production Gap: The Digital Divide and Web 2.0 Collide”
Examination #2	June 23, midnight	