Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

Soc 560; Fall 2013

Thursdays 4:00-7:00; 206 Tarbutton Hall & ECIT 217 (Woodruff Library)

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:00
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course (1) provides students with grounding in cultural sociology and (2) prepares students for doing their own cultural research. To facilitate the first objective, we survey major themes and issues in the sociology of culture. We begin this survey by considering the sociological approach to culture, which entails answering the following questions: “What is culture and what does it do?” and “How are we to study culture?” We get at these broad questions via the case of music. We next turn to issues that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim respectively raised. In particular, we inspect how current scholars (from a variety of theoretical perspectives) approach these seminal issues. Examples of issues that spring from the work of classical sociologists include the following: “Do media messages shape our view of reality? If so, how?” and “How do class and lifestyle intertwine to reproduce inequality?” Finally, we turn to substantive questions that have come to the fore in recent decades, including “How is market activity undergirded by cultural assumptions?” and “How does social context shape the production and consumption of expressive goods?” To facilitate the second objective (i.e., doing research), we give special attention to methods and designs employed in current research, and we heed how theoretical ideas are translated into empirical projects. Thus, by the end of the semester, each student will have a grasp of the field and an understanding of how to do cultural sociology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized as a seminar, which entails the combination of a fair amount of reading, class discussion, and an empirical paper. Given this organization, you are expected to attend each class and to participate.

A) Attendance

If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. Note that unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade.
B) Class Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned material before class and develop your own assessment of this material. Such careful preparation will improve the quality of class discussion. Of course, class discussion should be both informed and respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings. Most of all, this discussion should be fun. Class participation comprises 20% of your final grade.

C) Weekly Memos

You will prepare a 3-page memo for each week's readings (typed and double-spaced). You should regard these memos as ideas in progress rather than as finished products. Use them to digest each week's readings and to respond with questions, criticisms, and new ideas. Please bring your memo to class and submit it at the end of the evening. The weekly memos comprise 30% of your final grade.

D) Final Paper

You will complete a theoretically informed paper with an empirical component. This paper will be at least 15-pages in length (typed and double-spaced), and it will represent the first step in your efforts to submit a work for an honor’s thesis, conference presentation and/or journal review. While the paper topic is left to your discretion (subject to my approval), the default paper will consist of survey analysis – most likely involving one of the surveys located at the Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archive (see http://http://www.cpanda.org/cpanda/data). Of course, you have the option of proposing an alternative to this default of survey-analysis.

I ask that you discuss your topic with me by September 26 and submit an outline by October 24. The final paper is due on December 12 and comprises 50% of your final grade.

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**COURSE RESOURCES**

As the semester progresses, class materials will be posted on the Blackboard site for SOC 560 (see http://classes.emory.edu/). Each week, for example, I will post a “Questions to Ponder” document that addresses the current readings. These questions should give you a starting point for approaching the reading materials and subsequent class discussion.

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available at our Blackboard site and at Woodruff electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php).

Note that the readings for this class augment – but do not duplicate – those found in the Sociology of the Arts (SOC 561) and Sociology of Mass Media (SOC 562) graduate seminars.
As a result, you may wish to peruse the SOC 561 and SOC 562 syllabi for additional culture readings on my faculty webpage (see http://sociology.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/dowd-tim.html).

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Disability Services website; see http://www.ods.emory.edu/).

**COURSE SCHEDULE**  
**(Subject to Revision)**

**August 29:**  
**Introductions**

**September 5:**  
**Sociology and the Study of Culture: The Case of Music**


**September 12:**  
**Class, Ideology, Reproduction and Resistance: The Cultural Turn**


September 19: From Media Domination to Framing


September 26: Status Groups: The Construction of Identity and Exclusion


DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER TOPICS
October 3:  
**Class, Status, and Cultural Capital: Reproduction Revisited**


October 10:  
**The Rationalization of Life, Work and the Economy**


October 17:  
**Sources of Solidarity: Classification Boundaries and Rituals**


October 24: Construction of Markets and Industries


DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER OUTLINES

October 31 The Social Context of Creativity [MEET IN ECIT 217]


**November 7:**  *The Content of Expressive Goods: Stability and Change [ECIT 217]*


**November 14:**  *The Reception and Consumption of Expressive Goods [ECIT 217]*


**November 21: Aesthetic Classification Systems: The Interplay between Production and Consumption [ECIT 217]**


**November 28: THANKSGIVING BREAK (No Class)**

**December 5: WORK ON FINAL PAPERS (No Class)**

**December 12: FINAL PAPER DUE**