Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

SOC 560; Spring 2021

Thursdays 4:30-7:30; Online via Zoom

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30 to 3:30
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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, including the important contributions of Du Bois. We next turn to issues that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim respectively raised years ago. In particular, we inspect how current scholars (from a variety of theoretical perspectives) approach these enduring 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

- Attendance

You are strongly encouraged to attend class, especially because we will use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings. In fact, each daily reading is a contemporary example of broader scholarship that I will address in my lectures.
Of course, given the current pandemic, some students might become sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine. If you feel ill or fear that you are sick, please understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Thus, do not put yourself at risk for fear of missing a class.

- **Office Hours and Appointments**

I will be holding “virtual” office hours via Zoom on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 pm. Please use my Calendly link to sign up for a specific time: [https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours](https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours).

If you cannot make those office hours, please email me for alternative times.

The Zoom link for office hours is: [https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595](https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595).

I will occasionally hold in-person office hours, as well. I will share more information on those hours as the semester unfolds.

- **Participation**

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. Participation accounts for 75% of your final grade.

- **Assignment**

You will answer a set of questions over the course of a week following the last class meeting. These questions will be in the format of our program’s preliminary examination. As a result, this assignment will allow you to synthesize what you have learned throughout the semester, as well as offer “practice” for prelim-type exams. This assignment comprises 25% 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](https://canvas.emory.edu)).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available at our Canvas site.

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 (and other syllabi) for additional culture readings on my faculty webpage (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).

A NOTE ABOUT THE READINGS

Cultural sociology is a sprawling and ever-growing body of scholarship. As a result, there is no way to capture all of it in the readings for a single seminar. What you will see below, then, are a mixture of readings that should provide an informative entrée to cultural sociology while also touching upon classics, contemporary classics, and brand new works. You will also encounter a number of works-in-progress – which is helpful for you to see cultural sociology in action (rather than as a finished product).

COURSE SCHEDULE
(Subject to Revision)

January 28: Introductions

February 4: Sociology and the Study of Culture: The Case of Music


February 11:  VIRTUAL VISIT BY DR. ANTHONY JACK (5:00 pm)


Register at http://bit.ly/DrAnthonyJackEmory

February 18:  Capitalism and Class: The Cultural Turn


February 25:  Old Media, New Media: Domination, Framing, & Homogeneity


**March 4: Status Groups: The Construction of Identity and Exclusion**


**March 11: Class, Status, and Cultural Capital: Reproduction Revisited**


**March 18: Distinction: The Intertwining of Social Position and Tastes**


March 25: The Rationalization of Life and the Aura of Rationality


April 1: Genre Classifications and Valuation


**April 8: Classification and the Sacred in Contemporary Times**


**April 15: Construction of Organizations and Industries**


**April 22: Emotions, Health, and Hierarchies**


April 29: The Reception and Consumption of Expressive Goods

Friedman, Sam. 2012. “Cultural Omnivores or *Culturally Homeless*? Exploring the Shifting Cultural Identities of the Upwardly Mobile.” *Poetics* 40: 467-489.


May 3: Final Questions Posted

May 10: Final Answers Due