

Sociology 160: Sociology of Culture

Winter 2013, UC-San Diego

M-W-F, 2:00-2:50pm, HSS 1330

Prof. Tom Medvetz

Office hours: Wed & Fri, 3-4pm, and by appointment

Office: 485 Social Sciences Building

Email: tmedvetz@ucsd.edu (please include the phrase "SOC 160" in the subject line of your email)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will survey some of the major theories, concepts, themes, and analytic traditions associated with the sociology of culture. A growing but nebulous subfield, the sociology of culture has been a dynamic part of the discipline over the past few decades. The class is divided into three parts. We will begin with some well-known attempts to define the term *culture* for analytic purposes. Then we will run through five theoretical perspectives that have shaped the sociological study of culture. Finally, we will address a series of empirical topics. At each point, we will try to draw linkages among the texts and expose their gaps and tensions. My aim is not just to help you learn about the sociology of culture but also to help you develop your critical reading and thinking skills. You will be expected to keep up with all of the assigned readings and to bring the relevant text(s) with you to each class. I will give the lectures with the assumption that you've finished the reading in advance. Please come to class with questions and comments!

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are two required books for this course. Both are available for purchase at the UCSD bookstore:

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*

You may get the books elsewhere, but please be sure to buy versions with the same page numbers as the ones I've ordered. All additional readings will be made available in electronic format through TED (<https://ted.ucsd.edu>).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade in this class has four parts. The first part (25%) is based on a series of six reading quizzes. Most of these will happen on Fridays and cover the material from that week (and usually *only* that week). The quizzes are meant to give you an incentive to do the reading. They will all follow the same format: 10 multiple-choice questions of a straightforward nature. The quizzes will be graded as follows: 7 or more correct out of 10 = 1 credit. 6 or fewer correct out of 10 = 0 credits. At the end of the quarter, I will multiply the number of credits by 5. There are six quizzes, so you get one "freebie" (e.g, 5/6 = 25%, i.e. full credit). Put differently, you can fail one of the six quizzes and still get a perfect score for this portion of your grade. (But you can't earn extra credit.)

The second part of your grade (15%) is based on attendance. *Attendance is required for all class meetings.* While I won't record attendance every day, I will pass around a sign-in sheet during some classes. Active participation will also count positively toward your attendance grade. I won't be tyrannical about forcing everyone to talk in class, but I do expect some classroom discussion. Apart from talking in class, there are other ways for you to demonstrate your engagement, such as coming to office hours (highly recommended; see above for the times) or emailing me with topics or questions for discussion.

The third and fourth parts of your grade are based on written assignments. There will be a short writing assignment (approx. 3-4 pages; 25% of your grade) about half way into the quarter. I will be sure to pass out the assignment at least a week ahead of time. There will also be a final paper of more substantial length (about 10 pages in length; 35% of your grade) that will ask you to consider multiple readings from the class and compare them. To recap:

25%	Reading quizzes
15%	Participation / attendance
25%	Short writing assignment (Week 6)
35%	Final paper
100%	Total grade

OTHER POLICIES

Academic integrity

You may not misrepresent your work in any way or be party to another student's failure to maintain academic integrity. I will refer any suspected cases of cheating, including plagiarism, to the Academic Integrity Office. For the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, see <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>. The minimum penalty for violations of academic integrity will be an F for the course.

Classroom conduct

Please refrain from being disruptive to your fellow students and your instructor. Disruptive behavior includes coming to class late, leaving early, text messaging, and not silencing your phone before class.

Writing

The ability to write clearly is very important, and not something that can be reliably distinguished from "good ideas" expressed poorly. In your papers, please pay special attention to grammar, mechanics, syntax, style, and organization. In the past, students have asked me for references on writing advice, and I often point them to these two: the classic *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White and *The St. Martin's Handbook* (St. Martin's Press, 6th edition).

Grievances

If you wish to contest a grade, you must first go to your reader and submit to him/her a one-page statement explaining why you think the grading is unfair. Only if you are still dissatisfied should you come to me. Please note that I will not change any grade without first discussing it with your reader. Also bear in mind that your grade may move upwards or downwards should I decide to re-grade the paper.

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I: THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE

WEEK 1

Monday, 7 January

Introduction, syllabus, classroom policies, etc.

Wednesday, 9 January

Raymond Williams, "Culture," p. 87-93

Wendy Griswold, "Culture and the Culture Diamond," p. 1-20

Friday, 11 January

William H. Sewell, Jr., *Logics of History*, "The Concept(s) of Culture," p. 152-174

PART II: FIVE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE

Perspective #1: Culture as a system of classification**WEEK 2**

Monday, 14 January

Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, "The Problem," p. 3-9

Warren Schmaus, "Durkheim and the Social Character of the Categories," p. 1-26

Wednesday, 16 January

Émile Durkheim, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1," *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 1-44 (first part)

Friday, 18 January

Émile Durkheim, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1," *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 1-44 (second part) [QUIZ #1]**Perspective #2: Culture as an instrument of power****WEEK 3**

Monday, 21 January

NO CLASS—MLK HOLIDAY

Wednesday, 23 January

Karl Marx, excerpt from *The German Ideology*, p. 146-155

Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," p. 130-143

Gideon Kunda, *Engineering Culture*, Chapter 1, p. 1-25

Friday, 25 January

Gideon Kunda, *Engineering Culture*, Chapter 4, p. 92-128

WEEK 4

Monday, 28 January

Gideon Kunda, *Engineering Culture*, Chapter 4, p. 128-159 [QUIZ #2]

Perspective #3: Culture as a product of social interaction

Wednesday, 30 January

Herbert Blumer, "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism," *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, p. 1-60 (first part)

Friday, 1 February

Herbert Blumer, "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism," *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, p. 1-60 (second part)

WEEK 5

Monday, 4 February

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 3-86 (first part)

Wednesday, 6 February

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 3-86 (second part)

Friday, 8 February

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 3-86 (third part) [QUIZ #3]

Perspective #4: Culture as a system of signs

WEEK 6

Monday, 11 February

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 3-30 [BOOK]

Wednesday, 13 February

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 412-453 [BOOK] (first part)

Friday, 15 February

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 412-453 [BOOK] (second part)

WEEK 7

Monday, 18 February NO CLASS—PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY

Wednesday, 20 February

Clifford Geertz, “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali,” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 360-411 [BOOK] (first part)

Friday, 22 February

Clifford Geertz, “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali,” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 360-411 [BOOK] (second part)

Ann Swidler, “Geertz’s Ambiguous Legacy,” p. 299-302 [QUIZ #4]

Perspective #5: Culture as embodied practice linked to social position

WEEK 8

Monday, 25 February

Pierre Bourdieu, “Preface to the English-Language Edition” and “Introduction,” *Distinction*, p. xi-xiv, 1-7

Wednesday, 27 February

Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Space: Introduction to a Japanese Reading of *Distinction*” p. 627-638

Mark Grief, “The Hipster in the Mirror,” *New York Times*

Mark Oppenheimer, “The Unholy Pleasure,” *Slate.com*, p. 1-11

PART III: EMPIRICAL TOPICS

Topic #1: The Market

Friday, 1 March

Viviana Zelizer, “The Marking of Money,” *The Social Meaning of Money*, p. 1-36

Topic #2: The Body

WEEK 9

Monday, 4 March

Loïc Wacquant, “Preface to the U.S. Edition,” “Prologue,” “The Street and the Ring,” *Body and Soul*, p. vii-xii, p. 3-31

Wednesday, 6 March

Loïc Wacquant, “The Street and the Ring” (cont.), *Body and Soul*, p. 31-71 (first part)

Friday, 8 March

Loïc Wacquant, “The Street and the Ring” (cont.), *Body and Soul*, p. 31-71 (second part)
[QUIZ #5]

Topic #3: American culture

WEEK 10

Monday, 11 March

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, Chs. 1-2, p. 3-51 [BOOK]

Wednesday, 13 March

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, Ch. 3, p. 55-84 [BOOK]

Friday, 15 March

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, Ch. 11 & Appendix, p. 275-307 [BOOK]

QUIZ #6 TO BE HELD DURING THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD