

CSOn4002 INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY – FALL 2022

Schedule and location of classes:

Thursdays 14:00-15:40 Room U23

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

B. Nadya Jaworsky (jaworsky@fss.muni.cz) Room 3.66, Wednesdays 13:00 to 14:00 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.) **Please make sure you have an electronic or hard copy of your paper in class.**
3. **5 -minute 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.**

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

Week	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading
1	Sept 15	Introduction to course	No reading
2	Sept 22	Introduction to the field Cultural turn in the social sciences & Constitution of cultural sociology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spillman – Introduction, pp. 1-15. (14 pp.) 2. Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2021. “Recovering the primitive in the modern: The cultural turn and the origins of cultural sociology.” <i>Thesis Eleven</i> 165(1): 10-19. (8 pages) 3. 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.) 4. Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2020. “The Double Whammy Trauma: Narrative and Counter-Narrative during Covid-Floyd,” <i>Thesis Eleven</i>, Online Special: Living and Thinking Crisis. https://thesiseleven.com/2020/07/09/the-double-whammy-trauma-narrative-and-counter-narrative-during-covid-floyd/ (4 pp.) 5. “Culture” (<i>The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology</i>, pp. 111-117) (6 pp.)

3	Sept 29	Culture in “Classical” Social Theory – Part I	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Durkheim, Emile. 1915. <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i>, Book 2, Ch. 6 & 7, pp .188-234. (*46 pp.) 2. Inglis, Chapter 2, pp. 27-52. (25 pp.)
4	Oct 6	Structuralism and the Semiotic Analysis of Culture	<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.)
5	Oct 13	Culture in “Classical” Social Theory – Part II (Guest: Sonya Darrow)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Du Bois, W.E.B. 2007 [1903]. <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. READ: Chapter I “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” and Chapter II “Of the Dawn of Freedom.” (27 pp.) 2. Du Bois, W.E.B. 2007 [1903]. <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. READ: Introduction (17 pp.)
6	Oct 20	The Poststructural Turn (Guest Lecturer: Csaba Szalo)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decoteau, Claire Laurier. 2017. “Poststructuralism Today.” Pp. 251–77 in <i>Social theory now</i>, edited by C. E. Benzecry, M. Krause, and I. Reed. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press. (26 pp.)
7	Oct 27	NO CLASS – READING WEEK	
8	Nov 3	Culture in “Classical” Social Theory – Part III	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Martineau, Harriet. 1838. <i>How to Observe Morals and Manners</i>. London: Samuel Bentley. READ: Introduction (3 pp.), “What to Observe” (4 pp.). Part II, Chapter II, General Moral Notions (13 pp.), and Part III, Chapter VI, “Discourse” (5 pp.) (total = 25 pp.) https://www.gutenberg.org/files/33944/33944-h/33944-h.htm#si 2. Martineau, Harriet. 1838. <i>How to Observe Morals and Manners</i>. London: Samuel Bentley. READ: Part I, Chapter 1, 2, and 3 (25 pp.)
9	Nov 10	Societalization: A Macro-Institutional Model (The Me Too Movement)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2019. <i>What Makes a Social Crisis? The Societalization of Social Problems</i>. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, Conclusion. PLEASE READ ALL THE FOOTNOTES – THEY ARE CRUCIAL. (total = 49 pp.)

10	Nov 17	Pressing Issues: Gender and the Body (HOLIDAY – NO CLASS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inglis – Chapter 1, pp. 15-26 (11 pp.) 2. 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.)
11	Nov 24	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>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.)</p>
12	Dec 1	“Strong” vs. “Weak” Programs?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alexander – <i>Meanings of Social Life</i>, Introduction & Ch. 1, pp. 3-26. (23 pp) 2. Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51:273-286. (*13 pp) 3. Pierre Bourdieu, “Artistic Taste and Cultural Capital” (1968) pp. 205-216 in <i>Culture and Society</i>. (11 pp.)
13	Dec 8	IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF SEMINAR PROJECTS	<p>No shared reading</p> <p>Summary of work to date on the essay due December 7</p>