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 does social context shape the production and consumption of expressive goods?” 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 do class and lifestyle intertwine to reproduce inequality?”

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.

As part of this participation, you will be asked to be responsible for 1 reading per week—making sure that relevant points from that reading are brought into the discussion.

Class participation comprises 50% of your final grade.

C) Final Paper

You will complete a 15-page paper (typed and double-spaced). The paper should deal with some aspect of cultural sociology, yet it should also relate to your own research interests. Consequently, this paper may take a variety of forms. For example, it can be a review of the literature, a research proposal, or an empirical project.

I ask that you discuss your topic with me by September 21 and submit an outline by October 19. The final paper is due on December 7 and comprises 50% of your final grade.

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COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 560 (see https://canvas.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 Canvas site and at Woodruff electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php).

The particular reading that provides the foundation for each week is marked by a star (*). 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 Accessibility Services website; see http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html).

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

**August 24:** *Introductions*

**August 31:** *Sociology and the Study of Culture: The Case of Music*


**September 7:** *Class, Ideology and Resistance: The Cultural Turn*


September 14:  From Media Domination to Media Framing


September 21:  Status Groups: The Construction of Identity and Exclusion


DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER TOPICS

September 28:  Class, Status, and Cultural Capital: Reproduction Revisited


**October 5:** *Distinction: The Intertwining of Social Position and Tastes*


**October 12:** *The Rationalization of Life, Work and the Economy*


**October 19: Classification and Boundaries in Contemporary Times**


**DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER OUTLINES**

**October 26: Construction of Markets and Industries**


**November 2:**  
**The Social Context of Creativity**


**November 9:**  
**The Content of Expressive Goods: Stability and Change**


**November 16:**  
**The Reception and Consumption of Expressive Goods**


**November 23:** THANKSGIVING BREAK (No Class)

**November 30:** Taking Stock of Big Ideas


**December 7:** FINAL PAPER DUE