

SOC 571 INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY – FALL 2017

Schedule and location of classes:

Wednesdays 11:30-13:00 (& one Friday morning for outdoor excursion and one Fri-Sat for conference)
Room U34

Teachers (e-mails, rooms, office hours):

B. Nadya Jaworsky (jaworsky@fss.muni.cz, 3.59, Wednesdays 10-11 am or by appointment)

Course Description:

Arguably, signs, symbols and meanings have always been the province of sociologists but not always their primary concern. Many believe we have finally taken or are in the midst of taking a “cultural turn” in contemporary sociology. Problems of meaning, discourse, aesthetics, value, textuality, and narrativity, topics traditionally within the purview of humanists, have come to the fore as sociologists increasingly emphasize the role of meanings, symbols, cultural frames and cognitive schema in their theorization of social processes and institutions. This course will chart such a move, providing a wide-ranging overview of the ways in which culture has been conceived and utilized in the evolution of contemporary cultural sociological thought, culminating in the Strong Program beginning in the 1990s in the United States.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Compare and contrast different sociological approaches to the study of culture
- Review and analyze patterns of historical change in the meanings of culture as a theoretical concept
- Recognize, define and discuss the debates concerning the sociological sub-disciplines of “cultural sociology” vs. “sociology of culture”
- Apply a sociological lens for analysis of cultural phenomena in various social spheres, including the state, the economy, the family, education, religion, urban space, and civil society
- Critically reflect about their own cultural experiences in light of sociological and historical data
- To cultivate research proficiency and expertise by undertaking a semester-long research paper that involves primary sociological texts, the incorporation of a strong thesis and multiple drafts

Assessment methods

Conditions for passing the course:

1. **Regular Attendance and active participation in seminar discussions** (“*Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal.*” Ludwig Wittgenstein)
2. **Short (1-page) weekly discussion papers** (The papers should be a reaction/critical engagement rather than a simple summary of the readings assigned for the week. You should focus on the questions you want to ask in the class, or point to gaps and conflicts in one or more readings.) **You will only get credit for the discussion paper if you show up and talk in class.**
3. **Oral presentation and discussion leadership**
4. **Written final exam** (5 essay questions to be answered outside of class)

5. **Final essay** (topic of student's choice in consultation with instructor; 3,000-4,000 words; approximately 10-13 double-spaced pages in Times New Roman, 12-font; DO NOT EXCEED 4,000 WORDS!)

Particular activities of students will be evaluated as follows:

- 25% - reading, discussion papers and class participation
- 15% - oral presentation/discussion leadership
- 25% - written exam
- 35% - research essay

Academic Honesty:

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples' ideas as one's own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the course's interactive syllabus in IS. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. **The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.**

LITERATURE:

For required reading:

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2003. *The meanings of social life: a cultural sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2011. *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Durkheim, Émile. 1965 (1912). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

Edles, Laura Desfor. 2002. *Cultural sociology in practice*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Hall, John R., Grindstaff, Laura and Ming-Cheng, Lo, eds. 2010. *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. New York: Routledge.

Inglis, David. 2005. *Culture and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

Spillman, Lyn. 2002. *Cultural Sociology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1997. *Social Mindscapes. An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

(IMPORTANT: See online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments and any changes!)

Week	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading
1	Sept 20	Introduction to course	No reading
2	Sept 27	Introduction to the field Cultural turn in social sciences & Constitution of cultural sociology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alexander – <i>Meanings of Social Life</i>, Introduction & Ch. 1, pp. 3-26. (23 pp) Bauman, Zygmunt. 2010. “Culture: Liquid-Modern Adventures of an Idea.” Pp. 326-334 in <i>Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>, edited by J. R. Hall, L. Grindstaff, and M. Lo. New York: Routledge. (8 pp.) Spillman – Introduction, pp. 1-15. (14 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Culture” (<i>The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology</i>, pp. 111-117) Bonnell & Hunt 1999. “Introduction”. (pp. 1-32) Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1997. <i>Social Mindscapes. An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (any chapter)
	Sept 29	EXCURSION: URBAN MEMORY & URBAN ETHNO CULTURE Brno architectural functionalism and Roma community	Meet Radim Marada in front of the faculty at 10:00 am
3	Oct 4	Culture in Classical Social Theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Durkheim, Emile. 1915. <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i>, Book 2, Ch. 6 & 7, pp. 188-234. (46 pp.) Inglis, Chapter 2, pp. 27-52. (25 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weber, Max. 1930. <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>, Ch. 1-3, 5, pp. 35-94 & 155-184. (78 pp.) Talcott Parsons; Smith & Riley – Ch. 2, pp. 27-33. (6 pp.)
4	Oct 11	The Durkheimians: Ritual, Classification, and the Sacred	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Robert Bellah. 1990[1967]. “Civil Religion in America.” Pp. 262-274 in <i>Culture and Society</i>. (12 pp.) Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. 1900[1978] “Sex as Symbol in Victorian Purity.” Pp. 160-170 <i>Culture and Society</i>. (10 pp.) Giesen, Bernhard. 2011, “Inbetweenness and Ambivalence.” Pp. 788-804 in J. Alexander, R. Jacobs, and P. Smith, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (16 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edles – Chapter 2, pp. 23-55. (22 pp.)

5	Oct 18	Structuralism and the Semiotic Analysis of Culture/ The Poststructural Turn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barthes, Roland. 1990[1972] "The World of Wrestling." Pp. 87-93 in <i>Culture and Society</i>. (6 pp.) 2. Sahlins, Marshall. 1990[1976]. "Food as Symbolic Code." Pp. 94-104 in <i>Culture and Society</i>. (10 pp.) 3. Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. "The Structural Study of Myth." <i>The Journal of American Folklore</i> 68(270):428-444. (16 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cultural Analysis of Postmodernism & Postmodernity / Postmodern & Poststructural Critical Theory; Smith and Riley, Chapters 13-14, pp. 207-240 (33 pp.)
-	Oct 20-21	<i>Conflict in Identities, Identities in Conflict</i> Conference: attendance strongly recommended	No reading Sessions in Room U34; time TBA
6	Oct 25	READING WEEK – NO CLASS	
7	Nov 1	NO CLASS Materiality, iconicity, collective memory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misztal – Theories of Social Remembering (pp. 9-25) 2. Alexander – "Iconic consciousness: the material feeling of meaning" (pp. 782-794) 3. Nora, Pierre – "Between Memory and History" (pp. 1-20) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ricoeur – "A Phenomenological Sketch of Memory". (pp. 21-44) • Zerubavel – "Social Memories" (pp. 81-99)
8	Nov 8	The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Social Performance Theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2011. <i>Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power</i>. London: Bloomsbury Academic. <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander, Jeffrey C., Bernhard Giesen and Jason L. Mast. 2006. <i>Social performance: symbolic action, cultural pragmatics, and ritual</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 29-90 (60 pp.)
9	Nov 15	Culture as Text	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." Pp. 415-451 in <i>Interpretation of Cultures</i>. New York: Basic Books. (36 pp.) 2. Smith, Philip. 2011. "Narrating Global Warming." Pp. 745-762 in J. Alexander, R. Jacobs, and P. Smith, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (17 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," Pp. 3-30 in <i>Interpretation of Cultures</i>. New York: Basic Books. (27 pp.)

10	Nov 22	Pressing Issues: Race, Gender and the Body	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inglis – Chapter 1, pp. 15-26 (11 pp.) 2. Young, Alford A., Jr. “The Conundrum of Race in Sociological Analyses of Culture.” Pp. 316-325 in <i>Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>, edited by J. R. Hall, L. Grindstaff, and M. Lo. New York: Routledge (9 pp.) 3. Gamson, Joshua and Laura Grindstaff. 2010. “Gender Performance: Cheerleaders, Drag Kings, and the Rest of Us.” Pp. 252-262 in <i>Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>, edited by J. R. Hall, L. Grindstaff, and M. Lo. New York: Routledge. (10 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shilling, Chris. 2003. <i>The Body and Social Theory</i>. London: Sage Publications, pp. 131-151 (20 pp.)
11	Nov 29	The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Classification & Binary Codes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Meanings of Social Life</i>. “The Discourse of American Civil Society,” Chapter 5, pp. 121-154 (33 pp). 2. Zerubavel, Eviatar. “The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life,” Chapter 21 in Spillman. (10 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshall Battani, David R. Hall and Rosemary Powers. 1997. “Cultures' Structures: Making Meaning in the Public Sphere,” <i>Theory and Society</i> 26(6): 781-812 (31 pp.) • Alexander and Philip Smith. 1999. “Cultural structures, social action, and the discourses of American civil society: A reply to Battani, Hall, and Powers,” <i>Theory and Society</i> 28(3): 455-461. (6 pp.)
12	Dec 6	“Weak” Programs?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51:273-286. (13 pp) 2. Pierre Bourdieu, “Artistic Taste and Cultural Capital” (1968) pp. 205-216 in <i>Culture and Society</i>. (11 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Peterson, “Six Constraints on the Production of Literary Works,” <i>Poetics</i> 14 (1985): 45-67. (22 pp.) • John Meyer and Bryan Rowan, “Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony,” <i>AJS</i> 83 (1977): 340-63.
13	Dec 13	IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF SEMINAR PROJECTS	No shared reading