

Sociology 345: Cultural Sociology

Grand Valley State University

Fall 2011

229 LSH

MWF 11:00-11:50

Professor Marshall Battani, 2171 Au Sable Hall, 331-3726. battanim@gvsu.edu

Office Hours: MWF 12-1

Course Description. This course examines symbolic processes in the production and circulation of meanings within society and the socio-cultural context in the construction and interpretation of social behavior and identity. Through a careful reading of classical sociological texts and recent theoretical and empirical work in sociology and cultural studies students will learn to think critically and creatively about the various roles that material and symbolic culture play in modern societies. What exactly is culture? How does culture "work" in our everyday lives? How can culture be assessed, measured, or interpreted?

Required Readings

Best, Amy. 2006. *Fast Cars, Cool Rides: The Accelerating World of Youth and Their Cars*. New York: New York University Press.

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge.

Articles, Chapters, and Excerpts on Reserve

Optional Text:

Hall, John R., Mary Jo Neitz, and Marshall Battani. 2003. *Sociology on Culture*. London: Routledge. (Available at the Bookstore and on Reserve)

Objectives. Describe the major sociological approaches to the study of culture and their historical roots. Apply the sociological imagination to describe both the reproductive and productive potential of cultural practices in modern societies. Apply sociological theories to explain differences between significant 20th Century subcultures in Britain and the United States.

Expectations. Expect to spend at least two hours working outside of class for every hour spent in class. For this course that means a minimum of six hours every week. Whether or not you actually do that is your choice; I will, however, grade your work as if you have.

Evaluation.

Reading Reviews: A typewritten, one-two page summary of each assigned reading due on Mondays. These will be marked credit / no credit—two no credits and your course grade drops 1/3.

Project Proposal: 1-2 pages and list of sources. (Details TBA) 10% of your grade. **Field Notes/ Prelim Analysis:** (Details TBA.) 20% of your grade. **Project Write-up:** 6-10 pages in length. (Details TBA.) 30% of your grade.

In-Class Essays: 25% of your grade.

Final Exam: Comprehensive. Essay format. 15% of your grade.

Attendance.

Whatever. Take responsibility for your own actions. I'll take attendance—maybe everyday, maybe not. **Miss two classes and your course grade drops 1/3. If you miss class** you are responsible for the material you missed. **If you miss class** on a Monday I will not accept your reading summary for credit. Can you email it to me? **NO.** Can you have a classmate bring it for you? **NO.** Drop it at my office later? **NO.** (Exceptions granted for verified legitimate reason for missing—must have a doctor's note, towing receipt, police report, etc.)*

If you miss class do not, under any circumstances, ask me if we did anything important that day. **Late assignments** are not accepted for credit. Ever. (If you have a legitimate reason for non-submission it's not late.)*

Exams / In-Class Essays can be made up in the case of **VERIFIED** serious medical or family emergency only.*

Those in need of a make-up must **notify me in writing by the end of week fourteen.** Documentation verifying legitimate reason for missing must be attached (i.e. a doctor's note, towing receipt, police report, etc.). **Make-ups will take place immediately following the final exam.**

A Missed Final Exam cannot be made up. A situation grave enough to make you miss the final should qualify you for an incomplete according to University regulations.

I do not reschedule exams or assignments for personal reasons. (This includes work, vacation, mission trips, etc.)

No assignments for credit beyond those listed above will be given.

Disability Statement. If you have a disability that will require special accommodation(s) in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services. If you have already done so, you should have a letter that describes your specific needs and the necessary accommodations. Please bring that letter to my attention as soon as possible.

*If you are unsure whether your excuse for missing a class, exam, assignment, etc. is legitimate, assume that it is not.

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| Setting Foundations | Week One - Four: Conceptions of Culture Reflection Approaches Critical Theory Culture <i>and</i> Structure Culture as Structure Culture as Meaningful Practice | Wk1: Marx, Excerpts from "The German Ideology" (Reserve) (One response – Due Wednesday this week only) |
| | | Wk2: Horkeimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (Reserve) Alexander and Smith, "The Discourse of Civil Society." (Reserve) One response <i>for each</i> due Monday |
| | | In Class Essay #1 |
| | | Wk3: Bourdieu, Introduction to <i>Distinction</i> (Reserve) (One response due Monday) |
| | In Class Essay #2 | |
| | Wk4: Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (Reserve) Geertz, "Deep Play, Notes on a Balinese Cockfight" (Reserve) (One response <i>for each</i> due Monday) [Recommended: <i>Soc on Culture</i> , C3 and C6] | |
| | In Class Essay #3 | |
| | Week Five - Seven: Culture, Self, Society Sociology on Selves Adolescent Identities Relationships, Gender, Power Adolescents and Institutions: Families and Capitalism | Wk5: Amy Best. Intro and Chap. 1-2 (One response due Monday) |
| | | In Class Essay #4 |
| | | Wk6: Amy Best. Chaps 3-5, and Conclusion (One response due Monday) [Recommended: <i>Soc on Culture</i> , C2] |
| In Class Essay #5 | | |
| Wk7: Crips and Bloods: Made in America (Film Response Due Friday) | | |
| Focus on Practice | Week Eight - Nine: Analyzing Social Settings The Term Project Proposal | Wk8: Lofland and Lofland. 5-30, 46-53, 62-68 (One response <i>for each</i> due Monday) |
| | | Wk9: Lofland and Lofland. 71-92 (One response due Monday) |
| | | Project Proposal Due Friday 10.21.11 (end of week eight) |
| | Week Ten - Fifteen: Culture and Power Meaningful Mutations: Cultures and Subcultures Ruling Ideology and "Teeth – Gritting Harmony" | Wk10: Hebdige Intro and Chaps 1-3 (One response due Monday) |
| | | Wk11: Hebdige Chaps 4-6 (One response due Monday) |
| | | Field Notes and Preliminary Coding Due Monday 11.09.11 (middle of week eleven) |
| | | MWk12: Hebdige Chaps 7-9 and Conclusion (One response due Monday) |
| | | Wk13: <i>The Filth and the Fury</i> Wk14: <i>Dogtown and Z-Boys</i> Wk15: Catch-Up, Project Discussion, Review [Recommended: <i>Soc on Culture</i> , C8 and C10] |
| | Projects Due: Wednesday 12.05.11 | |
| | Final Exam. Wednesday. 12.14.11 10:00-11:50 Essays. | |