

# SOC 590: CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

Tuesdays, 4:30 – 6:20 in Savery 409  
Spring 2018

Professor Sarah Quinn  
[slquinn@uw.edu](mailto:slquinn@uw.edu)

Savery Hall 253

Sign up for office hours online at  
<http://www.meetme.so/SarahQuinn>

Culture infuses social life, and so its study cuts across nearly every area of sociology. This expansiveness makes the sociology of culture rewarding to study but challenging to master. As an introduction to cultural sociology, this course does not offer an overview the field so much as it offers an introduction to some major themes with the goal of providing a foundation for future inquiry. We will spend most of our time reading contemporary research that grapples with a selection of core questions and debates: What determines meaning? What is morality? What is the relationship between culture and cognition? Culture and power?

We will read the equivalent of a book a week (sometimes more, sometimes less), and students will regularly contribute through written responses and presentations. Class is run seminar style. I will rarely lecture.

## ABOUT THIS COURSE

**Course Materials and Canvas.** A course webpage is set up on Canvas. You can access it through your myuw portal. Shorter selections from books will be posted on the canvas website, and journal articles are available through Jstor.org.

**Evaluation.** Grades are based on the following components:

Participation: 20%

Response memos: 40% (4 memos, 10% each)

Other writing: 50%

**Participation.** All course members should be prepared to regularly and actively participate in discussions. As with any seminar, you should show up with the readings in-hand (along with your reading notes), having completed and partially digested them. That is, you should have already spent some time considering (i) the strengths and weaknesses of each piece, (ii) how the current reading relates to other course materials, and (iii) implications for research. You should also have at least one or two questions prepared to share with the class. Especially at the start of the quarter I'm likely to have us all go around in a circle and share questions about the texts.

**Response Memos.** You will turn in response memos (about 3 double-spaced pages) on four separate weeks of your choosing. Responses memos are due on paper in class. On the first day of class we will discuss how to approach them.

**Additional Writing.** In addition to the above, you will also do either:

- 1) **A research project**, 20 pages or so, due on the last day of class.
  - a. If you would like to develop a new project, you may use this final paper to write a **proposal** that builds on the questions, methods, and/or topics discussed in this course.
  - b. If you would like to **actually do some research** this quarter, you may pilot a project and write it up for your final paper. To select this option, you must meet with me to discuss your ideas/plans by the end of week three.
  - c. You may **revisit existing research** in view of the course materials. If you have an article in progress you may rewrite it using the course readings, or else you may submit a reflection piece on how the course readings informs your earlier/ongoing research.
- 2) **More memos.** For this option, you will submit reading responses on four additional weeks, for a total of eight memos. One of these should be an extended memo (5 - 7 pages long).

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

CHECK CANVAS FOR CHANGES AND UPDATES

All articles available via jstor. All chapters will be posted on Canvas. I recommend doing the readings in the order listed. See Canvas for a list of supplemental and recommended readings.

Week 1: March 27

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Week 2: April 3

WHAT IS CULTURE?

- Patterson, Orlando. 2014. "Making Sense of Culture" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40: 1-30.
- Collins, Randall. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004. Introduction.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review*, 51: 273-286.
- Stephen Vaisey. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Theory of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114: 1675-1715.
- Sewell, William H. Jr. 2005. "The Concept(s) of Culture." Pp. 152-174 in *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 3: April 10

#### HOW SHOULD WE STUDY CULTURE?

- Lizardo, Omar. 2016. "Improving Cultural Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 82(1): 88-115.
- Ron Jepperson and Ann Swidler. 1994. "What Properties of Culture Should We Measure?" *Poetics* 22: 359-71
- Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 43: 178-209.
- DiMaggio, Paul, Manish Nag, and David Blei. 2013. "Exploiting affinities between topic modeling and the sociological perspective on culture: Application to newspaper coverage of U.S. government arts funding." *Poetics* 41(6):570-606.
- Pugh, Allison J. 2013. "What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1): 42-68.
  - Plus responses from Vaisey and Pugh

Week 4: April 17

#### SIGNS, SYMBOLS, MEANING

- Saussure, Ferdinand. [1964] 1990. "Signs and Language." Pp. 55-63 in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates* Alexander and Seidman (eds). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Douglas, Mary. [1966] 1990. "Symbolic Pollution." Pp. 155-159 in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates* Alexander and Seidman (eds). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed," in *The Logic of Practice*. 271-283.
- Martin, John Levi. 2000. "What Do Animals Do All Day? The Division of Labor, Class Bodies and Totemic Thinking in the Popular Imagination." *Poetics*. 27:195-231.
- Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(5): 1077-1117.

Week 5: April 24

#### COGNITION

- DiMaggio, Paul. "Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 263-87.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. Selected Pages.
- Happé, Francesca, Jennifer L. Cook, and Geoffrey Bird. 2017. "The Structure of Social Cognition: In(Ter)Dependence of Sociocognitive Processes." *Annual Review of Psychology* 68, no. 1: 243-67.
- Daniel Winchester. 2016. "A Hunger for God: Embodied Metaphor as Cultural Cognition in Action," *Social Forces*, Volume 95, Issue 2(7): 585-606.

Week 6: May 1

#### CLASSIFICATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

- Durkheim & Mauss. *Primitive Classification*. Selected pages.
- Lamont, Michele. Symbolic Space and Status. In Spillman.
- Bourdieu, Social Space and Symbolic Space. Pp. 336 - 344. .
- Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Leigh Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. Selected pages.
- Panofsky, Aaron and Catherine Bliss. 2017. "Ambiguity and Scientific Authority: Population Classification in Genomic Science" *ASR*

Week 7: May 8

CULTURE & PERCEPTION - CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES

- Hunt, Darnell, "Raced Ways of Seeing." Pp. 120-129 in *Cultural Sociology* (Lyn Spillman, ed.) Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2002
- Braman, Eileen, and Thomas E. Nelson. "Mechanism of Motivated Reasoning? Analogical Perception in Discrimination Disputes." *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2007, pp. 940–956.
- Anderson, Eric, Erika H. Siegel, Eliza Bliss-Moreau, and Lisa Feldman Barrett. 2011. "The Visual Impact of Gossip." *Science* 332, no. 6036: 1446.
- Gantman, A. P., & Van Bavel, J.J. (2015). "Moral perception. Trends in Cognitive Sciences," 19, 631- 633.

Week 8: May 15

MORALITY

- Hitlin, Steven, and Stephen Vaisey. "The New Sociology of Morality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2013/07/30 2013): 51-68.
- Jonathan Haidt, Koller, S., & Dias, M. (1993). "Affect, culture, and morality, or is it wrong to eat your dog?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 613-628.
- Abend, Gabriel. 2014. *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. *Selected chapters*.

Week 9: May 22

THE POWER OF CULTURE

- Omar Lizardo. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." *American Sociological Review* 71:778-807.
- Biernacki R. 2001. "Labor As an Imagined Commodity" *Politics & Society*, 29(2)" 173-206(34) Sage Publications Inc.
- Dow, Dawn Marie. 2016. "The Deadly Challenges of Raising African American Boys." *Gender & Society* 30(2): 161-88
- Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. 2004. "Ethnicity as Cognition." *Theory and Society*

Week 10: May 29

CULTURE AND THE STATE

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2014. *On the State: Lectures at the College De France, 1989-1992*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. Lecture of 18 January 1990; Lecture of 25 January 1990; Lecture of 7 February 1991
- Loveman, Mara. 2005. "The Modern State and the Primitive Accumulation of Symbolic Power." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(6): 1651-1683.
- Norton, Matthew, 2015. 2014. "Classification and Coercion: The Destruction of Piracy in the English Maritime System." *American Journal of Sociology* 119 (6): 1537-1575.
- Morgan, Kimberly J., and Ann Shola Orloff. *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. INTRODUCTION