

SC 390: Making Popular Culture
Boston College
Spring 2012
MWF, 3pm

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Office Hours: Fridays 11am-12pm, or set up by email
Course Website: on Blackboard

Course Description: This course explores popular goods, television, movies, music, dance, art, sports, festivals, and holidays from a sociological perspective. What is the difference between popular culture and high culture? Where does popular culture come from and what role does it play in society? What do people do with popular culture? How does popular culture intersect with race, class, and gender? The class will be framed around the theoretical traditions of conflict theory (how popular culture influences inequality) and symbolic interactionism (how people construct and interpret popular culture). Students will analyze a popular culture event of their choice through a field assignment.

Contacting the Instructor: Please communicate with me if you have questions. If you email me with questions about the readings, please be as specific as possible. Please do not email saying "I don't understand [name of reading] reading." Instead, reread the article and then email me saying, "I'm not sure what the main argument of this reading is. Is it [insert your thoughts]?" or "I don't understand how the article's argument that [insert argument] relates to conflict theory?" These are just examples, but be specific.

Required Texts:

1. Grazian, David. 2010. *Mix It Up*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
2. Grazian, David. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

All other readings and videos will be available on the course website.

Course Requirements:

Discussion: Participation is vital to the learning process. You are required to participate in an online discussion, by responding to the questions posed by your classmates in their article reviews. You must post a response to at least once per week. Further details for this assignment are at the end of the syllabus.

Homework Assignments: There will be three small assignments that require each student to bring an article of popular culture to class. Further instructions will be provided during the semester, as each assignment approaches.

Article Review: Each student will be responsible for preparing an outline and analysis of one of the class readings and posting it online the day BEFORE the reading is "due" to be read in class. Further details for this assignment are at the end of the syllabus.

Field Activity: You will complete your own sociological analyses of a popular culture ritual of your choice. Further details are at the end of the syllabus.

Exam: There will be one short-answer exam.

Grading:

Discussion Posts (14 at 6pts each)	84 pts
Homework Assignments (3 at 20pts each)	60 pts
Article Assignment	100 pts
Field Assignment	100 pts
Exam	100 pts

TOTAL	444 pts

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	100 - 93%	C	77 - 72%
A-	92 - 90%	C-	71 - 70%
B+	89 - 88%	D+	69 - 68%
B	87 - 82%	D	67 - 62%
B-	81 - 80%	D-	61 - 60%
C+	79 - 78%	F	59 - 0%

Students with Disabilities: If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Resources and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

Boston College values the academic integrity of its students and faculty. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university's policy on academic integrity: <http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>. If you have any questions, always consult your professor.

Violations of academic integrity will be reported to your class dean and judged by the academic integrity committee in your school. If you are found responsible for violating the policy, penalties may include a failing grade as well as possible probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the violation.

Course Policies:

1. Late work will not be accepted. Please do not contact me requesting an extension.

2. Make up will not be allowed for any activities.

3. Exams will be administered only on the scheduled date.

4. No extra credit will be assigned to make up for missed work. Do not ask me for extra credit. Exceptions to these policies will only be made in the case of a DOCUMENTED illness or family emergency. If you have a legitimate need (a medical emergency or death in the family) for an extension or alternate exam date, you should contact me by email as soon as possible and a scan of your documentation (a dated hospital admittance form) should be attached to the email when you contact me. I cannot grant extensions for students that do not provide documentation within 2 weeks of the emergency.

5. I do not negotiate grades. If you feel I have incorrectly graded your work or have not entered your points correctly (it happens), please contact me with your concern as soon as possible. However, if you contact me simply to bargain for a higher grade than you have earned in the class, I WILL DEDUCT POINTS from your overall grade.

6. When calculating the final grade, I round up if to the nearest whole percentage. For example, if you have an 89.5, this will become a 90% final grade. Again, please do not ask me to adjust your grades.

7. If you have a learning disability and need special accommodations, you must contact me BEFORE the assignment or exam in question. Do not wait until an exam has begun to contact me to request extra time.

8. Finally, a word on cheating. I strictly follow the BC code of academic integrity regarding cheating and I will report any violation. If you copy text from any source (including the internet), you will receive a zero on the exam or assignment. Please remember that rewording someone else's thoughts must also be cited as if you were quoting that material. For example, if you use an internet source that reviews a course reading without citing the internet source, you are passing that information off as your own work. This is plagiarism and it will earn you a zero on the assignment.

Course Outline

Wed	Jan 18	Intro
Fri	Jan 20	The sociological perspective on culture 1. <i>Mix It Up</i> : Chapters 1-2
Mon	Jan 23	What are popular culture and “high” culture? 1. Veblen. “Conspicuous Consumption” in <i>Theory of the Leisure Class</i> . 2. Peterson, R. and R. Kern (1996). 'Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore.' <i>American Sociological Review</i> 61(5): 900-907.
Wed	Jan 25	1. Gotham, Kevin. 2007. “The Greatest Free Show on Earth,” in <i>Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy</i> . New York: New York University Press, pp. 169-196.
Fri	Jan 27	<i>Video: By Invitation Only (Mardi Gras)</i>
Mon	Jan 30	1. DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. “Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston, Part I: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America.” <i>Media, Culture, and Society</i> 4: 33-50.
Wed	Feb 1	Symbolic Interactionism and Popular Culture 1. <i>Mix It Up</i> : Chapters 4-5
Fri	Feb 3	1. Becker, Howard S. 1982. <i>Art Worlds</i> (U California Press), excerpt.
Mon	Feb 6	1. Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “Deep Play: Notes from the Balinese Cockfight.” In <i>The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays</i> . New York: Basic Books.
Wed	Feb 8	1. “Ritual and Narrative in the Sport Spectacular” HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #1: Find a blog on an aspect of popular culture that interests you. What are the “meanings” of that cultural object asserted on the blog? What are people saying about it? How are they using it? Write up a brief one page review of what you discovered on the blog. Be prepared to briefly present your findings to the class.
Fri	Feb 10	Benzecry, Claudio. 2009. "Becoming a Fan: On the Seductions of Opera." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 32 (2):131-151.
Mon	Feb	Conflict Theory and Popular Culture

	13	1. <i>Mix It Up</i> : Chapter 3
Wed	Feb 15	1. Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 1944. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in <i>The Consumer Society Reader</i> (Schor and Holt, eds.) pp. 3-19.
Fri	Feb 17	<i>Video: Mickey Mouse Monopoly</i> You must choose a site for your field assignment by today. See instructions at the end of the syllabus. Your site must be something that is new for you, so do not chose a location that you frequent regularly (such as your regular gym or favorite bar). Hand in a brief paragraph explaining what site you have chosen and why.
Mon	Feb 20	1. Reel Power, CH 1
Wed	Feb 22	Mass Production 1. <i>Mix It Up</i> : Chapter 6 2. Gamson, Joshua. 1994. <i>Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America</i> , Chapter 3 "Industrial-Strength Celebrity."
Fri	Feb 24	1. Ritzer, George. The McDonaldization of Society, Introduction and "Control" (chapter 6).
Mon	Feb 27	1. Sheila Whiteley. 2008. Christmas, Ideology, and Popular Culture, Chapter 1 "The Invention of the English Christmas."
Wed	Feb 29	Reception <i>Video: Barbie Nation</i>
Fri	Mar 2	1. <i>Mix It Up</i> : Chapter 8
Mon	Mar 12	1. Sheila Whiteley. 2008. Christmas, Ideology, and Popular Culture, Chapter 3 "Consumption, Coca-colonization, Cultural Resistance – and Santa Claus."
Wed	Mar 14	Globalization and Popular Culture 1. Watson, James. 2006. "McDonald's in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children's Culture" in <i>Readings for Sociology</i> , Garth Massey (ed), New York: Norton, 152-163.
Fri	Mar 16	1. Waxer, Lise. 2002. "Introduction" in <i>Situating Salsa</i>
Mon	Mar 19	1. Condry, I. (2006). <i>Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization</i> . Durham, Duke University Press. Chapter 2.

Wed	Mar 21	Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Culture <i>Video: Killing Us Softly 3</i>
Fri	Mar 23	<i>Video: Killing Us Softly 4</i> HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #2: Using Killing Us Softly 3 as your guide, find an interesting advertisement and analyze the gendered representations in the ad. Write up a one page summary of your findings. Be prepared to share with the class.
Mon	Mar 26	1. Leblanc, L. (1999). <i>Pretty in punk: Girls' gender resistance in a boys' subculture</i> , Rutgers Univ Pr. Chapter 5 "'I'll Slap on My Lipstick and Then Kick Their Ass": Constructing Femininity."
Wed	Mar 28	1. Chrys Ingraham, <i>White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture</i> , Chapter 3 "Romancing the Clone."
Fri	Mar 30	<i>Video: Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity</i>
Mon	Apr 2	FIELD ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY! - Be prepared to share a brief description with the class!
Wed	Apr 4	FIELD ASSIGNMENT -- Be prepared to share a brief description with the class!
Fri	Apr 6	NO CLASS
Mon	Apr 9	NO CLASS
Wed	Apr 11	Race and Popular Culture <i>Video: Reel Bad Arabs</i>
Fri	Apr 13	1. Fischer. 2001. "Chief Bill Orange and the Saltine Warrior" in <i>Team Spirits</i> .
Mon	Apr 16	1. Roy, W. G. (2004). "'Race Records" and "Hillbilly Music": Institutional Origins of Racial Categories in the American Commercial Recording Industry.' <i>Poetics</i> 32(3-4): 265-279.
Wed	Apr 18	1. Grazian, David. 2003. <i>Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Introduction and CH 1 -2
Fri	Apr 20	Popular Culture and Authenticity 1. Grazian, David. 2003. <i>Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, CH 4-5
Mon	Apr 23	HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #3 - Use the BC library to access the online <i>Journal of Popular Culture</i>. Search for an article relevant to your "object"

		and write a brief summary of how the article enlightens your understanding of that object.
Wed	Apr 25	1. Lu, S. and G. A. Fine (1995). 'The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment.' <i>The Sociological Quarterly</i> 36 (3): 535-553.
Fri	Apr 27	Popular Culture and Nationalism 1. Knauer, Lisa. 2008. "The Politics of Afrocuban Cultural Expression in New York City," in <i>Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies</i>
Mon	Apr 30	1. Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz. 1991. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemoration of a Difficult Past" in <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , 97(2): 376-420.
Wed	May 2	1. Miller, Marilyn Grace. 2004. "Tango in Black and White". <i>Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America</i> . M. G. Miller. Austin University of Texas Press, pp. 79-95.
	?	FINAL EXAM



ARTICLE REVIEW GUIDELINES

Provide a summary of your assigned reading, outlining its key points. Make sure to explain what the ARGUMENT of the article is. Also explain how the article relates to relevant sociological concepts and to the topic of the week (globalization, reception, etc). 40 points.

What were 2 things in the article you found particularly interesting? Why? 40 points.

Do you agree with the article's argument or perspective? Why or why not? 10 points.

What are 2 questions (related to the reading) that you have for the class? 10 points.

Post your article review on Blackboard.

You can post it early, but it MUST be posted the day BEFORE the day it is assigned.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

You are required to participate in an online discussion, by responding to the questions posed by your classmates in their article reviews. You must post a response to at least once per week, responding to article review questions. These are worth 6 points each.

The following should be kept in mind for responses:

- Ensure that the responses add to the discussion and are relevant to the questions posted for that week.
- Please do not just disagree or agree, but clearly and concisely explain your argument.
- Please use examples from the assigned readings for the week and any other relevant materials that may add to the discussion.
- Please include examples from your experience or current events to support your answer (when you can).

Grading Rubric for Discussion posts

Earned points	0	3	6
Criteria	Agree or disagree; 1 or 2 sentences responses that may be related to the topic.	Adds to the discussion but lacks several of the above substantial criteria	Meets all of the above criteria

FIELD ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

1. Choose a "site" of popular culture which interests you. Your "site" should be a physical place of social interaction. See the list below for possible sites. **Your site must be something that is new for you, so do not chose a location that you frequent regularly (such as your regular gym or favorite bar).**
2. Prepare a 1.5-2 page ethnographic description of the site. It should describe what individuals and groups are in the site, what they are doing, how they are or are not interacting, what if anything is the central focus of the site/activity, what objects or rituals are most important in the site and how can you tell this by observing the site, and where do you fit into the site.
3. Prepare a half page reflection on how you felt in the site and what you think of the cultural activity/site.
4. Prepare a 2 page sociological analysis of the site and be prepared to discuss your work in class. First, decide which of the following are MOST important issues in the site: race, class, gender, consumption, globalization, authenticity, or any other concept we read about in class. **CHOOSE ONLY 2 TO DISCUSS IN THE PAPER.** Analyze the site with these two theories or concepts. *You must cite at least 2 of the course readings .*
5. Format this paper in 12-point, double spaced lines, Times New Roman font. It should be AT LEAST 4 pages long. Please submit in Microsoft WORD format.
6. Submit a copy of your final paper by the due date listed on the syllabus. You can submit the paper in class or by email.

Possible Field Sites:

- a fashion show
- a club
- sports bar (only if the bar is new to you)
- a gym (only if the gym is new to you)
- a sporting event (not one that you always attend)
- a dog race
- an art show
- a habitat for humanity event
- a wedding
- a holiday event (valentines day dinner, etc.)
- car show
- book sale
- library
- cosmetics counter "event"
- a yoga, dance, or martial art class (some places will let you take a first class for free)
- concert (of a music you don't usually listen to)
- museum exhibit
- a play or musical
- a brand store (apple, fossil, etc.)
- church event
- festival
- farmers market
- circus, carnival, etc.
- the beach
- dog park
- zoo
- public park

VIDEO LINKS

Mickey Mouse Monopoly (whole video available)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgxVvbai_nI

Reel Bad Arabs (whole video available)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWb7LoMtw9g>

Killing Us Softly 3 (you can search youtube for other sections of this video series, all very good):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISTg_6N0G7w&playnext=1&list=PLA895ABE3BD3D40C2

Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity (whole film available):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79ijDA_1FVY