Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

Soc 560; Spring 2008

Thursday, 6:00-9:00, 206 Tarbutton Hall

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
231 Tarbutton, Office Phone: 727-6259
Office Hours: Mondays, 10:30-12:30
email: tdowd@emory.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course (1) provides students with a grounding in cultural sociology and (2) prepares students for doing their own cultural research. To facilitate the first objective, we survey major themes and issues in cultural sociology. We begin this survey by considering the sociological approach to culture, which entails answering the following questions: "What is culture and what does it do?" and "How is culture to be studied?" We next turn to seminal issues that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim respectively raised. In particular, we inspect how current scholars (from a variety of theoretical perspectives) approach these seminal issues. Examples of issues that spring from the work of classical sociologists include the following: "Do media messages shape our view of reality? If so, how?" and "How do class and lifestyle intertwine to reproduce inequality?" Finally, we turn to substantive questions that have come to the fore in recent decades, including "How is market activity undergirded by cultural assumptions?" and "How does social context shape the production and consumption of expressive goods?" To facilitate the second objective (*i.e.*, doing research), we give special attention to methods and designs employed in current research, and we heed how theoretical ideas are translated into empirical projects. Thus, by the end of the semester, each student will have a grasp of the field and an understanding of how to do cultural sociology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized as a seminar, which entails the combination of a fair amount of reading, class discussion, and written assignments. Given this organization, you are expected to attend each class and to participate.

A) Attendance

If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. Note that unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade.

B) Class Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned material before class and develop your own assessment of this material. Such careful preparation will improve

the quality of class discussion. Of course, class discussion should be both informed and respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings. Class participation comprises 20% of your final grade.

C) Weekly Memos

You will prepare a 3-page memo for each week's readings (typed and double-spaced). You should regard these memos as ideas in progress rather than as finished products. Use them to digest each week's readings and to respond with questions, criticisms, and new ideas. Please bring your memo to class and submit it at the end of the evening. The weekly memos comprise 30% of your final grade.

D) Final Paper

You will complete a 15-page paper (typed and double-spaced). The paper should deal with some aspect of cultural sociology, yet it should also relate to your own research interests. Consequently, this paper may take a variety of forms. For example, it can be a review of the literature, a research proposal, a practice preliminary examination in culture, or an empirical project. I ask that you discuss your topic with me by *February 28* and submit an outline by *April 10*. The final paper is due on *May 8* and comprises 50% of your final grade.

COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (*e.g.*, syllabus, overheads) will be posted on the Blackboard site for SOC 560.

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available on the class Blackboard site (click on the "Reserve Readings" button) and at Woodruff Library's electronic reserves (click on "Reserves Direct").

Note that the readings for this seminar augment – but do not duplicate – those found in the *Sociology of the Arts* (SOC 561) and *Sociology of Mass Media* (SOC 562) graduate seminars. As a result, you may wish to peruse these syllabi for additional readings. Note also that many of the readings listed below are found on the reading list for the preliminary exam in sociology of culture.

If you have any special needs due to learning disabilities, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Disability Services website).

COURSE SCHEDULE

(*Subject to Revision*)

January 17   Introductions

January 24   Sociology and the Study of Culture

Any survey of cultural sociology should begin by addressing a key question: "How are we to conceptualize and study culture?" Three of the readings grapple with this question. Heeding the overlap between sociology and cognitive psychology, DiMaggio explores the implicit properties of culture. Eliasoph and Lichterman continue the implicit emphasis by linking culture to interaction and groups. Wuthnow likewise conceptualizes culture as implicit, emphasizing the historical narrative it allows. The remaining readings provide a chance for reflection and dialogue: Patillo-McCoy shows the sometimes strategic (*e.g.*, "tool kit") nature of culture, while Swidler highlights how culture can organize action.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1997. "Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 263-287.

Eliasoph, Nina and Paul Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 735-794..

Patillo-McCoy, Mary. 1998. "Church Culture as Strategy of Action in the Black Community." *American Sociological Review* 63: 767-784.

Swidler, Ann. 2001. *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and Chapter 6.

Wuthnow, Robert. 2005. "Democratic Renewal and Cultural Inertia: Why Our Best Efforts Fall Short." *Sociological Forum* 20: 343-367.

January 31   Class, Ideology, and the Reproduction of Inequality: The Cultural Turn

Scholars working in the Marxian tradition have long been concerned with the emergence and persistence of inequality. The rise of a cultural approach is a notable development in this tradition. *The German Ideology* provides a nice launching point for our consideration of the cultural turn, especially as Marx linked consciousness with material existence (*i.e.*, class). The remaining works, although not always cast in Marxian terms, demonstrate the utility of such a cultural turn. In considering the Nicaraguan uprising of the 1970s, Foran and Reed deftly deal with ideology, agency and revolution. Taking an historical approach, both Beisel and Higginbotham demonstrate the salience of class, especially as it relates to morality and comportment. Lareau shows the salience of class in contemporary settings with regards to parental styles.

Beisel, Nicola. 1997. *Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-3.

Foran, John and Jean-Pierre Reed. 2002. "Political Cultures of Opposition: Exploring Idioms, Ideologies, and Revolutionary Agency in the Case of Nicaragua." *Critical Sociology* 28: 1-36.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. 1993. *Righteous Discontent: The Woman's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1 and 7.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67: 747-776.

Marx, Karl. 1978. "The German Ideology: Part I." Pages 146-200 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker. Second edition. New York: W. W. Norton.

February 7   From Media Domination to Media Framing

Given their concern with ideology, it is not surprising that certain Marxists turned their attention toward mass media. The members of the early Frankfurt School, for example, stressed the manipulative role of media; Adorno's article offers a notable example of their critique. Subsequent media scholars, however, have stepped back from positions like that of Adorno's. The review by Gamson and colleagues shows how past conceptions of all-powerful media have given way to present conceptions that emphasize such nuanced ideas as framing and filtering. Consistent with such present developments, McCarthy and colleagues demonstrate why news organizations cover certain protests while ignoring others, and Benson and Saguy address how framing of particular issues can vary between nations. Continuing a concern with international processes, Jin grapples with the cultural imperialism thesis by considering the case of South Korea.

Adorno, Theodor. 1975. "Culture Industry Reconsidered." *New German Critique* 6: 12-19.

Benson, Rodney and Abigail C. Saguy. 2005. "Constructing Social Problems in an Age of Globalization: A French - American Comparison."*American Sociological Review* 70: 233-259.

Gamson, William A., David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson. 1992. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18: 373-393.

Jin, Dal Yong. 2007. "Reinterpretation of Cultural Imperialism: Emerging Market vs Continuing US Dominance." *Media, Culture & Society* 29: 753-771.

McCarthy, John D., Clark McPhail, and Jackie Smith. 1996. "Images of Protest: Media Bias in the Coverage of Washington, D.C. Demonstrations." *American Sociological Review* 61: 478-499.

February 14   Status Groups: The Construction of Identity and Exclusion

A well-known aphorism states that Weber conversed with the ghost of Marx. In "Class, Status, and Party," for example, Weber posits that status groups are analytically distinct from classes and are theoretically important. The remaining readings bolster Weber's position. DiMaggio and Fleming and Roses explore how status groups facilitated the historical emergence of an aesthetic classification (*e.g.*, high culture) in the U.S.; note that both readings provide a necessary foundation for next week's topic of cultural capital. Although not framed in Weberian terms, Feagin and Lacy explore how issues of race can (and do) shape exclusion and identity.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1991 (1982). "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." Pages 374-397 in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, edited by Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Feagin, Joe R. 1991. "The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiblack Discrimination in Public Places." *American Sociological Review* 56: 101-116.

Fleming, Crystal M. and Lorraine E. Roses. 2007. *"*Black Cultural Capitalists: African American Elites and the Organization of the Arts in Early Twentieth Century Boston.*"* *Poetics* 35: 368-387.

Lacy, Karyn. 2004. *"*Black Spaces, Black Places: Strategic Assimilation and Identity Construction in Middle Class Suburbia." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27: 908-930.

Weber, Max. 1946. "Class, Status, Party." Pages 180-195 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

February 21   Class, Status, and Cultural Capital: Reproduction Revisited

Scholars working in the Weberian tradition have developed the concept of "cultural capital" in order to demonstrate how lifestyle contributes to inequality. Bourdieu's work – including *Distinction* – is an important touchstone for this literature. Sallaz and Zavisca offer a cogent introduction to Bourdieu's work, as well as detailing its treatment in U.S. sociology. Aschaffenburg and Mass rigorously assess the cultural capital accounts offered by both Bourdieu and DiMaggio. The remaining works enrich, if not critique, cultural capital research in important ways. Bryson raises the issue of "multicultural capital" (thereby foreshadowing our discussion of omnivorousness), and Dumais interrogates the applicability of Bourdieu's theory to American children and their teachers.

Aschaffenburg, Karen and Ineke Maas. 1997. "Cultural and Educational Careers: The Dynamics of Social Reproduction." *American Sociological Review* 62: 573-587.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard

Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "'Anything But Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review* 61: 884-899.

Dumais, Susan A. 2006. "Early Childhood Cultural Capital, Parental Habitus, and Teachers' Perceptions." *Poetics* 34: 83-107.

Sallaz, Jeffrey J. and Jane Zavisca. 2007. "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980-2004." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 21-41.

February 28   The Rationalization of Work and Economy

Rationalization entails a major theme in Weber's work. One meaning of "rationalization" is that (crudely put) justifications for action are increasingly based on calculable and systematic criteria rather than on mystical or *ad hoc* criteria. The excerpt from *The Protestant Ethic* illustrates the theme of rationalization, including the famous "iron cage" passage. Collins nicely locates *The Protestant Ethic* amidst Weber's oeuvre, and he also offers a generalization of Weber's argument. Scott considers the impact of religion on contemporary notions of work, while also heeding the role that gender plays. Espeland and Sauder broach the topic of rationalization via a consideration of law school rankings. Meanwhile, Biggart examines a sector of the economy in which individuals react against formal rationality.

Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. 1989. *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 5 and 6.

Collins, Randall. 1997. "Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Emergence of Capitalism in Japan." *American Sociological Review* 62: 843-865.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Michael Sauder. 2007. "Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds." *American Journal of Sociology* 113: 1-40.

Scott, Tracy L. 2002. "Choices and Constraints: Protestantism, Gender, and the Meaning of Work." *International Journal of Sociology & Social Policy* 22: 1-38.

Weber, Max. 1992. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. London: Routledge. Chapters 1 and 5.

DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPER TOPICS

March 6   Sources of Solidarity: Classification Boundaries and Rituals

Durkheim's focus on social solidarity culminated in *Elementary Forms*, wherein he argued that solidarity is enabled by classification boundaries and their attendant symbols and rituals. Karen Field's introduction reveals the radical nature of Durkheim's work while providing a succinct overview. Lamont shows the salience of classification boundaries in her comparative study of working men. The remaining pieces extend Durkheim, either implicitly or explicitly, via particular cases. Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz document and explain the commemoration of a divisive war, and Killian and Kurien respectively examine religion and boundaries in contemporary France and and the U.S.

Durkheim, Emile. 1995 (1915). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press. Translator's Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion.

Killian, Caitlin. 2003. "The Other Side of the Veil: North African Women in France Respond to the Headscarf Affair." *Gender and Society* 17: 567-590.

Kurien, Prema A. 2006. "Multiculturalim and 'American' Religion: The Case of Hindu Indian Americans." *Social Forces* 85: 723-741.

Lamont, Michèle. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1, 3 and 6.

Wagner-Pacifici, Robin and Barry Schwartz. 1991. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *American Journal of Sociology* 97:376-420.

March 13   **SPRING BREAK (No Class)**

March 20   ***Construction of Markets and Industries***

Classical sociologists emphasized that market activity entails a cultural component (witness *The Protestant Ethic*). Of late, sociologists and others have embraced this emphasis with a newfound vengeance. Johnson and colleagues show how processes at work in organizations and markets are as cultural as those processes found among small groups. Thus, their review takes seriously the interplay between cultural, social, and economic factors. The remaining readings heed such an interplay. While they address different cases, they all share a common approach. They each illuminate the cultural foundation of market activity via historical studies, thereby casting into bold relief cognitive aspects that were once explicit but later taken for granted.

Dobbin, Frank and Timothy J. Dowd. 2000. "The Market that Antitrust Built: Public Policy, Private Coercion, and Railroad Acquisitions, 1825 to 1922." *American Sociological Review* 65: 631-657.

Cathryn Johnson, Timothy J. Dowd, and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. "Legitimacy as a Social Process." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32: 53-78.

Leblebici, Huseyin, Gerald R. Salancik, Anne Copay, and Tom King. 1991. "Institutional Change and the Transformation of Interorganizational Fields: An Organizational History of the U.S. Broadcasting Industry." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36: 333-363.

Mezias, Stephen J. and Elizabeth Boyle. 2005. "Blind Trust: Market Control, Legal Environments, and the Dynamics of Competitive Intensity in the Early Film Industry, 1893-1920." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 50: 1-34.

Peiss, Kathy. 1998. *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*. New York: Metropolitan Books. Chapters 1, 3 and 4.

March 27   ***The Social Context of Creativity***

The creator who toils in isolation is a romantic image that is typically not accurate. Sociologists, as Peterson and Anand detail, often approach creators by stressing the larger context in which such creators are embedded, which includes extended networks of individuals and conventions regarding creation. Each of the remaining articles demonstrates the salience of this context. DeNora and Santoro examine how historical shifts enabled the rise of new categories of creators. The Bielbys and Fine examine constraints that creators face in commercial settings.

Bielby, William T. and Denise D. Bielby. 1999. "Organizational Mediation of Project-Based Labor Markets: Talent Agencies and the Careers of Screenwriters." *American Sociological Review* 64: 64-85.

DeNora, Tia. 1991. "Musical Patronage and Social Change in Beethoven's Vienna." *American Journal of Sociology* 97: 310-346.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1992. "The Culture of Production: Aesthetic Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work." *American Journal of Sociology* 97: 1268-1294.

Peterson, Richard A. and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 311-334.

Santoro, Marco. 2002. "What is 'Cantautore?': Distinction and Authorship in Italian (Popular) Music." *Poetics* 30: 111-132.

April 3   The Content of Expressive Goods: Stability and Change

The study of content is typically the purview of the humanities, and it is a relatively new endeavor for most of sociology. Not surprisingly, many sociologists draw on the humanities to inform their theorizing and research. For example, Bauman turns to film theory, and Dowd and colleagues make use of music scholarship. Many sociologists also extend the traditional reflection model of the humanities by employing multivariate and longitudinal analysis; Alexander and Pescosolido *et al.* offer but two examples of this tendency. Howard Becker provides our framework for this week, discussing the respective factors that shape similarity and change in content.

Alexander, Victoria D. 1996. "Pictures at an Exhibition: Conflicting Pressures in Museums and the Display of Art."*American Journal of Sociology* 101: 797-839.

Bauman, Shyon. 2001. "Intellectualization and Art World Development: Film in the United States." *American Sociological Review* 66: 404-426

Becker, Howard. 1984. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 2 and 10.

Dowd, Timothy J., Kathleen Liddle, Kim Lupo, and Anne Borden. 2002. "Organizing the Musical Canon: The Repertoires of Major U.S. Symphony Orchestras, 1842 to 1969." *Poetics* 30: 35-61.

Pescosolido, Bernice A., Elizabeth Grauerholz, and Melissa A. Milkie. 1997. "Culture and Conflict: The Portrayal of Blacks in U.S. Children's Picture Books through the Mid- and Late-Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 62: 443-464.

*April 10   **Princeton / Mellon Meeting on Orchestras (No Class)***

DUE DATE FOR PAPER OUTLINES

April 17   The Reception and Consumption of Expressive Goods

We return once again to the "consuming audience." However, instead of examining how individuals are affected by the content of expressive goods, we will consider how they actively incorporate such goods into their daily existence. Andrea Press discusses the burgeoning literature that focuses on the active consumers and the insights that this literature has yielded. Griswold provides a comprehensive approach to readers in Nigeria, locating them in the nation's larger "fiction complex." The remaining readings demonstrate important directions found in the audience literature. Shrum fills a gap in the literature by comparatively examining how the opinion of critics affects audience choices; Shively moves beyond imputation, addressing how and why viewers apprehend John Wayne films; Roscigno and Danaher show how consumption can be a resource for action.

Griswold, Wendy. 2000. *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 4.

Press, Andrea L. 1994. "The Sociology of Cultural Reception: Notes Toward an Emerging Paradigm." Pages 221-245 in *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*, edited by Diana Crane. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Roscigno, Vincent J. and William F. Danaher. 2001. "Media and Mobilization: The Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929 to 1934." *American Sociological Review* 66: 21-48.

Shively, JoEllen. 1992. "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos." *American Sociological Review* 57: 72-734.

Shrum, Wesley. 1991. "Critics and Publics: Cultural Mediation and Popular Mediation in Highbrow and Popular Performing Arts."*American Journal of Sociology* 97: 347-375.

April 24   Aesthetic Classification Systems: Interplay between Production and Consumption

A notable current of work in cultural sociology brings together issues of production and consumption via what DiMaggio labels aesthetic classification systems. That is, its contributors examine how certain cultural objects are cast as "art" -- initially by certain cultural entrepreneurs and later by key organizations (*e.g.,* universities) and audiences. This current of work, in turn, has complicated the cultural capital literature, as it suggests both an expanding array of works that are acceptable and the increasingly eclectic tastes of (certain) audiences. Baumann's review provides a nice entree into this this literature by examining processes by which cultural objects attain legitimacy (*e.g.*, aesthetic mobility). Two other works examine how such legitimation plays out in the respective fields of food and literature, while the remaining works grapple with the extent of omnivorousness among individuals and groups. Note that these readings bring together many themes that previous readings raised and thus provide a nice conclusion to the semester.

Baumann, Shyon. 2007. "A General Theory of Artistic Legitimation: How Art Worlds are Like Social Movements." *Poetics* 35: 47-65.

Corse, Sarah M. 1995. "Nations and Novels: Cultural Politics and Literary Use." *Social Forces* 73: 1279-1308.

Johnston, Josee and Shyon Bauman. 2007. "Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing." *American Journal of Sociology* 113: 165-204.

Katz-Gerro, Tally. 2002. "Highbrow Cultural Consumption and Class Distinction in Italy, Israel, West Germany, Sweden, and the United States." *Social Forces* 2002: 207-229.

van Eijck, Koen. 2001. "Social Differentiation in Musical Taste Patterns." *Social Forces* 79: 1163–85.

May 8   DUE DATE FOR FINAL PAPERS