Course Description

This course will focus on community structure generally, and especially on how the patterning of relations within any community generates predictable outcomes at the individual and small-group level. We will begin by introducing a framework for analyzing communities and then continue with an exploration of youth subcultures. We will rely on various sociological theories to help us find answers to questions such as: What is a community? How do communities differ from groups, neighborhoods, or networks? Are face-to-face interactions and living in the proximity of other community members integral to community life? What contributes to community wellbeing, or conversely, to community breakdown? We will also explore values and beliefs that motivate people to participate in communities; examine different types of communities situated in rural/suburban/urban settings; reflect upon the benefits and drawbacks of community life; and consider the consequences for people who, by virtue of their identity (racial, ethnic, class- or gender-based, etc.) are excluded from community life.

From among the multiple types of communities, we will focus in particular on youth subcultures. We will investigate a range of historical and contemporary youth subcultures that emerge within communities situated in rural/suburban/urban spaces. We will explore the ways in which youth subculturists – goths, punk, gamers, riot girrrls, virginity pledgers, skaters, hip hop artists, etc. – feel marginalized by society, or otherwise intentionally self-exclude, seeking to resist and contest the influence of mainstream culture. We will draw on a wide range of sources – including books, articles, films, zines, and music – to explore these subcultures, and their corresponding styles, beliefs, values, patterns of identity formation, behaviors, symbols, and rituals. By the end of this semester, students will be able to use the analytical and theoretical perspectives gained in this course to analyze other communities and subcultures. In particular, students will have the opportunity to analyze how the choices that people make in their lives are not solely the result of their individual choices, but are also shaped and influenced in significant ways by the structure and culture of communities they belong to.
Teaching Method/Role of Students

The course is conducted utilizing a theoretical framework that stresses the need for participation and meaningful deliberation. From an empowerment perspective of education—which reckons the chief aim of education is education for democracy—students are understood to be both learners and teachers. As learners, students are ultimately responsible for their own learning as they interact critically with the course materials and dialogue with other members of their class. As teachers, students take on—along with the professor—the responsibility of teaching one another. It is hoped that you all, in your roles as students, will take each of these roles seriously.

Concretely, to have a productive and satisfying experience, this course requires that you come to class prepared for substantive discussions. Our ability to have such vigorous and informed class discussions depends upon our understanding of course readings and our preparation to dialogue about them. Each member of the class is expected to prepare and read carefully the assigned materials prior to each class. This type of preparation—reading for discussion and deliberation—may require you to read materials more than once, take notes, and write down key ideas from the texts. Student participation also extends to thoughtful and engaged analytical reflections in your course assignments. Logistically, in order to increase the absorption rate, it will helpful for students to spread out the readings over the course of a week, in 2-3 study sessions. Students should allocate 7-9 hours per week for this course (2-3 hours preparation per credit hour.)

While I will lecture weekly in this course, I will do strategically, with the chief aim of enhancing and supporting our class discussions. My lectures will tend to focus mostly on introducing key theories, concepts, definitions, etc., to help enhance the analytical depth of our discussions. Pedagogically, I am of a firm belief that class discussions are important because they fulfill four key purposes, namely they...

- Help participants reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic or topics under consideration,
- Enhance participants self-awareness and their capacity for self-critique,
- Foster an appreciation among participants for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly, and
- Act as a catalyst to helping people take informed action in the world.¹

Given the topics discussed in this class, you should expect that, at certain points, you will feel some discomfort, particularly as you encounter subcultures with conflicting beliefs, norms and expectations when compared to your own. This applies both to the subcultures we will study in our course materials, as well as the multiple subcultures that we personally belong to. Such discomfort can serve a useful purpose, as it forces us all to examine presuppositions, truisms, and ways in which we engage and are engaged by the subcultures we are a part of, and by society at large.

Course-related communication

I check email several times a day during weekdays. I will do my best to respond to your emails within a day or two. If you have an immediate need to reach me, it is best if you call or text me (please don't forget to identify yourself.) No voicemail, please, as voicemail notifications are often delayed on my end. Please remember that it is your responsibility to communicate with me when concerns or questions arise on your end. You will also need to check the course Latte site on a regular basis, as this will be my main way of communicating with our class, posting course readings and questions, etc.

Readings

Students are required to purchase the following books, available at the campus bookstore:


Additional articles and excerpts are required and available on our LATTE course page. These readings are labeled with a (L) in the syllabus. Please note that reading assignments should be done by the date listed on the syllabus -- we will generally discuss them during that class period.

Assignments and Grading

Students are expected to complete the following assignments in this class:

1. **Breaking a community norm 20%**
2. **Presentation of a subculture (pics, zines, music, etc.) Paper and visual 20%**
3. **In-class exam 20%**
4. **Final paper 30%**
5. **Overall class participation 10%**

These assignments will be discussed in the first day of class. In addition, I will provide a detailed handout with instructions for each assignment approximately one week before the due date for each assignment.

The first two written assignments are three pages (3 pp) long, and your final paper is 6 pages long (6pp.) Paper specs: Times New Roman or a similar font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced papers. Please bring a hard copy of each paper and submit it at the beginning of class. Email submissions are allowed for the final paper only; otherwise, email submissions are by permission only. Each hard copy must include your full name, course name, assignment title, and date. Email attachments must include course number, your last
name, and partial title (e.g., “Soc154-SCHOR-SoccerHooligans.”) The subject line of your email also needs to include the same information.

**Breaking a community norm (3 pp.) 20% September 26, 2016**

The purpose of this assignment is for you to explore the socially constructed nature of norms governing the behavior of members of a specific community. Since the most effective method of examining the social force of a norm is through its violation, I would like to ask you to act in a contrary manner/violate/break a characteristic mannerism, disposition, style and/or behavior closely associated with a particular community of your choice (or, one associated with the youth subculture that you will write about in your final paper.) While doing so, your job is to chronicle the reactions and interactions that you experience during this social performance. Examples of breaking community norms can come from multiple areas of community life: expected gender roles, proper eating habits, healthy student behavior, appropriate cultural behavior, disclosure or restraint in discussing income and assets, etc. My hope is that this hands-on experience will spark both a personal awareness of norms that are often invisible to us², or to those of a specific community. In addition, I hope that such awareness may lead to challenging harmful norms through existing institutional channels on campus (e.g., breaking an accepted gender norm and writing an article in The Brandeis Hoot or The Justice, or discussing it with an appropriate institutional stakeholder, etc.)

**Presentation of a subculture in printed media (pics, zines, music, etc.) Paper (3 pp.) + Visual (poster with illustrations or an alternate artistic presentation) 20% October 21, 2016**

In this assignment, students will describe a subculture of their own choosing, focusing on a few issues related to artifacts, style, beliefs, rituals, etc., of youth subculturalists. A visual representation in the form of a small poster is also required. This visual will include relevant pictures, excerpts from zines, logos, key leaders, or any other relevant visual identifiers. Students will discuss their posters with their peers during class time. Alternatively, if a student chooses to focus on music, he or she will select a number of songs, write a reflection on their content, and share one or more songs with their peer students. I encourage (and test) multiple intelligences in this course, so students should feel free to think about this project in creative ways.

**In-class exam 20% November 15, 2016**

Students are required to take an in-class exam that tests students on central theories, concepts, cases and frameworks, as well as specific knowledge from each of the case studies discussed up to this point. The exam will include multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, short answers, and one or two essays. This exam offers an opportunity for students to integrate key lessons learned up until that point. It also serves as an accountability mechanism, to ensure that students complete all readings on a regular basis. Students should prepare all course materials we read up to this point, and also

---

² For example, we don’t realize that we have specific norms related to dining until we see someone eating with their hands in a restaurant. In Western cultures, we also expect women to shave their legs, and men are frowned upon if they wear makeup. We will discuss the different types of norms (folkways, taboos etc.), and ensure that you pick an appropriate norm that does not violate student rules for Brandeis students.
review their class notes. We will have an opportunity later in the semester to discuss how you may best prepare for this exam.

**Final paper (6 pp.)**  
30%  
December 13, 2016  
This paper allows students to deepen their knowledge on a specific subculture of their own choice. Students can explore a subculture’s history, outline its key claims and goals, describe its adherents, their beliefs and values, patterns of identity formation, rituals and behaviors specific to this subculture, etc.

**Overall class participation and attendance**  
10%  
Expectations for student participation are detailed in the earlier section on Teaching Methods/Role of Students.

Class attendance is mandatory in this course. You are allowed **two excused absences** throughout the semester (3 hours of instruction) during non-testing days, or on days when you do not have to turn in an assignment. Please use such excused absences wisely. You do not need to let me know the reason why you did not attend class. Beyond this exception to the rule, I will excuse absences based only on **written** proof received from a qualified professional (advisor, doctor, RD, etc.) All test make-ups and extensions for written work due to unexcused absences are up to my discretion. If you miss a class, please reach out to one of your peers to get notes and ask about any changes to upcoming assignments and their due dates. Please note that each unexcused absence (beyond the two excused ones) will reduce your overall grade by 2 points each. A total of six absences (the equivalent of missing three weeks of classes) will trigger an F grade and constitute reason for dismissal from this course. Unless cleared with me in advance, being late to class by more than 15 minutes counts as an unexcused absence. In the eventuality that I will need to miss class due to well-founded reasons (e.g., health-related), students are expected to come to class and discuss class materials assigned for that day.

For pedagogical reasons, my stated preference is for students to take **handwritten notes** in this course. If you absolutely feel that you take better notes on your computer, please ask me for permission. I am supportive of your individual learning, as long as it does not hinder our collective learning goals. If I grant you permission to use a computer, please disable your wifi during class time.

Please make sure you mute your cell phone and store it in your backpacks during class time. If you have an emergency and need to call or text, please step outside the classroom.
### Timeline: Required readings and Assignments

**Tuesday**

| 8/26 | **In search of culture: What is it?**  
**In search of community: What is it?**  
Malcolm Gladwell, “The Roseto Mystery”, Introduction in *Outliers* (L) |
| --- | --- |

**PART I: Community: definitions, theories and frameworks**

| 8/30 | **Decline of community and the rise of mass society**  
Community, created through social exclusion  
Suzanne Keller, chapter 1 in *Community: Pursuing the Dream, Living the Reality* (L)  
Lyons and Driskell, Chapter 1 *The Community in Urban Society* (L)  
Crispin Sartwell, "Community at the margin", in *Diversity and community: An interdisciplinary reader* (L) |
| --- | --- |

| 9/2 | **Community and Society**  
Community on a rural/urban continuum  
Subcultures in rural communities  
Community breakdown  
Lyons and Driskell, Chapter 2 *The Community in Urban Society* (L)  
Kai Erickson, Part 1 from *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (L) |
| --- | --- |

| 9/6 | **Collective action problem**  
Community as a spatial phenomenon and social network  
Neighborhood destruction and community breakdown  
Lyons and Driskell, Chapters 3 and 4 in *The Community in Urban Society*  
Kenneth N. Bickers and John T. Williams, Chapter 4 in “The problem of collective action”, in *Public Policy Analysis* (L)  
Listen to this four minute story about a ... |
| --- | --- |

| 9/9 | **Marx & conflict**  
Social capital  
Subcultures in rural communities  
Community breakdown  
Lyons and Driskell, Chapters 5 in *The Community in Urban Society*  
John Field, “Introduction: What is social capital and why does it matter?”, in *Social capital* (L)  
Part 3 from Kai Erickson, *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (L) |
| --- | --- |
**Tuesday**

(*continued from previous page*)

contemporary collective action problem in Kansas
- *Turning off the spigot in Western Kansas*
  Part 2 from Kai Erickson, *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (L)

**Friday**

**PART II: Youth Subcultures: definitions, theories and frameworks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9/13 | Community definitions wrap-up | *Subcultures in rural communities*  
Lyons and Driskell, Chapter 6 in *The Community in Urban Society*  
Mary Grigsby, *Noodlers in Missouri: Fishing for Identity in a Rural Subculture* (L) |
| 9/16 | Introduction to subcultures | *Introduction to subcultures*  
Patrick Williams, chapter 1 (pp.1-12) and chapter 2, in *Subcultural Theory: Traditions and Concepts* (L)  
Dick Hebdige, Chapter 1 in *Subculture and the Meaning of Style* (L)  
Janicemarie Allard Holtz (1975),”The ‘Low-Riders' portrait of an urban youth subculture” in *Youth and Society, 6:4* (L) |
| 9/20 | Introduction to subcultures | *Youth subcultures: style and ritual*  
Dick Hebdige, Chapter 4, in *Subculture and the Meaning of Style* (L)  
Ross Haenfler, Chapter 1 “Introduction” and Chapter 2 “Skinheads--The Symbolism of Style and Ritual” in *Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures*  
**Movie: Dogtown and Z-Boys** |
| 9/23 | Introduction to subcultures | *Youth subcultures and sports*  
Dick Hebdige, Chapter 5, in *Subculture and the Meaning of Style* (L)  
H. G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, Chapters 1-4  
**Movie: Dogtown and Z-Boys(cont.)** |
| 9/27 | Youth subcultures and sports | *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, Chapters 4-10  
**Breaking a community norm** |
| 9/30 | Youth subcultures and sports | *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, Chapters 11-13  
**Be prepared to discuss your community norm paper** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/4</td>
<td>10/7 <strong>Youth subcultures and sports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H. G. Bissinger, <em>Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream</em>, Chapters 14-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>10/14 <strong>Youth subcultures: gender and resistance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth subcultures: status and hierarchy, gender and resistance</strong></td>
<td>Leblanc, <em>Pretty in Punk: Girl's Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture</em>, Chapters 3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Haenfler, Chapter 3 “Punk Rock, Hardcore, and Straight Edge--Status and Hierarchy in Subcultures” in <em>Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18</td>
<td>10/21 <strong>Youth subcultures: gender and resistance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth subcultures: gender and resistance</strong></td>
<td>Leblanc, <em>Pretty in Punk: Girl's Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture</em>, Chapters 7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVIE: Between Resistance &amp; Community: A Documentary About the Long Island D.I.Y. Punk (cont.)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25</td>
<td>10/28 <strong>Youth subcultures: moral panics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No class (Brandeis Monday: Monday class schedule in effect)</td>
<td><strong>Structure and culture in urban communities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gender and race</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hip Hop</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ross Haenfler, Chapter 5 “Heavy Metal--Moral Panics, Satanic Scares, and Moral Entrepreneurs”, followed by Chapter 4 “Hip Hop--&quot;Doing&quot; Gender and Race in Subcultures” in <em>Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Julius Wilson's <em>More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City</em>, Chapters 1-2 (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em><strong>Be prepared to share your visual with your peers, and discuss your paper.</strong></em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11/1 | Structure and culture in urban communities  
Gender and race  
Hip Hop  
Graffiti  
William Julius Wilson’s *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*, Chapters 3 and 5 (L)  
Jeff Chang, Part 1 from *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (L)  
OPTIONAL: K. Negus, *The Business of Rap* | Structure and culture in urban communities  
Gender and race  
Hip Hop  
Graffiti  
Jeff Chang, Part 2 from *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (L)  
OPTIONAL: Murray Forman “Represent: Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music” p201-221 (L)  
**MOVIE:** *Style Wars* |
| 11/4 | | Veteran’s Day: Classes in session  
**Youth subcultures: gender, sexuality and stigma management; style and status**  
Ross Haenfler, Chapter 7 “Goth--Stigma and Stigma Management” in *Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures*  
Amy Wilkins, *Wannabees, Goths, and Christians. The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*, Introduction (pp.1-15) and Chapters 1-3 |
| 11/8 | **Structure and culture in urban communities**  
**Gender and race. Hip Hop**  
Jeff Chang, Part 3 and 4 from *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (L)  
**MOVIE:** *Style Wars* (cont.) | |
| 11/11 | | Subcultures: gender, sexuality, and religion  
Ross Haenfler, Chapter 6 “Virginity Pledgers--Religion, Sexual Identity, and Positive Deviance” in *Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures*  
Amy Wilkins, *Wannabees, Goths, and Christians. The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*, Chapters 4-5 |
| 11/15 | **Exam** | |
| 11/18 | | **Thanksgiving holiday: No university exercises** |
| 11/22 | **Subcultures: gender, sexuality, and ethnicity**  
Amy Wilkins, *Wannabees, Goths, and Christians. The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*, Chpts 6-7 | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12/6</strong> Looking forward: Aging out of subcultures Ross Haenfler, Chapter 10 “Questions and Conclusions--Resistance, Commodification, and Growing Up” in <em>Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures</em> Jason Torkelson. 2010. “Life After (Straightedge) Subculture” Qualitative Sociology v33, p257-274. (L)</td>
<td><strong>12/9</strong> Study day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12/13</strong> Final Papers due at midnight</td>
<td><strong>12/16</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>