

Soc 221b
Brandeis University
Fall 2008
Fri 1:40-4:30
Pearlman 202

Laura Miller
Office: Pearlman 103
736-2643
lamiller@brandeis.edu
office hours: Tu 1:00-2:00
Fri 12:00-1:00
and by appointment

Sociology of Culture

This course introduces graduate students to sociological approaches to the study of culture. As we will discover, the sociology of culture is not a unified body of work. It draws on various traditions within sociology as well as other disciplines (such as anthropology and history), it employs diverse theoretical frameworks, and the substantive focus has broadened over the past few decades to include a huge range of social phenomena. Indeed, there is not always agreement on whether a given work actually falls within the sociology of culture. Nevertheless, what does tie this field together is a concern with meaning, whether it be found in ideas, practices, or material artifacts. In this course, we will try to get a handle on this field by considering several of the major perspectives used to analyze culture and its social significance. Readings for the course include many key works that have informed subsequent sociological work on culture. As a whole, course readings raise questions about the relationship between culture and power, the ways in which culture is used to both differentiate and bind people together, the role culture plays in social change, and the most appropriate methods for studying culture.

Requirements

Students are expected to: (1) keep up with the readings and actively participate in seminar discussions (2) give seminar presentations on two occasions (either individually or in groups, depending on course enrollment) (3) complete a final paper of 20-30 pages on a topic related to issues raised in the class.

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact me, and present your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible.

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York, Anchor Books, 1967 [1966].

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, second edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [1980].

Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 2008 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008 [1985].

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1981 [1979].

Vincent J. Roscigno and William F. Danaher, *The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music,*

and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

The readings for Week 2 are on the Latte site for this class. Look at the section titled "Readings."

All other required readings are contained in a custom course packet. These are marked with an * on the syllabus. Information on how to purchase the packet will be announced in class.

If you would like to do further reading in this area, now or in the future, there are suggestions at the end of the syllabus.

Course Schedule

week 1
Aug 29

Introduction

week 2
Sep 5

What Is Culture? How Do We Study It?

Definitions of Culture

Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 [1981], chap. 1.

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Joseph R. Gusfield, "Nature's Body and the Metaphors of Food." In Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 75-103.

Culture and the Big Picture

week 3
Sep 12

Perception, Belief, and Knowledge

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York, Anchor Books, 1967 [1966].

week 4
Sep 19

The Tenor of Our Times

* Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982], Preface & Introduction.

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

What Does Culture Do

week 5
Sep 26

The Structure We Dwell In or A Toolkit for Contingencies

- * Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, Introduction, chaps. 1 & 2.
- * Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 51, No. 2, April 1986, pp. 273-286.
- * Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, chaps. 3 & 4.
- * Michael Schudson, "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory and Society* Vol. 18, No. 2, March, 1989, pp. 153-180.

week 6
Oct 3

Culture as Integration

Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 2008 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008 [1985].

week 7
Oct 10

no class -- Yom Kippur

week 8
Oct 17

Culture as Ideology: Mass Culture

- * Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1989.
- * Theodor W. Adorno, "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column." *Telos*, Vol., No. 19, Spring, 1974, pp. 13-90.

week 9
Oct 24

Culture as Ideology: Hegemony

Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, second edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [1980].

Where Is Culture

week 10
Oct 31

The Aesthetic Realm: Production, Content, and Reception

- * Howard S. Becker, "Art as Collective Action." In C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby, eds., *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001 [1974], pp. 67-79.
- * Keith Negus, "Identities and Industries: The Cultural Formation of Aesthetic Economies." In Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke, eds., *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*. London: Sage, 2002, pp. 115-131.
- * Wendy Griswold, "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 92, No. 5, March, 1987, pp. 1077-1117.
- * Leo Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols." In *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1961, pp. 109-140.
- * David Morley, *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1992, chaps. 3 & 6.

week 11
Nov 7

Everyday Life

- * Gary Alan Fine, "Small Groups and Cultural Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 44, No. 5, October 1979, 733-45.

Material Culture

- * Thomas J. Schlereth, "Material Culture and Cultural Research." In Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture: A Research Guide*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985, pp. 1-34.
- * Dick Pels, Kevin Hetherington, and Frédéric Vandenberghe, "The Status of the Object: Performances, Mediations, and Techniques." *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 19, No. 5/6, October-December 2002, pp. 1-21.
- * Elizabeth Shove, Matthew Watson, Martin Hand, and Jack Ingram, *The Design of Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg, 2007, chaps. 1 & 5.
- * Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century." In Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982, pp. 222-236.
- * Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995 [1985], pp. 38-73, 192-224.

Forms of Power and Resistance

week 12
Nov 14

Class and Race

- * Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979], Introduction & chaps. 1-2.
- * Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." In Richard Collins, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks, eds., *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*. London: Sage, 1986, pp. 194-211.
- * Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000, chaps. 1 & 3.

week 13
Nov 21

Subcultures as Resistance

- * John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures, and Class: A Theoretical Overview." In Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: HarperCollins Academic, 1976, pp. 9-74.

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1981 [1979].

week 14
Nov 28

no class -- Thanksgiving

week 15
Dec 5

Collective Action

Vincent J. Roscigno and William F. Danaher, *The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music, and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Final paper due Thursday, December 18th

ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PURSUE THIS FIELD:

What Is Culture? How Do We Study It?

Wendy Griswold, "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture." *Sociological Methodology* Vol. 17, 1987, pp. 1-35.

Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, "Introduction: Rethinking Popular Culture". In Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds., *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 1-61.

Steven Seidman, "Relativizing Sociology: The Challenge of Cultural Studies." In Elizabeth Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 37-61.

Michael Schudson, "Cultural Studies and the Social Construction of 'Social Construction': Notes on 'Teddy Bear Patriarchy'." In Elizabeth Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 379-398.

Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*. London: Hogarth Press, 1992.

Perception, Belief, and Knowledge

Peter L. Berger: *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor, 1969.

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985 [1936].

George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962 [1934].

The Tenor of Our Times

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Philip Elliot Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point*, rev. ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.

The Structure We Dwell In or A Toolkit for Contingencies

Margaret Scotford Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

William H. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation."

American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 98, 1992, pp. 1-29.

Culture as Integration

Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith, "The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies." *Theory and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April, 1993, pp. 151-207.

Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press, 1965 [1915].

Culture as Ideology

Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Todd Gitlin, "Television's Screens: Hegemony in Transition." In Donald Lazere, ed., *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 240-265.

Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the `Ideological Effect'." In James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Mass Communication and Society*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979 [1977], pp. 315-348.

Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding." In Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, eds., *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 128-138.

George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971.

Karl Marx, "The German Ideology."

Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure." In *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 75-82.

Culture as the Aesthetic Realm: Production, Content, and Reception

Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience*. London: British Film Institute, 1980.

Richard A. Peterson, "The Production of Culture: A Prolegomenon." *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 19, No. 6, July/August 1976, pp. 669-684.

Richard A. Peterson. "Culture Studies Through the Production Perspective: Progress and Prospects." In Diana Crane, ed., *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*. New York, Basic Books, 1986.

Everyday Life

Gary Alan Fine, *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967.

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959.

Material Culture

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society, 1750-1980*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

David Halle, *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Chandra Mukerji, "Toward a Sociology of Material Culture: Science Studies, Cultural Studies and the Meanings of Things." In Diana Crane, ed., *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 143-162.

Harvey Molotch, *Where Stuff Comes From: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers and Many Other Things Come to Be as They Are*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Class

Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*, revised and expanded edition. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Douglas B. Holt, "Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's Theory of Tastes from

Its Critics." *Poetics*, Vol. 25, 1997, pp. 93-120.

Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988 .

Race

Mitchell Duneier, *Slim's Table*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Ruth Frankenberg, *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Paul Gilroy, *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.

Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000.

Michèle Lamont, ed., *The Cultural Territories of Race: Black and White Boundaries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Loic Wacquant, "Inside the Zone: The Social Art of the Hustler in the Black American Ghetto." *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 15, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 1-36.

Subcultures as Resistance

John Fiske, *Reading the Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

Paul Willis. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981 [1977].

Collective Action

Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Ricahrd Flacks, eds., *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance*

Movement, second edition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986 [1963].

Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, eds., *Social Movements and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston and Joseph R. Gusfield, eds., *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Alberto Melucci. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.