Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF THE ARTS

SOC 561; Fall 2019

Fridays, 1:00 – 4:00, 206 Tarbutton Hall

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
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Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00 – 4:00
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociological consideration of the arts has a long history. It extends back to the works of such classical writers as Max Weber and W.E.B. Du Bois and has burgeoned in recent times with the contributions of such scholars as Pierre Bourdieu, Wendy Griswold, and Damon Phillips. In studying realms of creativity, such scholars have connected those realms to key concerns in sociological theory – such as commodification, inequality, legitimation, and racialized hierarchies – while also drawing recently upon a host of cutting edge methodologies related to multiple correspondence analysis, social network analysis, topic modeling, and so forth. Put another way, this graduate seminar on a specialized topic also ties directly to the core of sociology.

In this advanced seminar, we seek a purchase on this sociological work by discussing many of these classic works in class and by reading contemporary works addressing themes that currently enliven the sociology of the arts. As a result, we will explore such topics as artistic careers, fields of artistic production, aesthetic boundaries, the audiences for artistic works, and the import and impact of critics. Besides providing students with grounding in the sociology of the arts, this advanced seminar will also prepare them for doing their own research in this area of scholarship, as well as in sociology more broadly. In particular, we will give special attention to methods and designs employed in current research, and each student will also embark upon their own empirical project. Thus, by the end of the semester, all will have a grasp of the field and an understanding of how to conduct research in the sociology of the arts.

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 50% of your final grade.

C) Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices, such as laptops and tablets, can be very useful in terms of taking notes. However, when students use them in class to do other things (e.g., surf the Internet, order from online stores, check social media posts) that proves detrimental both to student participation and discussion. Note that using devices in a non-curricular way will, most definitely, affect your final grade in a negative fashion.

D) Final Paper

Many of 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 likely represent the first step in your efforts to submit a work for 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 analysis of an existing dataset – most likely one of the surveys located at the National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture (see http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NADAC/studies) or one of the longitudinal datasets that I have. Of course, you have the option of proposing an alternative to this default paper – including a qualitative study or literature review.

I ask that you discuss your topic with me by October 4 and meet with me to discuss your outline by November 8. The final paper is due on December 17 and comprises 50% of your final grade.

COURSE RESOURCES

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available on our Canvas site for SOC 560 (see http://canvas.emory.edu).

Note that the readings for this class augment – but do not duplicate – those found in my other culture seminars: Sociology of Culture (SOC 560) and Sociology of Mass Media (SOC 562). As a result, you may wish to peruse the SOC 560 and SOC 561 syllabi for additional culture / arts readings on my faculty webpage (http://www.sociology.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/dowdtim.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 30:**    **Introductions**

**September 6:**    **Situating “Art” in the Broader Society**


**September 13:**    **Be(com)ing an Artistic Creator**


**September 20:**  **Aesthetic Classification: Canons and “High Culture”**


**September 27:**  **Aesthetic Classification: “De-Hierarchilization” and Commodification**


**October 4:**  **Arts Organizations**


DUE DATE FOR MEETING RE: RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC (October 4th)

October 11: Fields of Artistic Production


October 18: Connecting Careers, Organizations and Fields, Pt. 1: Networks


**October 25: Connecting Careers, Organizations and Fields, Pt. 2: Reputations**


**November 1: Cultural Intermediaries, Part 1: Critics and Legitimation**


**November 8: Cultural Intermediaries, Part 2: From Production to Consumption**


**DUE DATE FOR MEETING RE: RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE (November 8th)**

**November 15:**  
*Moving Forward Bourdieu’s Theory of Taste*


**November 22:**  
*Moving Forward Cultural Omnivorism Theory*


November 29:  NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

December 6:  Audiences in Action: The Creative Work of “receivers”


December 17:  DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPERS