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 well as more recent studies. 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.

**Learning Goals**

Students who complete this course will:

1. Gain familiarity with key works and theoretical and methodological debates in the sociology of culture.
2. Assess the place of cultural analysis within the field of sociology.
3. Apply the perspective of cultural sociology to social phenomena.
4. Improve the ability to comprehend, analyze, and communicate about sociological texts.

**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:


The following book has not been ordered because it is very expensive to buy new. However, used copies are available at reasonable prices on Bookfinder.com:


The readings for Week 1-3 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**

I. What Is Culture? How Do We Study It?

**week 1**  
Jan 18  
**Introduction**  
Definitions of Culture

**week 2**  
Jan 25  
**Interpretive and Formal Approaches**  


II. Locating Culture

Culture and the Big Picture: The Tenor of Our Times


Expressive and Mundane Cultural Objects: Production, Use, and Interpretation


* Harvey Molotch, *Where Stuff Comes From: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers,*
and Many Other Things Came to Be as They Are. New York: Routledge, 2005 [2003], chap. 4.


**Week 6**
**Feb 29**

Small Groups and Organizations


**Week 7**
**Mar 7**

Cultural Economy


III. Forms of Power and Resistance

week 8
Mar 14

Culture as Ideology: Mass Culture


week 9
Mar 21

Culture as Ideology: Hegemony


week 10
Mar 28

Class and Status


week 11
Apr 4

Subcultures as Resistance


week 12
Apr 18

Race and Collective Identity

Collective Action


Final paper due Tuesday, May 15th
(hard copies only -- no emailed papers)
ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PURSUE THIS FIELD:

What Is Culture? How Do We Study It?


How Culture Operates


The Tenor of Our Times


Expressive Culture


Material Culture


Small Groups and Organizations


Cultural Economy


Culture as Ideology


Karl Marx, "The German Ideology."

Class and Status


Subcultures as Resistance


Race and Ethnicity


Collective Action


Durkheimian Tradition


**Interactionist Tradition**


**Sociology of Knowledge Tradition**
