

**Emory University**  
**SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE**

**SOC 560; Fall 2026**

**Mondays, 1:00-3:45 pm, 206 Tarbutton Hall**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 pm

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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 and then via recent work on the concept of culture. We next turn to issues that Marx, Weber, Du Bois, 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 corporations and media 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 aesthetic activities and works?” 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, students will have a grasp of the field and an understanding of how to do cultural sociology.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This course is organized as a seminar, which entails the combination of a fair amount of reading, class discussion, and written assignments. This leads to the following requirements.

**A) Attendance**

Attendance is crucial for this class, especially as we meet only once per week. If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make the necessary arrangements. Note that two absences may reduce your final grade by a half-a-letter (e.g., A to A-), with each absence thereafter reducing by another half-a-letter 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. Class participation comprises **half of your final grade**.

## C) Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices—such as laptops, phones, 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. If your usage of devices becomes distracting, I will not hesitate to say so during class. Note that using devices in a non-curricular way will definitely affect your final grade in a negative fashion.

## D) Honor Code and AI Policy

We adhere to the LGS Honor Code in this class. That code emphasizes the importance of accurately crediting the ideas of others (and, hence, avoiding plagiarism). To that end, the LGS Honor Code also notes that the uncredited and unapproved use of AI in completing class work is itself a type of plagiarism—using the work of “others” to stand in for your work. See pp. 37-38 in the Laney Graduate School Student Handbook (2026-2027), which is posted here: <https://gs.emory.edu/academics/policies-progress/index.html>.

Remember that the purpose of this class (and graduate education in general) is to develop *your* intelligence—which includes “training” your mind on a range of scholarly material to come up with a distinct position. Note also that sometimes this “training” leads to temporarily unanswered questions that ultimately benefit your development (rather than the supposedly “definitive” answers that AI can often provide). Focus, then, on YI (your intelligence) rather than AI.

## E) Departmental Speaker Series

Due to the vagaries of the academic calendar, our class will not have a sufficient number of “contact hours” required by our accreditors (although, we will still cover the *same amount of material* in this semester as classes have done in past semesters). As a result, students will need to attend **two** of the presentations associated with the Emory Sociology Speaker Series. The scheduled presentations are listed below in the syllabus, along with their respective times and locations. If necessary, students can consult with me on other campus presentations that could serve as appropriate substitutes for those offered in the Sociology speaker series.

## F) 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. As a result,

this paper may take a variety of forms. For example, it can be a review of the literature, a research proposal, or the beginnings of an empirical project. I ask that you discuss your topic with me by *October 5* and submit an outline by *November 16*. The final paper is due on *December 16*. It comprises the **other half of your final grade**.

### **G) Final Grade**

My starting assumption is that you will earn an “A” in this seminar. If you do the work and contribute to the class, then all is fine. If you fall below expectations, I will let you know, so that you can adjust accordingly. Of course, if you are having difficulties, please contact me.

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## **COURSE RESOURCES**

Throughout the semester, course readings, explanatory slides and other materials will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 560 (see <http://canvas.emory.edu>). I urge you to make much use of that site.

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 Emory Department of Accessibility Services’ website; see <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html>). Note that the readings for this class augment those found in my other graduate seminars – “Sociology of the Arts” (SOC 561) and “Sociology of Mass Media” (SOC 562). In fact, SOC 560 serves as a good overview for the specialized courses of SOC 561 and SOC 562. As a result, you may wish to peruse my syllabi for additional readings that are on my faculty page (<https://sociology.emory.edu/people/bios/Dowd-Timothy%20J..html>).

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## **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, is a mixture of readings that should provide an informative entrée to cultural sociology while also touching upon classics, contemporary classics, and brand-new works. We will especially focus on current developments that are prominent in cultural sociology, thereby preparing you for the latest emphases.

Rest assured, we will talk about many other works that are not assigned for the class. My goal is to prepare each of you for navigating cultural sociology in its latest incarnation and for exploring cultural sociology in its entirety.

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

***Readings Marked with a “\*” are Foundational for a Given Week***

***August 31:                    Approaching Cultural Sociology via the Case of Music***

Cicchelli, Vivenzo, Sylvie Octobre, Tally Katz-Gerro, Neta Yodovich, Femida Handy, and Stefanie Ruiz. 2023. “‘Because We All Love K-Pop’: How Young Adults Reshape Symbolic Boundaries in Paris, Manchester, and Philadelphia.” *British Journal of Sociology* 74: 18-35.

Diwakar, Pranathi. 2023. “Placing Caste: Spatialization, Urban Segregation, and Musical Boundary-Making.” *Social Forces* 101: 1834-1855.

O’Brien, John. 2013. “Muslim American Youth and Secular Hip Hop: Manifesting ‘Cool Piety’ through Musical Practices.” *Poetics* 41: 99-121.

\*Roy, William G. and Timothy J. Dowd. 2010. “What is Sociological about Music?” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 183-203.

***September 7:                LABOR DAY (NO CLASS)***

***September 14:            Approaching the Culture Concept***

Boutyline, Andrei and Laura K. Soter. 2021. “Cultural Schemas: What They Are, How to Find Them, and What to Do Once You’ve Caught One.” *American Sociological Review* 86: 728-758.

Lizardo, Omar. 2017. “Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in Its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes.” *American Sociological Review* 82: 88-115.

Price, Taylor. “Cognition, Interaction, and Creativity in Songwriting Sessions: Advancing a Dual-Process Framework.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 88: 1-21.

\*Simko, Christina and Jeffrey K. Olick. 2021. “What We Talk About When We Talk About Culture: A Multi-Facet Approach.” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 9:431-459.

***September 21:            Capitalism and the Cultural Turn***

Itzigsohn, José. 2025. “A Du Boisian Sociological Imagination: The Black Radical Tradition, Marxism and Du Boisian Sociology.” *British Journal of Sociology* 76: 499-510.

Matlon, Jordanna. 2016. “Racial Capitalism and the Crisis of Black Masculinity.” *American Sociological Review* 81: 1014-1038.

\*Marx, Karl. 1978. “The German Ideology: Part I.” Pages 146-200 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker. Second edition. New York: W. W. Norton.

Mears, Ashley. 2015. "Working for Free in the VIP: Relational Work and the Production of Consent." *American Sociological Review* 80: 1099-1122.

**September 28: Platform Capitalism and the Cultural Turn**

Birced, Elif. 2026. "All One Million Views Are Not Equally Worthy: Relational Assessment of Influence in the Creator Economy." *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Culture, Media, and the Arts* 117: 102094.

Brasseur, Pierre. 2026. "Beyond the Gig: Selling Intimacy as Labour on OnlyFans." *British Journal of Sociology* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-4446.70162>.

Brayne, Sarah and Angèle Christen. 2021. "Technologies of Crime Prediction: The Reception of Algorithms in Policing and Criminal Courts." *Social Problems* 68: 608-624,

\*Cottom, Tressie McMillan. 2020. "Where Platform Capitalism and Racial Capitalism Meet: The Sociology of Race and Racism in the Digital Society." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 6: 441-449.

**Emory Sociology Speaker Series: Alexandre Frenette, Vanderbilt University;  
Tarbuton 106, 4:00-5:30 pm.**

**October 5: Cultural Foundations of Capitalism**

Cao, Yang. 2024. "The Cultural Consequences of Market Transition: An Empirical Examination of Rising Materialism in Twenty-First Century China." *American Sociological Review* 89: 449-487.

Chávez, Sergio, Heather B. Edelblute, and Elizabeth Korver-Glenn. 2016. "Life on the Edge: Balancing Gendered and Occupational Identities among Unauthorized Mexican Migrant Roofers." *Qualitative Sociology* 39: 125-146.

Thai, Hung Cam Thai. 2014. *Insufficient Funds: The Culture of Money in Low-Wage Transnational Families*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapters 1, 6, and 9.

\*Weber, Max. 1992. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1 and 5.

**PAPER TOPIC DUE**

**October 12: FALL BREAK (No Class)**

**October 19: Status, Status Groups, and Inclusion/Exclusion**

Boyle, Bryan and Dieter Vandebroek. 2025. "The Labor of Distinction: Butlers, Service Work, and the Production of Elite Lifestyles." *American Sociological Review* 90: 26-60.

Brown, Karida L. 2025. *The Battle for the Black Mind*. New York: Legacy. Chapters Two through Five.

Kwon, Hyeyoung. 2022. "Inclusion Work: Children of Immigrants Claiming Membership in Everyday Life." *American Journal of Sociology* 127: 1818-1859.

\*Weber, Max. 1946. "Class, Status, Party." Pages 180-195 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Emory Speaker Series: Christina Cross, Harvard University; Emory University Bookstore, 12:00-1:00 pm.**

**October 26:                    *Aesthetic Creation Amidst Inequality and the Powerful***

\*Du Bois, W.E.B. 1905. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. London: Archibald Constable & Co. Chapters 1 and 14.

Fang, Jun. 2024. "The Culture of Censorship: State Intervention and Complicit Creativity in Global Film Production." *American Sociological Review* 488-517.

Lee, Kangsan, Peggy Levitt, and Chantal Valdivia-Moreno. 2025. "Migrating Arts with (Out) Migrating Artists: Decentering the Global Art World." *Social Forces* 104: 270-293.

Polletta, Francesca, Debra Boka, Caroline Martínez, and Mutsumi Ogaki. 2025. "Social Movements in the Commercial Public Sphere: How Women's Magazines Popularized Second-Wave Feminism." *American Journal of Sociology* 130: 1263-1314.

**November 2:                    *Classification and Religion***

Braunstein, Ruth, Jaime Kuckinskas, Brian Steensland, and Daniel Winchester. 2026. "Religion Unbundled: Toward a Twenty-First-Century Paradigm for the Sociology of American Religion." *American Sociological Review* 91: 623-650.

\*Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press. Translator's Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion.

Karadmir, Irmak and Özgür Yaren. 2026. "How Do Conservative and Islamic Art Audiences Define Good Taste? Cultural Classifications at the Crossroads of Morality, Religion, and Politics in Turkey." *Cultural Sociology* 20: 542-565.

Ma, Wen, Ying Li, and Yunsong Chen. 2026. "The Selectiveness of Inclusiveness: Exploring the Influence of Traditional Religious Visage on Contemporary Cultural Tastes." *Social Forces* <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soag040>.

**Emory Sociology Speaker Series: Megan Reed, Emory University; Tarbuton Hall  
206, 4:00-5:30 pm.**

***November 9: Cultural Foundations of Markets and Economic Value***

Frye, Margaret and Anna Woźny. 2021. "Moralizing the Production and Sale of Student Papers in Uganda." *American Sociological Review* 86: 430-464.

Lu, Wan-Zi. 2025. "Rationality or Relationality in Life and Death: Regulating Organ Donation in Singapore and Taiwan." *American Sociological Review* 90: 848-878.

Ranganathan, Aruna. 2018. "The Artisan and His Audience: Identification with Work and Price Setting in a Handicraft Cluster in Southern India." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 63: 637-667.

\*Zelizer, Viviana A. 2012. "How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does That Mean?" *Politics & Society* 40: 145-174.

***November 16: Cultural Capital and the Realm of Education***

Byun, Soo-yong, Evan Schofer and Kyung-keun Kim. 2012. "Revisiting the Role of Cultural Capital in East Asian Educational Systems: The Case of South Korea." *Sociology of Education* 85: 219-239.

\*DiMaggio, Paul. 1979. "Review Essay: On Pierre Bourdieu." *American Journal of Sociology* 84: 1460-1474.

Jack, Anthony Abraham and Zennon Black. 2024. "Belonging and Boundaries at an Elite University." *Social Problems* 71: 996-1013.

Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4.

**PAPER OUTLINE DUE**

***November 23: Cultural Capital and the Realms of Careers / Consumption***

\*Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Frenette, Alexandre. 2026. *Blame the Intern: On (Not) Breaking into the Creative Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters One, Three, and Four.

Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77: 999-1022.

Špaček, Ondřej. 2026. "Convertibility of Cultural Capital: A Longitudinal Study of University Students From 2017 to 2024." *British Journal of Sociology* <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.70092>.

**November 30:            *Boundaries in Aesthetic Life: Largescale Patterns***

Chen, Lingxiao. 2026. "Performing Nationalism: Celebrity Politics and Audience Boundary Work Under Authoritarianism." *American Sociological Review* 91: 405-434.

Griswold, Wendy. 2000. *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 4.

Kuipers, Giseline. 2015. "Beauty and Distinction? The Evaluation of Appearance and Cultural Capital in Five European Nations." *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Culture, Media and the Arts* 53: 38-81.

\*Lamont, Michèle and Virág Molnár. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 167-195.

**December 7:            *Boundaries in Aesthetic Life: Foundational & Interactional Patterns***

\*Baumann, Shyon and Taylor Price. 2026. "A Graded Conceptualization of Taste." *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Culture, Media and the Arts* 115-116: 102092.

Schoenbachler, Adam and Eli R. Wilson. 2026. "Balancing Acts: Composite Careers in Nashville's Music and Service Industries." *Work and Occupations* 53: 311-342.

Tong, Kin-Long. 2026. "Keeping It Small: Scale and Cultural Resistance in Independent Publishing." *Cultural Sociology* <https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755261452886>.

Vandenberg, Femke, Michaël Berghman, and Koen van Eijck. 2026. "In Sync: Distinguishing Taste through the 'What' and the 'How' of Live Music Consumption." *Cultural Sociology* 20: 636-660.

**December 16:            FINAL PAPER DUE**