

SOCB58H3: Sociology of Culture

Lecture: Tues, Eleven-One, SW 143

Tutorials: Thursday (you must attend your assigned tutorial)

Instructor:

Clayton Childress

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OH: Tuesday 1:15-3:15 MW 309

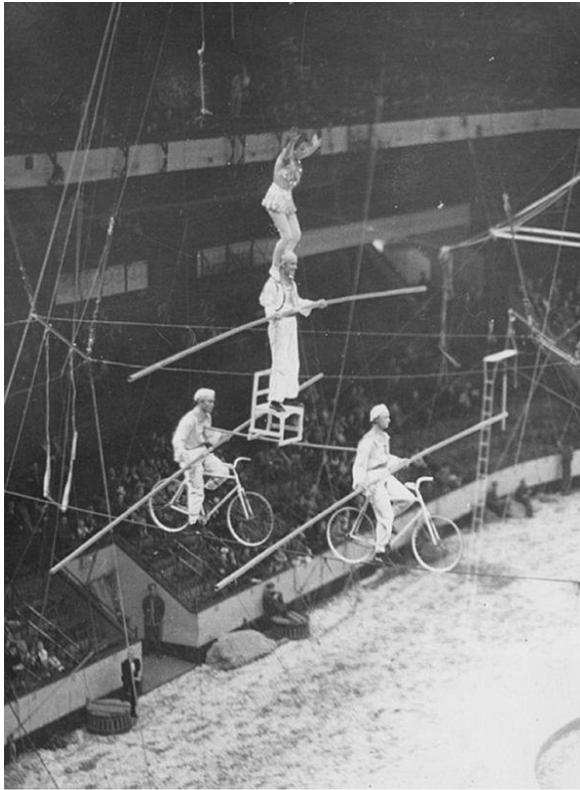
TAs:

James Lannigan (marking)

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The sociological study of culture has had a long and curious history. Long ago some sociologists either ignored culture or minimized its importance. Then in the mid-20th century the study of culture became dominant. After that culture was largely ignored again, until about 30 years ago when culture was brought “back in,” although at this point nobody is quite sure what that means for the future study of culture. If culture is “everything” and “everywhere” what exactly *isn't* culture, and do we actually need a subfield in sociology to study it if everyone is already studying it anyway? Does this course sound confusing? Does it sound like something you'd best run away from? Please don't. You need not worry. Culture is the norms, values and rituals that you celebrate and hold dearly, and the one's that you take for granted as “common sense.” Culture is a mental map or schema that you use to make sense of the world and your place in it. Culture is a “way of life.” Appeals to culture can be used to keep things from changing, or to change things. Culture is also material objects such as books, movies, art, and fashion, as well as physical practices such as singing or dancing. Culture is produced and culture is consumed. This is a course about how culture –which is both within you and all around you –works, doesn't work, and why.

Required Text

- Wray, Matt. 2014. *Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reader*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Goals and Objectives

- Students will be able to display comprehension of major theories and perspectives in the sociological study of culture, both historical and contemporary.
- Students will be able to apply theories from these subfields to real-world settings and examples.
- Students will leave the course with an analytic “tool-kit” for studying the role of culture in groups, organizations, fields, and societies.

Student Expectations

- Students **will** attend all scheduled meetings on time and prepared.
- Students **will not** falsify illness or injury to themselves, family, or friends if attendance is missed.
- Students **will** complete the readings assigned before class and to a level in which they would feel comfortable leading a group discussion.
- Students **will not** skip the reading, skim the reading, or give up on the reading if they find it initially confusing.
- Students **will** respect each other, and our collaborative learning environment in the course.
- Students **will not** plagiarize.

Instructor Expectations

In agreement and in honor of your commitment to the course, I agree to be punctual and prepared; to use my knowledge of sociology to work through the material with you; and to be forthright, timely, and helpful in my communication and feedback. I take our time together very seriously and work hard to provide opportunities within our course that will contribute to your goals, aspirations, and commitments inside and outside of UTSC.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Section Participation: You must attend your assigned section. Section is designed for group-discussion of course material. 10% of your final grade will be dependent on participation in discussion and in-section assignments.

Reading Responses: Over the term you will be responsible for **four**, two-page reading responses, which are due on Blackboard before the start of class on the week that the readings are discussed. Late reading responses are not accepted. Please see the end of this document for a guide to reading responses.

Mid-Term Exam: The midterm will take place in Week 6 of the course. Details will be provided in class in advance of the midterm.

Final Exam: The final exam will have a similar format to the mid-term. We will spend time during our last lecture discussing the final exam.

Final grades will be broken down into the following categories:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Section Participation | 10% |
| Reading Responses (5% each) | 20% |
| Midterm Exam | 35% |
| Final Exam | 35% |
| Total | 100% |

Cellphones and Laptops in Class

Cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate. When facing the board laptops allowed to the furthest right side of the room. If there are no more seats available all the way to the right please sit one-row over. If you are using a laptop and there are still seats to your right I will ask you to move over.

The reason for this policy is because recent research suggests that both directed and non-directed laptop use in post-secondary education significantly weakens student performance. The effect is large enough to drop the user's grade from a B+ to a B-. While some people choose not to do well in their courses, even worse, non-directed laptop use also hurts the performance of pen-and-paper users who are sitting near laptop users. For directed use, the speed of typing on a laptop also prevents students from processing and adjudicating main points in the note-taking process, thereby weakening their knowledge acquisition and retention. Hand-writing your notes is better for your grasp and retention of material.

In-Class Expectations

"Participation" – how much you do or don't talk, sit up or fall asleep – isn't really what most of us want from our students. Instead, most of us hope to see students accept our invitation to "the life of mind" by adopting a "scholarly attitude." Having a "scholarly attitude" involves developing intellectual curiosity and a genuine engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Students with a scholarly attitude take the student role seriously and demonstrate their commitment to academic pursuits by actively engaging in the material, reflecting deeply on the readings, raising thoughtful questions and comments in class, bringing unsolicited materials to share that are directly relevant to the topics being covered, come early and/or stay late to raise their own questions about the material, and generally go above and beyond the requirements of the course. Students who lack a scholarly attitude passively complete the readings and responses, occasionally engage in other activities during lecture (playing with phones, texting, daydreaming, and so on), and are primarily concerned with obtaining a particular grade in the course. Having a "scholarly attitude" is rewarded in many small and large ways.

Assorted Policies having to do with Email

Email your TA with all question. Emails sent to the professor will either be forwarded to the TA or not responded to. Questions that require two sentences or less to answer will be responded to by email, which basically excludes all emails

asking for substantive course material to be “explained.” For these types of inquiries and any other inquiries that will take longer to answer, please attend office hours or make arrangements by appointment. Andreas will forward me any questions that he cannot answer. Emails will be responded to within 48 hours. If your question has not been responded to within 48 hours, please forward it to me after that period. Do not expect a response outside of normal business hours (e.g. a question emailed on Friday night will be responded to by the end of the working day on Tuesday).

Feedback on our Course

I value and seek your feedback on our course. To that end, I will distribute a mid-term evaluation near the halfway point of the course to hear from you anonymously. This assists me in making any necessary adjustments in my teaching practice for the rest of our time together.

Possible Changes to the Syllabus

Every class is a bit different. As a result unforeseen problems may emerge and we may have to make adjustments to the syllabus as we go. Over the term the syllabus may change. Make sure you are staying up to date on our Blackboard site.

Academic Integrity

The University of Toronto is committed to academic integrity and academic dishonesty will be penalized. All of your assignments should be your own work that has not been submitted to any other class. In addition, you should cite—using any appropriate citation style—any information or idea that you obtain from any source. For further citation information see:

Using Quotations (University College Writing Centre): <http://www.utoronto.ca/ucwriting/quotations.html>

Citation Guide (UTSC Writing Centre): <http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/twc/citations>

For a full description of U of T’s academic integrity definitions and procedures see:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/academicoffenses.html>

Academic Services at UTSC

I encourage students to make good use of the academic resources available on campus. For instance, the Writing Centre provides online and individual support for getting started, writing, research, reading, revising, citation guidelines, and English language development. You can view these services here: <http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/twc/>. Check for writing workshops, clinics, drop-in hours, individual appointments, and online help. And did you know there is a **Sociology librarian** at UTSC? Everyone is encouraged to contact Sarah Fedko for research help. sfedko@utsc.utoronto.ca

AccessAbility Services

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach AccessAbility Services as soon as possible and keep me in the know about how this develops. AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm SW302, Science Wing) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations at 416-287-7560 416 or email ability@utsc.utoronto.ca. The sooner you let them know your needs, the quicker you can obtain help in achieving your learning goals in this course. The AccessAbility website is <http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~ability/>.

On Grading Curves:

Although typically not done, the professor reserves the right to curve final grades upwards or downwards based on historic curves and averages.

Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Class Outline and Readings

| | Topics | Reading Assignments |
|------------------|--|--|
| Day 1 – Jan 3 | The Problem of Culture | Wray. Introduction, pp. <i>xiii-xxxix</i> |
| Day 2 Jan 10 | Slapboxing With Gods | Wray: Chapters 1-5 |
| Day 3 Jan 17 | Some Newer Older Insights | Wray. Chapters 6-8 |
| Day 4 Jan 24 | So What is This Thing and What Does it Do? | Wray: Chapters 9-11 |
| Day 5 Jan 31 | Making & Changing Culture | Wray: Chapters 12-14 |
| Day 6 Feb 7 | The Diffusion of Cultural Forms | Wray: Chapters 15-17 |
| Day 7 Feb 14 | | <i>Midterm Exam</i> |
| Day 8 Feb 28 | We've Got it Pinned Down, But How Do We Study It? | Wray: Chapter 18-20 |
| Day 9 Mar 7 | Examining Culture in its Natural Habitat | Wray: Chapters 21-23 (Guest Lecture: Jason Pagaduan) |
| Day 10 Mar 14 | Culture as Fences, Culture as Bridges | Wray: Chapters 24-26 |
| Day 11 Mar 21 | Me, You, and We | Wray: Chapters 27, 28, and 30 |
| Day 12 Mar 28 | Culture, We Have a Problem | Wray: Chapters 31-33 |

A GUIDE TO READING RESPONSES

Over the course of the term you will be responsible for **four**, two page (each) reading responses. You are only allowed to do four, and if you accidentally do a fifth reading response it will not count.

Which Readings to Respond To

- Pick two of the assigned readings for response.

When They Are Due:

- Reading responses are due on Blackboard before the beginning of class on the day for which the reading is assigned. Late reading responses will not be accepted.

The Contents:

- **Summarize** the main arguments, terms, and points of each of the two readings in one paragraph each.
- **Critically Analyze and Compare** the two readings with each other and/or other readings in one paragraph.

The Format:

- Each break from format below will result in an automatic decrease in grade. Reading responses must:
 - Include your name, the course number, and your ID number at the top of the document. The reading response should be titled “Week [X] Reading Response.”
 - Be typed in 12 point, Times New Roman Font
 - Be double spaced
 - Have 1 inch page margins
 - Have no spaces between paragraphs
 - You will be graded down for changing the margins, the font, the font size, the spacing between lines, the spacing between words, or the spacing between letters, and so on.
 - Your readings responses should be no more than two pages, and no less than 1.5 pages.