

## Culture and Society

HTS 3070 A  
Fall 2009  
M/W 2:30-4 pm  
DM Smith 304

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Office hours: M 12-1 & by appointment

### Overview

This course is an introduction to major questions and themes in cultural sociology. We begin by examining culture, broadly conceived, from a variety of theoretical angles: Marxist, Weberian, Semiotic, Durkheimian, and Symbolic Interactionist. We then shift to focus on how cultural goods are produced, evaluated, distributed, and consumed in the US and similar societies. Finally, we examine the role of culture in social processes that are not always understood as “cultural”—the economy, political action, and globalization. Empirical topics covered in the course include religion, moral crusades, political discussion, workplace interaction, fine arts, mass entertainment, games and sport, bars and nightclubs, television, popular music, novels, Web 2.0, shopping, clothing, and food.

### Course Requirements

#### *Participation and Attendance (10%)*

Participation in class discussions and active engagement with lectures are essential to your success in this course. To participate fully, read the materials listed for each session in the schedule *prior to* class and arrive prepared to share your thoughts, opinions, and questions.

#### *Midterm and Final Exams (midterm 25%; final 25%)*

The midterm (Monday, September 28) and final (Wednesday, December 9) will consist of identifications, short-answer questions, and essays based on readings, class lectures, and discussions.

#### *Course Paper (30%)*

This term paper, due on Monday December 7, will focus on a culture-relevant topic of your choosing, subject to my approval. It should be 15-20 pages long with no less than ten references. The goal of the paper is to discuss and evaluate one or more of the cultural theories covered in class by applying it to an empirical question or case which you have researched, either through secondary sources (i.e., library research) or by collecting your own data. More information and instructions will be provided in class.

#### *Course Paper Preparatory Assignment & Presentation (10%)*

Preparatory assignments throughout the term are designed to encourage and assist students in writing high-quality papers in a timely fashion. They include a list of potential paper topics and questions (due October 7), a finalized topic with theoretical framework and research strategy (due October 26), an outline of your paper and a bibliography including at least 8 of your minimum of 10 sources (due November 16), and a brief presentation of your paper to the class (November 30 or December 2). All will be graded on a check, check-plus, check-minus basis, and additional feedback will be given as needed.

## Policies

*Late Assignments:* Late preparatory assignments will be docked one level (e.g., check becomes check-minus). Except in the case of *extreme* and well-documented emergencies, late final papers will be docked by a half letter grade. All late work must be submitted by Wednesday, December 9, at the final exam.

*No Extra Credit:* The best ways to improve your grade are to put effort into the course paper and study well for the final exam.

*Honor Code:* You are expected to act in accordance with the Georgia Tech Honor Code. See: <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>  
Anyone engaging in acts which violate the honor code, such as cheating or plagiarism, will be penalized. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!

*Accommodating Disabilities:* If you have any conditions which require accommodation, please alert me and provide documentation from the ADAPTS office as early in the term as possible so that arrangements can be made. No accommodations will be made retroactively. ADAPTS information can be found at: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>

## Required Texts:

The following book has been ordered at Engineer's:

Wendy Griswold, 2008. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Los Angeles: Sage/Pine Forge Press. ISBN 978-1-4129-6126-4

Chandra Mukerji & Michael Schudson, Editors (1991). *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. University of California Press. ISBN 0-520-06893-9

Additional readings are posted as PDFs on T-Square and marked "(TSq)" in the schedule below. Please let me know at once if you have difficulty getting access to any of the readings.

## Schedule

### INTRODUCTION

- 8/17 Course introduction, no readings
- 8/19 Griswold, Ch. 1, all  
Raymond Williams (1976), *Keywords*, “Culture” (TSq)

### CONCEPTUALIZING CULTURE AND SOCIETY

#### **Week 2: Marx – The Social Foundations of Culture**

- 8/24 Griswold, Ch. 2, pp. 21-37  
Karl Marx (1846), *The German Ideology*, excerpts (TSq)
- 8/26 Siegfried Kracauer (1927), “The Mass Ornament” (TSq)  
Paul Willis (1979), “Masculinity and Factory Labor” (TSq)

#### **Week 3: Weber – The Cultural Foundations of Society**

- 8/31 Griswold, Ch. 2, pp. 37-47  
Max Weber (1905), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, excerpts (TSq)
- 9/2 Peter Berger (1967), “Social Sources of Secularization” (TSq)  
Peter Berger (2009), “Faith and Development” (TSq)

#### **Week 4: Semiotics – Culture as Social Code**

- 9/7 *No class – Labor Day*
- 9/9 Ferdinand Sussure (1916), “Signs and Language” (TSq)  
Roland Barthes (1967), “Written Clothing” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 17)  
Marshall (1976), “La Pensee Bourgeoise: Western Society as Culture” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 8)  
Jean Baudrillard (1983), “Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland” (TSq)

#### **Week 5: Durkheim – Culture as Collective Representations**

- 9/14 Griswold, Ch. 3, pp. 49-56  
Emile Durkheim (1912), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, excerpts (TSq)
- 9/16 Clifford Geertz (1972), “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 7)

## **Week 6: Interactionism – Culture in Everyday Life**

- 9/21 Griswold, Ch. 3, pp. 56-64  
Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, excerpts (TSq)
- 9/23 David Grazian (2007), “The Girl Hunt: Urban Nightlife and the Performance of Masculinity as Collective Activity” (TSq)  
David Snow et al. (1991), “‘Cooling Out’ Men in Singles Bars and Nightclubs: Observations on the Interpersonal Survival Strategies of Women in Public Places” (TSq)  
Elijah Anderson (1999), “The Code of the Street” (TSq)
- 9/28 *Midterm Exam*

## **THE SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE: PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS**

## **Week 7: Production of Culture I – Creativity in Context**

- 9/30 Howard Becker (1982), *Art Worlds*, Chs. 1 (TSq)  
Gary Alan Fine (1992), “The Culture of Production: Aesthetic Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work”

## **Weeks 8-9: Production of Culture II – Cultural Fields and Industries**

- 10/5 *No Class – October Break*
- 10/7 Griswold, Ch. 4, pp. 73-98  
Paul DiMaggio (1982), “Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 13)  
*Optional:* Paul Hirsch (1972), “Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 10)  
*DUE: List of potential course paper topics and questions*
- 10/12 William Bielby & Denise Bielby (1994), “All Hits are Flukes: Institutionalized Decision Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development” (TSq)  
Paul Lopes (1992), “Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry, 1969 to 1990” (TSq)  
Joshua Gamson and Pearl Latteier, “Do Media Monsters Devour Diversity?” (TSq)

## **Week 9: Cultural Consumption I – Culture as Ideology**

- 10/14 Rosalind Williams (1982), “The Dream World of Mass Consumption” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 6)

## **Week 10: Cultural Consumption II – Distinctions, Boundaries, Identities**

- 10/19 Pierre Bourdieu (1968), “Artistic Taste and Cultural Capital” (TSq)  
Pierre Bourdieu (1978), “Sport and Social Class” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 12)
- 10/21 Richard Peterson and Roger Kern (1996), “Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore” (TSq)  
Bethany Bryson (1996), “Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes,” excerpts (TSq)  
Lisa Pellerin and Elizabeth Stearns (2001), “Status Honor and the Valuing of Cultural and Material Capital” (TSq)

## **Week 11: Cultural Consumption III – Appropriation & Resistance**

- 10/26 Janice Radway (1974), “Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 19)  
Natalie Zemon Davis (1975), “Printing and the People” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 2)  
*DUE: Final course paper topic with theoretical approach and research strategy*
- 10/28 Griswold, Ch. 7, pp. 143-156  
Jose van Dijck (2009), “Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content” (TSq)

## **Week 12: Cultural and Social Change**

- 11/2 Griswold, Ch. 3, pp. 64-71  
Roy Rosenzweig (1983), “The Rise of the Saloon” (Mukerji & Schudson, Ch. 4)  
Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1978), “Sex as Symbol in Victorian Purity” (TSq)
- 11/4 Tammy Anderson (2009), “Understanding the Alteration and Decline of a Music Scene: Observations from Rave Culture” (TSq)  
Steven Tepper (2009), “Stop the Beat: Quiet Regulation and Cultural Conflict” (TSq)

## **CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY: CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

### **Week 13: Culture and Politics**

- 11/9 Griswold, Chs. 5 and 8, all
- 11/11 Nina Eliasoph (1997), “‘Close to Home’: The Work of Avoiding Politics” (TSq)

## **Week 14: Culture and Economy**

11/16 Griswold, Ch. 6, all

*DUE: Course paper outline and bibliography of at least 8 sources*

11/18 Mitchel Abolafia (1996), “Homo Economicus Unbound: Bond Traders on Wall Street” (TSq)

Greta Paules (1991), “‘Getting’ and ‘Making’ a Tip” (TSq)

## **Week 15: Culture and Globalization**

11/23 Griswold, Ch. 7, pp. 157-163

John Boli (2005), “Contemporary Developments in World Culture” (TSq)

*NOTE: The Course/Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS) website should open today:*

*<http://www.cetl.gatech.edu/cios/>*

11/25 *No class – Thanksgiving*

## **Week 16: Student Presentations**

11/30 Student presentations – no assigned readings

12/2 Student presentations – no assigned readings

## **Exam Week**

All week ***Course/Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS)***: Go to <http://www.cetl.gatech.edu/cios/> by midnight on Sunday, December 13

12/7 ***Final Paper***: Due by 4:30 in my mailbox, 108 Old CE Building

12/9 ***Final Exam***: 2:50-5:40 pm