

Instructor: Sergio Galaz-García

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE
FOUNDATIONS,
LEVELS OF ANALYSIS,
THEMES,
CRITIQUES.

I. INTRODUCTION

- ★ This seminar surveys contemporary sociological approaches for the study of culture. We examine how culture has been recently studied both as a sociologically explainable factor and also as an explanatory element for social behavior. We conduct this exploration focusing on individual-level political behavior and issues related to inequality and stratification.

From the intimacy of a romantic interaction to the generation of collective action, and from individual-level acts to large-scale organizational behavior, social actors make sense of themselves and intervene in their social environments through what is commonly referred to as “culture” –systems of meanings, cognitive elements, and interactive practices that guide social perception and serve as platforms for action. Their importance in social life is so pervasive and intuitive that today it is difficult to imagine scholarly opinions explicitly contradicting the importance that culture plays in society.

However, merely recognizing that culture “matters” does not necessarily imply understanding the specific ways through which it becomes sociologically and politically relevant.

Within American social science, the production of knowledge in this direction was long obstructed by analytic approaches that regarded culture as a monolithic and externally constituted entity that constrained social action in a straightforward, mechanic fashion. This approach promoted cultural investigations with a low degree of empirical resolution that was often limited in their ability to provide specific evidence about how culture shaped concrete social behaviors.

In the 1980s, however, the sociological study of culture was revitalized by pioneer works that delineated new analytic approaches and fresh empirical knowledge of how culture impinges on concrete social behavior. This seminar serves as an introduction to this literature.

II OBJECTIVES

The seminar explores the following questions:

- What are (and which are not?) the conduits through which culture achieves explanatory significance in social action?
- What is the methodological repertoire available to describe and research the social influence of “culture”?
- Is it possible to dissociate cultural from non-cultural explanatory accounts? Is culture by itself capable of redistributing social resources and impacting social action, or does it require other intervening factors to achieve social relevance?
- In what ways does the empirical study of culture enrich standard causal models of social explanation?
- Are there any productive communication channels between empirical agendas of cultural research and works of socio-cultural critique?

The seminar explores these interrogations by discussing classic, seminal, and contemporary pieces of cultural analysis. Our exploration will carry an emphasis on the role that culture plays in individual political behavior and social inequality.

III ORGANIZATION

- * The seminar is organized into four sections. The first provides a quick overview of the disciplinary context of contemporary cultural studies. The second examines the importance of culture at different levels of social analysis, and the third focuses on how culture acts as an explanatory factor in a number of specific social and political phenomena. Based on these discussions, the last module engages in a critical discussion of normative pieces in political theory and critical studies regarding the role that culture may play or not in the constitution of a “good” society.

1 Premises

Weeks 1 & 2

Discusses the disciplinary context of contemporary approaches to the study of culture in U.S. sociology and presents an overview of qualitative and quantitative methodologies available for its research.

2 Levels of analysis

Weeks 3 - 8

Presents an overview of different levels of social aggregation, from the individual level to macro-social processes, where cultural dynamics are relevant in shaping outcomes.

3 Themes

Weeks 9- 13

Discusses a selection of investigations that use culture as an “independent variable” to understand political phenomena: How does culture impinge on state behavior, the production of collective action, social hegemony, and the reproduction of inequalities?

4 Critiques

Weeks 14 & 15

Explores opportunities for dialogue between empirical cultural research, critical cultural studies, and political theory.

IV EVALUATION

Performance evaluation will be organized in the following way:

30% Memos

- * Seminar members will produce four “memos” in the semester. Two memos should be written in the first half of the seminar and the rest in the second.

Memos should be of no more than three double-spaced pages. They should not be text summaries. This is useless since it is assumed that all seminar members already read them. Instead, they should be thought of as original personal reactions to these readings.

Memos are not intended to be finished, polished documents. They should be considered as drafts where students put their own research interests and intellectual sensibilities in dialogue with the texts to articulate theoretical, substantive, or methodological commentaries.

30% Seminar Interventions

- * The quality of students’ interventions in the seminar will be assessed considering the regularity at which they conduct critical assessments of reading materials and their contributions to generating meaningful discussions in the seminar. A strong performance in this dimension will reflect a student’s capacity to efficiently communicate original thoughts and engage with the texts and their colleague’s interventions rather than the frequency and length of her interventions.

40% Choice of final paper or exams

Students may choose to work on a final paper or take a final examination. Students must communicate their choice by the end of week 2.

Final Paper

- * The final paper should engage empirically, methodologically, and critically with the materials discussed in the seminar. Its expected length is fifteen pages, double spaced. It can take several forms: an empirical research exercise, a research proposal, a critical examination of the state of

the literature, or a cultural critique essay.

Every paper must count with fully developed theoretical and methodological sections. It must also mobilize empirical evidence supporting the paper’s argument.

Students should give time to produce the final paper throughout the semester. A number of deadlines to assist them in this regard are included:

- By Week 4.
Meetings with the professor about the content and form of the paper.
- By Week 8
First draft submission. More than a finished document, this text should be thought of as a first schematic presentation of the substantive, methodological and analytical sections of the final papers. They should also dedicate a section justifying their relevance.
- By Week 15
Final paper submission.
- * **Exams**
Students can also choose to take an examination that will evaluate their knowledge of the seminar’s materials and the degree to which they can critically and originally engage with it.

There will be two exams during the semester: one assigned in week 8, and another in week 15. Their questions will cover material discussed in the seminar up until those dates. These exams will be take-home. Answers must be submitted at most 72 hours after questions are given.

IV PERFORMANCE METRIC

Quantitative evaluations of performance will be assessed according to the following rubric:

- 10** Excellent performance. The student demonstrates both specific and critical familiarity with the seminar's materials, can use key concepts in a relevant fashion, and leverages the seminar's discussions and reading materials in an efficient and productive way to detect gaps in the literature and generate new research questions or hypothesis.
- 9** Notable performance. The student shows solid knowledge of the topics of the seminar, is capable of mobilizing relevant concepts in a generally satisfactory way, and can identify relevant empirical and theoretical issues out of the seminar's texts and discussions.
- 8** Adequate performance. The student demonstrates general familiarity with the texts' main contributions and their most important terminology. She is also able to articulate concrete positions on the main ideas of the texts.
- 7** Sufficient performance. The student shows general but fragmented knowledge of the seminar's readings and broad but raw familiarity with their main tenets. Occasionally, she is capable of engaging in meaningful dialogues with the texts' ideas and her colleague's participation.
- 6** Minimally accepted performance. It shows partial familiarity with the course's main ideas and ability to detect its most important ideas.
- ≤5** The student exhibits sufficient lack of knowledge of the seminar's materials to make it advisable to retake it.

V SEMINAR LOGISTICS

- * The course follows a seminar format. Attendance to all sessions, a careful reading of assigned materials, and active participation in discussions are key for the seminar's success and a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for satisfactory performance in it.
- * Electronic devices are allowed, provided they are used only in the context of the seminar's discussions. If their use begins affecting the seminar's development, their use will be forbidden.

Reading Schedule

The seminar's readings include both theoretical and empirical research pieces that attempt, to be representative of the substantive, analytic and methodological diversity of contemporary studies for the social study of culture.

1 / Premises

Week 1

The Sociological Study of Culture: Contemporary Approaches

The first week of the seminar gives an overview of the course. It also provides an overview of contemporary approaches to the study of culture within U.S. sociology. We begin by discussing the functionalist approach that this literature sought to depart from (Parsons) and Ann Swidler's seminal critique to it. Then we examine a recent attempt at building a general framework to understand how culture shapes social action (Vaisey) and a discussion by William Sewell on the use of the term "culture" in social research.

This introductory session will also discuss points of connection and disagreement between contemporary cultural research, classic sociological pieces, and interpretive cultural commentaries referred to as "sociological" in broader discussion circuits.

Required Readings:

- ★ Parsons, Talcott, and Edward A. Shils (eds.) (1962 [1951]), *Towards a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University, pp. 75-82, 96-210. (part II, chapter 1, sections 1 & 2; chapter 3, sections 1-6).
- ★ Swidler, Ann (2000) *Talk of Love. How Culture Matters*. Chicago: Chicago University, pp. 11-23 (Chapter 1).
- ★ Vaisey, Stephen (2009), "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process of Culture in Action", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 114, No.6, pp. 1675-1715.
- ★ Sewell Jr., William (1999), "The concepts of culture", in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California, pp. 35-61.

Suggested

Critiques of functionalism

- Wrong, Dennis (1961), "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26, No 2, pp. 183-193.
- Swidler, Ann (1986), "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51, No.2, pp. 273-286.
- Perlman, Janice (1976), *The Myth of Marginality. Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*. Berkeley: University of California, pp. 97-102, 108-118, 140-152 (Selections from Chapters 4 and 6).

Discussions of culture in classical sociology:

- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels (1932 [1846]), *The German Ideology*. New York: International Publishers, pp. 15-54 (Part I, Section A).
- Weber, Marx (1979 [1905]), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-13, 102-126.

On Contemporary analytic perspectives in sociology:

- Hedström, Peter (2011), "What is Analytical Sociology all About? An Introductory Essay", in Bearman, Peter, and Peter Hedström, *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University, pp. 1-24.

Week 2

Describing Culture

How can culture be empirically robustly described?

This week we review formal and qualitative approximations to this task, from the “least” to the most formalized: ethnographic fieldwork (Khan), survey analysis (Polavieja), experimental designs (Salganik), archival work, network analysis (Bearman & Stovel), and relational mappings of social meanings (King). We will discuss these approaches’ relative value and their relative fit for specific agendas of cultural research.

Required Readings:

- ★ Khan, Shamus (2012), *Privilege. The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 41-113, (Chapters 2 and 3).
- ★ Polavieja, Javier (2015), “Capturing Culture. A New Method to Estimate Exogenous Cultural Effects Using Migrant Populations”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 80, No.1, pp. 166-191.
- ★ Salganik, Matthew (2006), “Experimental Study of Inequality in an Artificial Cultural Market”, in *Science*, Vol. 311, pp. 854-856, and on-line support material (link)
- ★ Bearman, Peter, and Katherine Stovel (2000), “Becoming a Nazi: a Model for narrative networks”, in *Poetics*, Vol. 27, No. 2-3, pp.66-90.
- ★ To Yeung, King (2005), “What Does Love Mean?”, in *Social Forces*, Vol. 84, No.1, pp. 391-420.

Suggested Readings:

- Geertz, Clifford (2005 [1972]), “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”, in *Daedalus*, Vol. 134, No.4, pp. 56-86.
- Marsden, Peter, and Joseph Swingle (1994), “Conceptualizing and Measuring Culture in Surveys: Values, Strategies and Symbols”, in *Poetics*, Vol. 22, No.4, pp. 269-289.
- Swidler, Ann (2000), *Talk of Love. How Culture Matters*. Chicago: Chicago University, pp. 215-236 (Chapter 1, Methodological Appendix).
- Mohr, John (1998), “Measuring Meaning Structures”, in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, pp. 345-370.

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Week 3

Culture in Individuals: Subjectivity, Identities.

This week we begin our substantive relationships between culture and society. We discuss how the individual, arguably the lowest aggregate-level social actor, is herself constituted through processes related to meaning-making and practical habituation.

Our departure point is a classic text by Herbert Mead about the importance that the “generalized other” plays for the construction of the “self” during childhood and an empirical analysis of the way gender is constructed early on in kindergarten schools (Martin).

Oftentimes the “self” participates in social action through specific “identities,” which in principle can be understood as particular versions of subjective experience associated with specific areas of social experience. In this regard, Brubakers and his colleagues introduce us to the role that cognition plays in the configuration of ethnicity, a classic political identity. Subsequently, DiMaggio provides a general overview of how cognitive processes affect a broad array of social behaviors.

Finally, we discuss how recurrent and habituated practices impinge on broader social structures to stabilize individuals’ social identities. Our guide here is a discussion of the notion of “habitus” by Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most influential sociologists of the second half of the twentieth century. We then discuss Loïc Wacquant’s empirical examination of this notion in his ethnography of boxing in Chicago.

Required Readings:

- ★ Mead, George Herbert (1934 1934), *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp.192-221 (sections 20-28).
- ★ Martin, Karin (1998). “Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 63, No. 4, pp. 494-511.
- ★ Brubakers, Roger, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov (2004), “Ethnicity as Cognition”, in *Theory and Society*, No.33, pp.31-64.
- ★ DiMaggio, Paul (1997), “Culture and Cognition”, in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23, pp. 263-287.
- ★ Bourdieu, Pierre (2007 [1980]), “Structures, Habitus, Practices”, in Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University, pp. 52-65.
- ★ Wacquant, Loïc (2003), *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University, pp. 2-11, 77-150 (prologue, selections from chapters 1 and 2).

Suggested Readings:

- Nisbett, Richard, et al. (2001), “Culture and Systems of Thought. Holistic vs. Analytic Cognition”, in *Psychological Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2, pp. 291-307.
- Shweder, Richard, (1982), “Does the Concept of the Person Vary Cross-Culturally?”, in Shweder, Richard, *Thinking Through Cultures*. Cambridge: Harvard University, pp.113-155.
- Simmel, Georg (1972 [1908], “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality”, and “The Metropolis and Mental Life”, in Donald N. Levine (ed.), *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp. 251-293, 324-339.

Week 4**Culture in interaction**

What is the role of culture when two or more individuals interact? How do these interactions, in turn, affect “culture”? This session explores these questions in three human interaction registers: ritual, emotions, and conversation.

In two classic essays, Goffman explores how modern interactions follow ritual scripts aimed (in principle) at preserving individuals’ “sacredness,” and discusses how they are dramaturgically conducted.

Hochschild, on the other side, introduces us to issues related to emotions’ role in social interactions and how they connect with social hierarchies.

Gibson and Eliasoph, on the other hand, provide a glimpse of the fascinating world of human micro-interaction and its active role in perpetuating social inequalities and the political status quo. Drawing upon conversation analysis (C.A.) literature, Gibson makes us aware of the structures that pattern human communication and how these patterns help reproduce social structures at the micro-level. Eliasoph, in turn, discusses how people’s conversational strategies end bound their political engagement, even in contexts when they nominally recognize its importance.

Required Readings:

- ★ Goffman, Erving, (1956), “The Nature of Deference and Demeanor”, in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 473-502.
- ★ Goffman, Erving (1956), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, pp. 10-86 (chapters 1-3).
- ★ Hochschild, Arlie (1979). “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 85, pp. 551-575.
- ★ Gibson, David (2005), ‘Taking Turns and Talking Ties: Networks and Conversational Interaction’, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 110, No. 6, pp. 1561-1597.
- ★ Eliasoph, Nina, and Paul Lichterman, “Culture in Interaction”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 108, No. 4., pp. 735-794.

Suggested Readings:*Ritual in Interaction*

- Alexander, Jeffrey (2004), “Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy”, in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 22, No.4, pp. 527-573.

Emotions in Interaction

- [Collins, Randall (2004), *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 1-46 (chapter 1).
- [Durkheim, Émile (1982 [1912]), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press, pp. 207-242, (Book 2, Chapter 7).

Communication

- [Schegloff, Emanuel (1992), “Repair after the Next Turn: The Last Structurally Provided Defense of Intersubjectivity in Conversation” in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No.5, pp.1295-1345.
- [Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Kathy Kuipers, and Dawn Robinson (1998). “How do Status Beliefs Develop? The Role of Resources and Interactional Experience”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 63: 331-50.
- [Fine, Gary Alan (1979), “Small Groups and Culture Creations: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 44, No. 5, pp. 733-745.
- [Warfield-Rawls, Ann (2000), “Race as an Interaction Order Phenomenon: W.E.B. DuBois ‘Double Consciousness’ Thesis Revisited”, in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 18, No.2, pp 242-274.

2 / Sites

Week 5 Language

This is the first of two sessions discussing the role that cultural resources experienced as external to the individual have in shaping social life. This week we focus on language.

We begin our discussion with Ferdinand de Saussure's foundational text on the relationship between words and meaning. At the core of his theory lies the argument that meanings are not isolated and autonomous but relational: they denote concepts in relationship with one another. This argument, written already more than a hundred years ago, strongly oriented a large part of linguistic research across the twentieth century.

Through Lakoff and Ricoeur, we then discuss how metaphorical operations, which can be conceived as the building up of semantic relationships between previously dissociated concepts, are important factors structuring everyday meanings and social action.

By reading Bakhtin—and ahead of further conversations on identity and stratification—we will also discuss how language can be used to generate distinctive communicational regimes that can act as cultural boundaries between groups. By discussing Tammy Smith's research on differences in historical memories' narrative organization, we also discuss how narrative structures can be impactful in separating and bridging different communities.

Required Readings:

- ★ De Saussure, Ferdinand (1977 [1916]), *Course in General Linguistics*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, pp. 65-78 (chapters 1-2).
- ★ Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson (2003 [1980]), *Metaphors we Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp.3-24, 33-40 (sections 1-5, 7-8).
- ★ Ricoeur, Paul (2003 [1975]), *The Rule of Metaphor*. London: Routledge, pp.49-95, 128-156, 128-203 (study II; study III, sections 1 and 2; study IV, sections 3-5; study V).
- ★ Bakhtin, Mikhail (1986 [1979]), "The problem of speech genres", in Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas, pp. 248-293.
- ★ Smith, Tammy (2007), "Narrative Boundaries and the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict and Conciliation", in *Poetics*, Vol. 35, No.1, pp. 22-46

Suggested Readings:

- Polletta, Francesca (1998), "It Was like a Fever: Narrative and Identity in Social Protest," in *Social Problems*, Vol. 45, No.2, pp. 137-159.
- Austin, J.L. (1975), *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-24 (Lecture 1 and 2).
- Gamson, Robert (1992), *Talking Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp. 1-10, 117-134 (Introduction, Chapter 7).

Week 6 Matter, Space, Time.

Our focus this week is exploring how time, objects, and space become implicated in meaning-making processes.

We begin by discussing a classic ethnography by Paul Willis that explores the role that wardrobe elements and other non-linguistic features play in displaying social identities. We then revise Richard Biernacki's carefully researched investigation about the temporal and spatial techniques that allowed the institutionalization of "labor" as a social activity during the First Industrial Revolution.

Finally, Sewell, Mannheim, and Mische discuss how concrete forms of temporal embeddedness shape people's cognitive frameworks, political meaning structures, and proclivities for action. These processes remain relatively unexplored in contemporary sociology. A finer understanding of them constitutes an exciting path for future research.

Required Readings:

- ★ Willis, Paul (1981 [1977]), *Learning to Labor*. New York: Columbia University, pp.11-51 (chapter 1)
- ★ Biernacki, Richard (1997), *The Fabrication of Labor. Germany and Britain, 1640-1914*. Berkeley: University of California, pp. 93-144 (chapter 3).
- ★ Sewell Jr., William (1996), "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille", in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No.6, pp. 841-881.
- ★ Mannheim, Karl (1972 [1923], "The Problem of Generations", in Kecskemeti, Paul (ed.), *Karl Mannheim: Essays*. London: Routledge, 276-322.
- ★ Mische, Ann (2009), "Projects and Possibilities: Researching Futures in Action", in *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 24 No.3, pp. 694-703.

Suggested Readings:

- Willis, Paul (2000), *The Ethnographic Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 14-44.
- Swidler, Ann (2000), *Talk of Love. How Culture Matters*. Chicago: Chicago University, pp.43-70, 215-236 (Ch. 3).
- Latour, Bruno, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University, pp. 1-17 (Introduction).
- Sewell, William (1992), "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 98, No.1, pp. 1-29.
- Schutz Alfred (1962), "Tiresias or Our knowledge of future Events", in Arvid Brodersen (ed.), *Collected Papers. Studies in Social Theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

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Week 7

Fields, Networks

This week we shift from studying culture in micro/ interactions to evaluating its importance in interactive contexts where people may or may not personally know each other but may be nonetheless influencing one another as participants in arenas of social action delimited by a common set of stories, identities, and definitions of social situations. This level of analysis is associated with “fields” and “networks.”

This week explores research oriented to these concepts, identifying differences and complementarities between them. We begin by reading Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of the notion of “field” and a more recent exploration of this concept by John Levi Martin. As empirical applications, we discuss a piece about change in the nineteenth-century French art world by Harrison and Cynthia White and Paul McLean’s research on patronage networks in renaissance Florence.

Required Readings:

- ✦ Bourdieu, Pierre (1993). “The Field of Cultural Production”, in *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University, pp. 29-73 (chapter 1).
- ✦ Levi Martin, John (2003), “What is Field Theory?”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 109, No.1, pp. 1-49.
- ✦ White, Harrison, and Cynthia A. White (1993), *Canvases and Careers. Institutional Change in the French Painting World*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp.16-110 (chapters 2 and 3).
- ✦ McLean, Paul (1998), “A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks and Political Culture”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 104, No.1, pp.51-91.

Suggested Readings:

Networks

- White, Harrison (2008), *Identity and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp.1-62
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Jeff Goodwin (1994), “Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 99, No.6, pp. 1411-1454.
- Collins, Randall (1998), *The Sociology of Philosophies: a Global Theory*. Cambridge: Belknap, 19-79.
- Frickel, Scott, and Neil Gross (2005). “A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 2: 204-232.
- Vaisey, Stephen and Omar Lizardo (2010): Can Cultural Worldviews Influence Network Composition?, in *Social Forces*, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp.1595-1618.

Networks

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1995 [1996]), “The Author’s Point of View” in Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford: Stanford University, pp. 318-418.
- Lamont, Michèle (1987), “How to become a Dominant French Philosopher: the Case of Jacques Derrida”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 93, No.3, pp. 584-622.
- Griswold, Wendy (1987), “The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 92, No.5, pp.1077-11.
- DiMaggio, Paul (1982), “Cultural Entrepreneurship in 19th Century Boston”, in *Media, Culture and Society*, No. 4, pp.33-50.

Week 8 Institutions, “Reality”.

This week discusses studies related to the formation and reproduction of social institutions—the largest of which can be thought of as the very notion of “reality.” This body of research is commonly known as “new institutionalism.” It has been one of the most dynamic research agendas of contemporary cultural sociological research.

We discuss two classical texts from neo-institutionalist literature. One is a piece by Paul DiMaggio that introduces the notion of “isomorphism” —the tendency of interrelated actors to become or act similar to one another. The other is an essay by John Meyer that discusses similar questions in the specific case of modern state-building.

The rest of the lectures are not formally associated with new institutionalism. However, they relate to it to the extent they investigate how concrete sets of practices and understandings help to institutionalize the notion of “reality” as a single, shared arena of social experience.

Berger and Luckman’s text focuses explicitly on this “social construction” of reality. Boltansky and Thévenot, on the other hand, identify different justificatory regimes across realms of social experience. Finally, John Heritage provides an introduction to the work of Harold Garfinkel, an important figure of ethnomethodological research. This area of inquiry has yielded fascinating findings on the fundamental role that micro-level interactive rules play to produce a minimum degree of intersubjectivity—the assumption that we interact with one another in a single, shared social reality.

Required Readings:

- ★ DiMaggio, Paul (1983), “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48, No.2, pp. 147-160.
- ★ Meyer, John (1994) “Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account”, in Richard Scott and John Meyer (eds.), *Institutional Environments and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 9-27.
- ★ Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann (1966 [1991]), *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin, pp. 31-48, 70-88 (chapter 1, sections 1 and 2; chapter 3, sections 1b and 1c).
- ★ Boltansky, Luc, and Laurent Thévenot (2006), *On Justification*. Princeton: Princeton University, 2006, pp. 25-40.
- ★ Heritage, John (1987), “Harold Garfinkel”, in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner (eds.), *Social Theory Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 224-272.

Suggested Readings:

- Desmond, Matthew (2006), “Becoming a Firefighter”, in *Ethnography*, Vol. 7, No.4, pp. 387-421.
- Espeland, Wendy, and Mitchell Stevens (1998), “Commensuration as a Social Process”, in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, pp. 313-343.
- Zhao, Wei (2005), “Understanding Classifications. Empirical evidence from the American and France Wine Industries”, in *Poetics*, Vol. 33, No. 3-4, pp. 179-200.
- Friedland, Roger, and Robert Alford (1994), “Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions”, in W.W.Powell and Paul DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp. 232-267.

3 / Themes

Week 10

Change and Agency

How can culture foster social change or become a meaningful resource for individual agency?

Focusing on long-term political change, Ikegami argues that changing practices of sociability and the configuration of an open arts field in Japan served as a platform for political regime change in Japan during the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, David Gibson investigates communication between high-level officials and the U.S. president during the Cuban missile crisis to explore how communication structures shape decision-making processes at punctuated moments of crisis.

Writing from a science and technology studies perspective, Styhre shows how playful practices are sought to generate technological innovations. His study underlines the role that serendipity sometimes plays in cultural change and suggests that not all cultural shifts might be purposive.

Finally, we discuss a provocative piece from Richardson and Boyd that proposes adopting an ecologic approach to study cultural change.

Required Readings:

- ★ Ikegami, Eiko (2005), *Bonds of civility. Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp.19-66.
- ★ Gibson, David (2012), Talk at the Brink, Deliberation and Decision during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 1-50.
- ★ Styhre, Alexander (2008), "The Element of Play in Innovation Work. The case of New Drug Development", in *Creativity and Innovation Management*, Vol. 17, No.2, pp. 136-146.
- ★ Richardson, Peter, and Robert Boyd (2004), *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp. 58-99 (chapter 3).

Suggested Readings:

- Wagner-Pacifici, Robin (2000), *Theorizing the Standoff: Contingency in Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp.1-60, 214-238.
- Rao Hayagreeva, Philippe Monine and Rodolphe Durand (2003), "Institutional Change in Toque Ville", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 108, No. 4, pp. 795-843.
- Gibson, David (2000), "Seizing the Moment: The Problem of Conversational Agency", in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 368-382.

Week 11 Hegemony

This week we evaluate how the cultural productions of “intellectuals” can serve as instruments that naturalize inequalities and unequal power arrangements.

We begin by discussing Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony,” and then revise two papers that explore neoclassical economics’ “performativity”—the way theoretical viewpoints agreed upon by elites can exert changes on social reality to align to their postulates (MacKenzie, Muniesa and Siu; Garcia-Parpet).

Next, we discuss an excerpt from Benedict Anderson’s classic essay on nationalism that emphasizes the importance that lettered elite networks of political discussion played in the construction of Latin American nationalism.

We also explore the limits of these arguments by discussing James Scott’s discussion of oppressed communities’ strategies to resist cultural narratives and interactional regimes imposed from above.

Required Readings:

- ★ Gramsci, Antonio (1990), “Culture and Ideological Hegemony”, in Jeffrey Alexander and Steven Seidman (eds.), *Culture and Society. Contemporary Debates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp. 47-55.
- ★ MacKenzie, Donald, Fabian Muniesa, and Lucia Siu (2007), “Introduction,” in *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 1-19.
- ★ Garcia-Parpet, Marie-France (2007), “The Social Construction of a Perfect Market: The Strawberry Auction at Fontaines-en-Sologne”, in MacKenzie, Donald, Fabien Muniesa and Lucia Si (eds.), *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 20-54.
- ★ Anderson, Benedict (2006 [1983]), *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, pp. 9-48 (chapters 2 and 3).
- ★ Scott, James (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 1-44 (chapters 1 and 2).

Suggested Readings:

- └ MacKenzie, Donald, Fabian Muniesa, and Lucia Siu (2007), “Introduction,” in *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 1-19.

3 / Themes

Week 12

Inequality and Stratification

How can culture be consciously or unconsciously deployed to reproduce social inequalities?

In the first reading this week, Bourdieu uses the concept of “cultural capital” to describe symbolic elements and practical skills that give access to social resources in a way analytically independent from wealth or relationships. This discussion is transported to empirical terrain in *Distinction*, perhaps Bourdieu’s most influential work. In a related fashion, Lamont investigates the “symbolic barriers” that act as cultural boundary markers between identities from different socioeconomic strata.

Finally, Bernstein shows how issues related to inequality and stratification play out in language and interaction.

Required Readings:

- ★ Bourdieu, Pierre (2000 [1986]), “The forms of capital”, in Richardson, J. (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.
- ★ Bourdieu, Pierre (1988 [1984]), *Distinction*. Cambridge: Harvard University, pp. 260-317, 372-286 (chapters 5 and 7).
- ★ Lamont, Michèle (1992), *Money, Morals and Manners. The culture of the French and the American Upper Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp. 88-128. (chapter 4).
- ★ Bernstein, Basil (2003 [1971]), “Social Class, Language and Socialization”, in *Class, Codes and Control*. London: Routledge, pp. 132-147.

Suggested Readings:

- | Lamont, Michèle, and Annette Lareau (1988), “Cultural Capital. Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments”, in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 6, No.2, pp. 153-168.
- | Simmel, George (1957), “Fashion”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 62, No.6, pp.541-558.
- | Goffman, Erving (1951), “Symbols of Class Status”, in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No.4, pp. 294-304.
- | Bryson Bethany (1996), “Anything but Heavy Metal. Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes”, in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 5, pp.884-899.

Week 13

Collective Action

The works we revise this week indicate the intense cultural work that the generation of collective action entails—particularly if it is successful and sustained. We begin by discussing Bedford and Snow's seminal discussion on the narrative and rhetoric resources needed to "frame" collective action as a pertinent, relevant, and rewarding social behavior. Marx Ferrée and Steinberg, on the other hand, articulate critiques of Bedford and Snow's original framing model. They argue that social movements' cultural work is not made in a vacuum but in close interaction with the cultural context of their environment.

Finally, Summer Effler underlines the importance that emotional resources and experiences regarding the flow of time play in how civil society organizations regulate their interaction with their external social environment, and the success with which they secure resources to attain their goals.

Required Readings:

- ✦ Benford, Robert, and David Snow (2000), "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment", in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, pp. 611-639.
- ✦ Marx Ferrée, Myra (2003), "Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 109, No.2, pp. 304-344.
- ✦ Steinberg Marc (1999), "The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 5, No.3, pp. 736-780.
- ✦ Summer Effler, Erica (2010), *Laughing Saints and Righteous Heroes: Emotional Rhythms in Social Movement Groups*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp.1-22, 183-200 (chapters 1 and 5).

3 / Themes

Week 14

Discipline and Authority

How do modern states and societies use culture to foster compliance with the status quo?

Michel Foucault and James Scott describe modern states as actively engaged in cultural production to foster compliance from the societies they govern. Foucault focuses on how changes in justice and retribution practices have created regimes of punishment and surveillance aimed at eradicating practices defecting from an established notion of “normality.” Scott, on the other hand, emphasizes more “macro” strategies used by modern states to increase social legibility.

Norbert Elias’ work also relates to the general interests of Foucault and Scott. His classic *Civilizing Process* explores how modern states’ gradual monopolization of violence led to the generation of new forms of sociability.

George Steinmetz, on the other hand, reverses the direction of Scott, Foucault, and Elias’ research interests. He investigates how cultural understandings of specific bureaucratic fields reshapes state policies enacts. This question is explored against the dramatic backdrop of the German state’s vastly different colonial policies in China, the Pacific, and Africa.

Required Readings:

- ★ Scott, James (1998), *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven: Yale University, pp. 53-84.
- ★ Foucault, Michel (1995 [1975]), *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage , pp. 6-31, 211-236 (part I, chapter 1; part III, Chapter 1).
- ★ Elias, Norbert (2016 [1939]), *The Civilizing Process*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell: pp. 99-129, 152-156, 160-184. (Chapter 2, Sections 1-3; selections of section 4).
- ★ Steinmetz, George (2008), *The Devil's Handwriting. Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago, pp. 1-68 (chapter 1).

Suggested Readings:

- └ Berezin, Mabel (1994), “Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 99, No. 5, pp. 1237-1286.

4 / Critiques

Week 15

Critiques of Contemporary Cultural Regimes

Can we imagine a normative parameter to orient cultural research similar to the role that “democracy” plays for political analysis? What, if anything, should be a well-organized society from a cultural point of view? How can positive empirical research on culture be used as devices to further contemporary critiques of contemporary culture?

In this week and the following, we will examine these questions. We will do so by discussing several works of cultural critiques generated beyond sociology’s disciplinary boundaries. Notwithstanding differences in terminology, objectives, and intellectual genealogy, these works hold implicit connections with the materials we have discussed in earlier weeks.

The first week examines two cultural critiques examining “macro” sites of culture related to “realities” and institutions. Cayley introduces us to Ivan Illich’s critique of modern societies and their hegemonic institutions, as well as his implicit proposal to regard “autonomy” as a possible parameter for a normative cultural evaluation. Guy Debord, on the other hand, critiques the form and content of contemporary rituals of interaction.

Required Readings:

- ★ Cayley, David, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. Toronto: Anansi, pp. 1-58.
- ★ Debord, Guy (1995 [1970]), *The Society of Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, pp.1-52, 147-164, 212 (chapters 1, 2, 6, 9).

Suggested Readings:

- Adorno, Theodor (1998 [1944]), “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”, in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University pp.94-136.
- Freud, Sigmund (1961[1929]) *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York: Norton.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius (1997 [1980, 1982]), “From Ecology to Autonomy”, and “The Crisis of Western Societies”, in Ames Curtis, David (comp.), *The Castoriadis Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 239-265.

4 / Critiques

Week 16

Liberal-Communitarian Debate and Critiques of Political Selves

This week discusses critiques oriented at modern political subjectivities and identities.

Many of these discussions evoke the dissensus in political theory between liberals and communitarians. We revise this discussion by reading Michael Walzer's assessment of this controversy. Liberal positions, on the one hand, regard individuals as intrinsically analytic entities capable of political reflection independently from their particular situation in the world—a position famously captured by Rawls's famous proposition of the "unencumbered" self—. On the other hand, communitarian postures regard citizenship as inextricably defined by individuals' concrete social experiences.

The rest of the readings this week participate in this debate insofar as they discuss the wide disparities in the way cultural-political resources are unevenly distributed across ethnic, race, and gender lines.

Required Readings:

- ★ Walzer, Michael (1990), "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism", in *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No.1, pp. 6-23.
- ★ Said, Edward (1978), *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, pp. 31-48, 284-328.(chapter 1, section 1; chapter 3, section 4).
- ★ DuBois, W.E.B (1903), "Of Our Spiritual Strivings", in W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 7-15.
- ★ Butler, Judith (2007 [1990]), *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-34, 151-172. (chapter 1; chapter 2, "Gender Complexity and the Limits of Identification", "Reformulating Prohibition as Power).

Suggested Readings:

- Marcuse, Herbert (1964[1954]), *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon, pp. 123-169 (chapters 6 and 7).
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2007), *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University, pp. 3-26, 117-149 (introduction, chapter 5).
- Fannon, Franz (1986[1952]), *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto, pp. 17-40 (Chapter 1).