SC 573: Sociology of Culture
Boston College
Fall 2012
Tuesdays, 9:30am

Instructor: Danielle Hedegard
Email: hedegard@bc.edu
Office: McGuinn 409
Course Website: on Blackboard
Office Hours: *By appointment (I am happy to schedule a meeting. Please email to do so.)*

Description
This is a mixed graduate/undergraduate level course on the sociology of culture. By the sociology of culture, I refer to three intellectual orientations: 1) to understand what constitutes culture, how it is constructed, what forms it takes, 2) to examine how culture – in its many forms – influences, or even co-constitutes, social processes and structures, and 3) to examine culture as a tool actors use in social action. We will discuss several active debates in the literature on culture: structure vs. agency, form vs. content, and coherence vs. incoherence. Culture touches many sub disciplines in sociology (race, gender, social movements, politics, nationalism, etc.), but we will not have time to discuss all of these areas. The theoretical works we will read will be broadly oriented towards many areas of social like. The empirical readings emphasize inequality, race, class, gender, and work.

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 articles argument that [insert argument] relates to conflict theory?” These are just examples, but be specific.

Texts
1. Each student will review 1-2 books for the class. You will find your name next to that book(s) in the schedule below. **It is your responsibility to secure a copy of the book(s) you will review – either through the library or by purchasing a copy online. Do not wait until the last minute to obtain your book!**

All other readings will be posted online.

Assignments and Assessment
Class attendance and participation: 40pts
Students are expected to attend each meeting, do the reading thoroughly, and participate actively in class. Emphasis is on mastering the material and responding to it constructively and creatively, with an eye toward your own research interests. Students who miss classes or do not contribute to class discussions on a regular basis will not do well in this course. Because the class meets only once per week, you will lose a half letter grade for every class you miss past the 1st missed class – which is a "freebie". In other words, if you miss 3 classes, the highest possible final grade you can get will be B+ (1st miss free, 2nd miss takes you to an A-, 3rd miss to a B+).
Weekly memos on required readings: 100pts
Over the course of the semester, students will write brief analytical memos on the readings each week. Students should submit 8 memos (12pts each). You can choose which 8 weeks to review and which to skip.
These memos should not be simple summaries of the readings. Answer the following questions in your memos:

1. What research questions do the authors try to answer?
2. What is the definition or definitions of "culture" (or the aspect of culture focused on) used in the week's readings?
3. How satisfactorily do the authors link theory to evidence to conclusions?
4. Are there any contradictory arguments across readings?
5. What have you learned from the readings? If you are doing research, how do the readings relate to your own work?

Memos should be between 500-600 words. Post memos to Blackboard's discussion area BEFORE CLASS each week. Be prepared to discuss the memos in class. You will not receive credit for late memos, as the point is to prepare you to engage in class discussion.

Lead Discussant: 60pts (undergrad), 120pts (grad)
Each student will be required to act as lead discussant for one week's (undergrads) or two week's (grads) readings. This should not be a summary of the readings, but a synthesis and analysis of them in relation to each other, as well as in relation to topics from past weeks. Refer to the questions listed under “weekly memos” for guidelines. You can also suggest future avenues for research, or discuss the readings in relation to your own work and experiences. Your discussion will occupy the first 30 minutes of class. At the end of your discussion, you should have at least 3 well-crafted discussion questions for the class, provided as a class handout.

Book review: 80 pts (undergrad), 160pts (grad)
Each student will give a 15-20 minute review of one (undergrad) or two (grads) book(s) related to the course. This is entirely ORAL – you do not need to hand in a written paper. These books will not be read by the entire class, so the review should give the class a good overview of the main topics or arguments and how it relates to other course topics and readings. Answer the following questions in your review:

1. What is the book about? Summarize this in a few sentences.
2. What is the main argument or arguments of the book?
3. What definition of culture does the author employ?
4. What evidence is used to make the argument?
5. Why is this book interesting? (or why not?)
6. How does this book connect to the topic of the day and the week's readings? Does it expand on them, contradict them, or integrate two or more opposing viewpoints?
7. How does the book draw on topics discussed in OTHER week's readings? (Many of these books draw on multiple concepts from cultural sociology and could have been placed in other weeks as well.)

Final Exam (Undergraduates): 120 pts
Undergraduate students will take an in-class final exam. This will be a blue-book style essay exam, covering the entire semester.

Final Project (Grads): 0 pts
There is no final project for grad students. Instead, you will be required to do more work leading discussion and reviewing books throughout the semester, as described above.
Grade Distribution

**Graduate Students**

| Participation | 40pts | 10%  
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<td>8 Memos</td>
<td>100pts</td>
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<td>2 times Lead Discussant (60pts each)</td>
<td>120pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Book Reviews (80 pts each)</td>
<td>160pts</td>
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**Undergraduates**

| Participation | 40pts | 10%  
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**Week 1 (9/4): Introduction**


PRODUCTION

**Week 2 (9/11): Institutional Origins of Cultural Objects**

Ritzer, George. 2004. The McDonaldization of Society, CH 1, 2, 6.


**Week 3 (9/18): Fields of Cultural Production**


**TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS**

(Grad only) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

**RECEPTION**

**Week 4 (9/25): Audience Reception of Cultural Objects**


**TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS**

*The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles*

**FROM CULTURAL OBJECTS TO ABSTRACT CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS**

**Week 5 (10/2): Measuring “culture”**


TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS

Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery
(Grad only): A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change

Week 6 (10/9): Identity and Subcultures


TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS

Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity

Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status

Week 7 (10/16): Macro-level Culture: Categories, Boundaries, and Semiotics


**TODAY'S BOOK REVIEWS**

Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity and Community

**Week 8 (10/23): Macro-level Culture: Ideologies, Discourses, and Language**


Foucault, Michel. History of Sexuality. Selections.


**TODAY'S BOOK REVIEWS**

Dorm Room Dealers: Drugs and the Privileges of Race and Class

Sex Cells: The Medical Market for Eggs and Sperm

**Week 9 (10/30): Macro-level Culture: Hegemony, Power, and Control**


**TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS**

*Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism*

*Labor of Luck: Casino Capitalism in the United States and South Africa*

**CULTURE AND CLASS**

*Week 10 (11/6): Class Tastes, Dispositions, and Boundaries*


OR Swartz, D. 1997. *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.* [This is a more accessible overview of Bourdieu's work.]


**TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS**

*Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*

*The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School*

*Week 11 (11/13): Cultural and Social Capitals*


**TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS**

Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class

**DEPLOYING CULTURE**

*Week 12 (11/20): Practices and Toolkits*


Schnable, Alison. 2012. “Singing the gospel: Using musical practices to build religious and racial communities” Poetics.


**TODAY'S BOOK REVIEWS**

The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances

(Grad only): The Civilizing Process, Vol.I. The History of Manners (first half of book)
Week 13 (11/27): Ritual, Interaction, and Performance


Borer, Michael. 2009. “Objects of Faith and Consumption” Faithful to Fenway: Believing in Boston, Baseball, and America’s Most Beloved

TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS

Faithful to Fenway: Believing in Boston, Baseball, and America’s Most Beloved

GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE

Week 14 (12/4): Globalization and Culture


TODAY’S BOOK REVIEWS

Framing the Bride: Globalizing Beauty and Romance in Taiwan’s Bridal Industry