

Soc. 8735 -- *Central Problems in the Sociology of Culture*

Weds. 2:30 – 5 pm
SS 1114

Prof. Penny Edgell
Office Hours: Monday 1- 2:30 or by appt.
Office: SS 1039
email: edgell@umn.edu
phone: 624-9828

This course provides an overview of the sociology of culture and cultural sociology. We will consider why the field has moved away from a focus on culture as ideas and ideals and toward a conception of culture as practice and institution, and we will read newer work emphasizing the relationship between culture and boundaries, embodiment, and emotion.

The course places at the forefront questions of resources, power, identity, globalization, and social change, and considers several theoretical approaches to the relationship between culture, structure, agency, and change. Readings span national contexts. Empirical works include analyses of political, civic, religious, and literary culture as well as everyday cultural practices and mass media.

Readings:

The course is designed to provide an overview of the subfield and give you a critical perspective on its major debates. Most weeks, we will read (about) 4 articles or book chapters.

At the first class meeting we will discuss availability and distribution of difficult-to-find articles or book chapters; it is my expectation that articles available through on-line indexing services will be accessed directly by students.

Expectations, Written Work, and Grading:

Participation. 25% of grade. Students are expected to attend class consistently and to make regular and constructive contributions to the class discussions. Constructive contributions respond in a meaningful way to the critical review and discussion questions circulated each week by those preparing in-class presentations (see below); they may also note how a particular week's readings relate to other readings or core themes/concepts from the course. Students will be evaluated on both the quality and the quantity of in-class participation.

Discussion Questions and In-Class Presentation. 25% All students will take turns preparing critical reviews and discussion questions for 2-4 readings (the number depends on enrollment; students may be responsible for all or part of a given week's readings). Critical reviews should address *all* of the 8 focus questions provided (next page); it is not enough to summarize the reading, one must also provide critical reflection. For each reading, the student should also provide 4-6 *focus questions* to guide the in-class discussion. ***Critical reviews and discussion questions must be circulated by email to the class list no later than noon on the Tuesday before your presentation.***

Final paper. 15-17 pages. 50% of grade.

Topics Statement **Due in-class during Week 5 (Feb. 19).** One page, stating which option you've chosen and giving a tentative title and one-paragraph description of your proposed paper.

Option 1.

Write a critical review of the field, or a subsection of it. The review can be in the style of the *Annual Review of Sociology* or it can be a critical literature review that might be expanded for a preliminary exam paper (or part of one), or that might be used to frame a research project. For this paper, use the works on the syllabus as a guide, but incorporate other works as well.

Option 2.

Write a paper based that critically applies the material covered in the course to your own ongoing research. The format should be appropriate to your stage of research and could be a research proposal, an extended application of cultural theory to refine or reframe the conceptual basis of your project, or a paper using the theoretical insights from the class to interpret or analyze your data.

Instructions for in-class presentation on readings

In every discussion and critical summary, cover:

- * What is the author's central argument?
- * What is the author's (explicit or implied) definition of culture?
- * What kind of evidence does the author offer?
- * What kinds of generalizations/theoretical statements does the author make?
- * What are the strengths of the author's argument/presentation?
- * What are the weaknesses, gaps, or misconceptions?
- * How does the author's approach compare with others we've read?
- * How do you find the author's work useful for your own scholarship?

Organizational Notes:

Extension/Incompletes policy: I very seldom give extensions for papers; you must be quite ill and have a doctor's note or have a family emergency. **I do not give incompletes**, except for truly extraordinary circumstances. **All incompletes convert to a failing grade after six weeks if the work has not been completed.**

I. Getting started – definitions, overviews, method

Week 1 Who are we and what do we want?

Class overview. Be prepared to discuss why you are taking the course, what you hope to learn, “ordinary everyday” uses of the word “culture,” and any assumptions or theories about culture you have already picked up “along the way” in your graduate education.

Williams, Raymond. 1983. “Culture,” pp. 87-93, in *Keywords*. Oxford.

Week 2 How we got here . . . a (very) brief history of some central questions and concerns

Wuthnow, Robert. 1987. *Meaning and Moral Order*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17. California.

Alexander, Jeffrey. 1990. “Analytic debates: Understanding the Relative Autonomy of Culture.” Pp. 1-31 in *Culture and Society, Contemporary Debates*, eds. Alexander and Seidman, Cambridge.

Sewell, William Jr. (1999). “The Concept(s) of Culture.” Pp. 35-61 in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, eds. Bonnell and Hunt, California.

Kaufman, Jason. 2004. “Endogenous Explanation in the Sociology of Culture.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:335-57.

Recommended:

Wuthnow *et al*, 1984. *Cultural Analysis*, Chapters 1 and 6. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Edgell, Penny. 2012. “A Cultural Sociology of Religion: New Directions.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 38:247-65.

Mukerji, Chandra and Michael Schudson. 1986. “Popular Culture.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12:47-66.

Week 3 Questions of methods

Johnston, Hank. 1995. “A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata.” Pp. 217-246 in *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. Johnston and Klandermans.

Griswold, Wendy. 1987. “A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture,” *Sociological Methodology*, 12:1-35.

Swidler, Ann and Ronald L. Jepperson. 1994. “What Properties of Culture Should We Measure?” *Poetics* 22(4):359:371.

Steenland, Brian. 2004. “Restricted and Elaborated Modes in the Cultural Analysis of Politics.” *Sociological Forum* 24(4):926-34.

Recommended:

Griswold, Wendy. 1986. *Renaissance Revivals*, Chapter 1.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1994. “Introduction.” *Poetics* 22(4):L263-267.

Mohr, John W. 1998. “Measuring Meaning Structures.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24:345-70.

II. Central Concepts, Problems, and Approaches

Week 4 Cultural Structures

- Alexander, Jeffrey C., with Philip Smith. 2003. "The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics." Chapter 1 in *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Philip Smith. 1993. "The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies." *Theory and Society* 22: 151-207.
- Battani, Marshall, David R. Hall, and Rosemary Powers. 1997. "Cultures' Structures: Making Meaning in the Public Sphere." *Theory and Society* 26: 781-812.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Philip Smith. 1999. "Cultural Structures, Social Action, and the Discourses of American Civil Society: A Reply to Battani, Hall, and Powers." *Theory and Society* 28: 455-61.

Recommended

- Edgell, Penny. 1999. *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models and Local Religious Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Especially Chapters 1, 8, and any middle chapter.

Week 5 Culture, Structure, and Agency

- Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review*.
- Sewell, William H. Jr. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1):1-29.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy." *Sociological Theory* 22:527-573.
- Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(6):1675-1715.

Recommended:

- Archer, Margaret S. 1988. *Culture and Agency*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- DiMaggio, Paul. 1997. "Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:263-87.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa and Anne Mische. 1998. "What is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4):962-1023.
- Griswold, Wendy. 1992. "The Sociology of Culture: Four Good Arguments (and One Bad One)." *Acta Sociologica* 35(4):323-328.

Week 6

“Bringing Society Back In”

- Stryker, Robin. 1994. “Rules, Resources, and Legitimacy Processes: Some Implications for Social Conflict, Order, and Change.” *American Journal of Sociology* 99:847-910.
- Friedland, Roger and Robert Alford. 1991. “Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions.” Pp. 232-66 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Eds. Powell and DiMaggio. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Swidler, Ann. 2001. "What Anchors Cultural Practices," in Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny (eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge):74-92.

Week 7

Culture in Interaction

- Eliasoph, Nina and Paul Lichterman. 2003. “Culture in Interaction.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(4):735-794.
- Becker, Penny Edgell. 1998. “Making Inclusive Communities: Congregations and the ‘Problem’ of Race.” *Social Problems*, 45(4):451-472.
- Lichterman, Paul. 2008. “Religion and the Construction of Civic Identity.” *American Sociological Review*, 73(1):83-104.
- Polletta, Francesca and John Lee. 2006. “Is Telling Stories Good for Democracy? Rhetoric in Public Deliberation after 9/11.” *American Sociological Review* 699-723.

Recommended:

- Fine, Gary Alan. 1979. “Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams.” *American Sociological Review* 44: 733-45.

III. Topics in Contemporary Cultural Analysis

Week 8

Culture, Body, and Practice

- Martin, Karin. 1998. “Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools.” *American Sociological Review* 63:494-511.
- Winchester, Daniel. 2008. “Embodying the Faith: Religious Practice and the Making of a Muslim Moral Habitus.” *Social Forces*, 86(4): 1753-1780
- Ignatow, Gabriel. 2009. “Culture and Embodied Cognition: Moral Discourses in Internet Support Groups for Overeaters.” *Social Forces* 88(2):643-669.

Recommended:

- Ortner, Sherry. 1996. *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York and London: Cambridge University Press.

**** Enjoy Midterm Break****

Week 9 Public Discourse and the Media

- Bail, Christopher. 2012. "The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the September 11th Attacks." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):855-879.
- Ghaziani, Amin and Delia Baldassarri. 2011. "Cultural Anchors and the Organization of Differences: A Multi-method Analysis of LGBT Marches on Washington." *American Sociological Review* 76(2):179-206.
- Steenland, Brian. 2006. "Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State: The Case of Guaranteed Income Policy." *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 111(5):1273-1326.
- Gamon, Joshua. 2001. "Normal Sins: Sex Scandal Narratives as Institutional Morality Tales." *Social Problems* 48(2):185-205.

Week 10 Cultural Capital

- Lareau, Annette, and Erin McNamara Horvat. 1999. "Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships." *Sociology of Education* 72: 37-53.
- Lizardo, Omar. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." *American Sociological Review* 71: 778-807.
- Peterson, Richard A., and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61: 900-907.
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review*, 77(6):999-1022.

Recommended:

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice. Introduction, Chapters 2-5. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lizardo, Omar and Sara Skiles. 2012. "Reconceptualizing and Theorizing 'Omnivorousness': Genetic and Relational Mechanisms." *Sociological Theory* 30(4): 263-82.
- Carter, Prudence. "'Black' Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth." *Social Problems* 50(1):136-55.

Week 11

Symbolic Boundaries

- Lamont, Michèle and Virág Molnár. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28:167-95.
- Pachucki, Mark A., Sabrina Pendergrass, and Michele Lamont. 2007. "Boundary Processes: Recent Theoretical Developments and New Contributions." *Poetics* 35:331–51.
- Edgell, Penny and Eric Tranby. 2010. "Shared Visions? Diversity and Cultural Membership in American Life." *Social Problems* 57(2):175-204.
- Bail, Christopher. 2008. "The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries against Immigrants in Europe." *American Sociological Review*. 73(1):37–59.
- Edgell, Penny, Joseph Gerteis and Douglas Hartmann. 2006. "Atheists As 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71(2):211–34.

Recommended:

Lamont, Michele. 1992. *Money, Morals, and Manners*. Chicago

Week 12

Culture, Identities, and Politics

- Patillo, Mary. 2003. "Negotiating blackness, for richer or poorer." *Ethnography*, 4(1): 61-93.
- Pascoe, C.J. 2005. "'Dude, You're a Fag': Adolescent Masculinity and Fag Discourse." *Sexualities* 8(3):329-346.
- Meadow, Tey. 2010. "'A Rose is a Rose': On Producing Legal Gender Classifications." *Gender and Society* 24(6):814-837.
- Tranby, Eric and Douglas Harmann. 2008. "Critical Whiteness Theories and the Evangelical 'Race Problem': Extending Emerson and Smith's 'Divided by Faith'." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47(3): 341-359.

Week 13

Culture, Movement, Contention

- Bruce, Katherine McFarland. 2013. "LGBT Pride as a Cultural Protest Tactic in a Southern City." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 42(5):608-635.
- Straughn, Jeremy Booke. 2005. "Taking the State at Its Word: The Arts of Consentful Contention in the German Democratic Republic," *American Journal of Sociology*, 110:1598–1650.
- Krinsky, John and Ann Mische. 2013. "Formations and Formalisms: Charles Tilly and the Paradox of the Actor." *Annual Review of Sociology* 39:1-26.
- Polletta, Francesca, and James M. Jasper. 2001. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27:283-305.

Recommended:

Christian Smith, 1996, *Disruptive Religion*, Routledge
Francesca Polletta, 2006, *It was Like a Fever*, Chicago

Week 14

Subcultures and Resistance

- Ewick, Patricia and Susan Silbey, 2003. "Narrating Social Structure: Stories of Resistance to Legal Authority." *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (6): 1328-72.
- Finley, Nancy J. 2010. "Skating Femininity: Gender Maneuvering in Women's Roller Derby." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 39(4):359-387.
- Hebdige, Dick. "Contemporizing 'subculture': 30 years to life." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15: 399-424.
- Staff, Jeremy, Derek A. Kreager. 2008. "Too Cool for School? Violence, Peer Status, and High School Dropout." *Social Forces*, 87(1):445-471.

Recommended:

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

Week 15 Wrap-up and Discussion. What did we learn? Q and A on final papers.
Class evaluations. Adjourn to Town Hall and Celebrate Summer.

Final Paper due **May 9**, 4 pm, Sociology Dept. Office, 909 Social Sciences.

Additional Suggested Readings

Nationalism and Culture

Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood*

Genevieve Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland*

Lynette Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*

Culture and Cognition

Karen Cerulo, editor, *Culture in Mind*

Karen Cerulo, *Never Saw it Coming: Cultural Challenges to Imagining the Worst*

Cultural Reception

Schudson, Michael. 1989. "How Culture Works" in *Theory and Society*

Griswold, Wendy, "The Writing on the Mud Wall" in *American Sociological Review*

Radway, Janice, *Reading the Romance*

Press, Andrea, *Women Watching Television*

Mass Culture and the Culture Industry

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Paul Hirsch, "Processing Fads and Fashions" in *American Journal of Sociology*

John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*

Marxist (or Neo-) Approaches

Willis, Paul, *Learning to Labor*

Lareau, Annette, *Unequal Childhoods*

Culture and Colonialism

Go, Julian *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning*

Steinmetz, George, *The Devil's Handwriting*

Mass Media

Grindstaff, Laura, *The Money Shot*

Illouz, Eva, *Saving the Modern Soul*

Schofield Clark, Lynn, *From Angels to Aliens*