What is culture? How do sociologists define it, and study it? How does culture shape action? How does culture (in its various forms) contribute to or combat inequality? Why do certain foods taste good, why are certain paintings beautiful, why is some music just noise?

This course will introduce students to a range of approaches to the sociology of culture. Culture as high art, culture as unspoken practice, popular culture, symbolic violence, culture as a toolkit or interpretive framework—each approach will offer a window into the centrality of culture for broader sociological questions, and the methodological approaches with which to pose such questions. We will address a range of issues, including theories of culture, culture and inequality, culture in the city, popular culture, art, music, and food. We will read classical approaches, as well as a range of contemporary approaches (including Bourdieu’s analysis of taste, and Lareau and Lamont’s investigations of education inequality). Students will develop sound foundations in the key areas of the sociology of culture, combining theoretical and empirical analysis and developing the tools necessary to integrate cultural questions into their own research agendas.

In addition to mastery of the content of this course, students will also strengthen their understanding of how sociologists go about doing their research, respond to ongoing conversations in the literature, and draw (and write up) conclusions in order to join that conversation. In addition, this course will allow students to investigate their own particular research interests in the realm of culture.

**READINGS:**

**Books:**


Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987). [Please note that this book is OPTIONAL, although portions of it are required and will be available on the D2L site]

The required articles and book chapters available online (through library databases or the D2L site) are listed below in their relevant weeks. PLEASE NOTE: Some of the D2L scans have my margin notes or others’ margin notes in them. Please feel free to check out the original book, order it from interlibrary loan, etc. if that is distracting.
**ASSIGNMENTS:**

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<td>Discussion questions</td>
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**Attendance and Participation:**

It is an absolute requirement of this course that you participate actively in each class meeting and that you are prepared to discuss that week’s readings in a thoughtful manner. Attendance is mandatory, and more than one absence will seriously impact this portion of your grade. You should also plan on speaking up at least once every class meeting, even if you are not comfortable with speaking up in class—this is also a mandatory part of this element of your grade.

**Arguments/Discussion Questions:**

Each week you will need to summarize the key arguments of the readings, and develop questions for discussion. Please turn in a typed set of arguments and questions for EIGHT of our class meetings. Include at least one summary of the central argument per reading in a week where we are reading several articles, or a more in-depth explanation of the key arguments if we are reading a book. In addition, include at least three questions for discussion—really think about questions that will help to generate further discussion, AND/OR that will help to clarify things that you found unclear in the readings. Please use these documents to guide our discussion in class, and turn them in at the end of our class meeting.

**Discussion Leader:**

You will choose THREE articles this semester on which you want to lead the class discussion, and I will assign TWO of them to you (this gives me some flexibility in case there is overlap).

**Paper Topic:**

Relatively early in the semester, you will need to submit a one-page discussion of your final paper topic. You should include a tentative title, guiding questions for the paper, and a preliminary bibliography. In other words, you will need to do some thinking and some research and reading before completing this assignment. Use this opportunity to begin narrowing down your final paper topic early in the semester so that you are not left with LOTS to do at the end of the semester.

**Paper Proposal:**

Building on the Paper Topic assignment, and incorporating my feedback and additional preliminary research, you will need to write a proposal for your final paper. I will offer more detailed guidelines in the first few weeks of the semester. The proposal will include an in-depth abstract, outline, and preliminary bibliography.
**Final Presentation:**
On the last day of class, all students will offer a brief presentation of their final paper. I realize that your paper may not be complete at this point, but I will assume you will have completed all of the necessary reading for it, and that you will have some sense of your argument. Students will present in alphabetical order based on last name.

**Final Paper:**
This will be the most significant portion of your grade, and will give you the opportunity to write a relatively brief literature review, demonstrating your mastery of one of the areas of the sociology of culture. It is essential to develop these skills, and I will work closely with you to do so. This paper must also be as well-written as possible. Good writing allows your ideas and conclusions to shine through, and everything from spelling to overall organization can help you achieve this goal. I will provide more detailed instructions for the final paper later in the semester as well.

**SCHEDULE:**

Please note that this schedule is subject to change! I would very strongly discourage you from printing readings more than a couple of weeks ahead, as I will very likely adjust the readings a bit as we go along.

**Week 1: January 22**
Introduction (no reading)

**Week 2: January 29**
Culture in General, Definitions of Culture


2. (D2L) Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp 87-93.


**Week 3: February 5**
Sociology of Art

Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Focus on ix-xxv and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, and 11).

ALSO: Find 5 Sociology of Culture syllabi and/or prelim lists and choose two readings from them to include later in the semester. In addition, write a paragraph or so reflecting on what you found—what overlap and variation do you see? What might be some of the silences and omissions? How does this field constitute itself? In
addition, please bring the titles of THREE articles from our syllabus (Week 5 and beyond) for which you’d like to be Discussion Leader—I’ll assign you to two of them.

**Week 4: February 12**  
**Culture and Inequality: Bourdieu**

(D2L) Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*. 1-31, 56-96, 185-201

**Week 5: February 19**  
**Some responses to Bourdieu**


**Week 6: February 26 [PAPER TOPIC DUE IN CLASS ON FEBRUARY 26]**  
**Responding to Bourdieu, continued**


**Week 7: March 5**


Week 8: March 12
Library Research Seminar (DATE IS TENTATIVE, still waiting on confirmation)

Please note that this seminar is mandatory. Even if you have had a library orientation before, you must attend this session. We will meet at 4:30 pm in Library Instruction Room A in the North Commons of the Daniel M. Soref Learning Commons (first floor west wing of the Golda Meir Library building). Please note that the session will be led by Kristin Woodward. Before this class meeting, please spend some time on this website http://guides.library.uwm.edu/infolit in order to familiarize yourself with some of the fundamentals—some of this may already be very familiar, but some of it may be quite new.

MARCH 19: SPRING BREAK

Week 9: March 26
Topics in Culture: Cities and Places


Week 10: April 2 [PAPER PROPOSAL DUE]
Topics in Culture: Collective Memory


Week 11: April 9
Topics in Culture: Music


**Week 12: April 16**

**Objects and Places**


**Week 13: April 23**

**Beer and wine**


**Week 14: April 30**

**Topics in Culture: Food and Culture**


**Week 15: May 7**
Final Presentations

**FINAL PAPER DUE BY EMAIL ON TUESDAY, MAY 14 at 5:00 PM**

**WORKLOAD STATEMENT**

The university has asked departments to break down for students how much time they will spend working on various aspects of their classes.

As the UW System assumes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4), a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course; the numbers below only indicate that the course will not require any less of your time.

For this course, over the semester you will spend a minimum of
- **37.5** hours in the classroom
- **75** hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- **31.5** hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.
UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** In the pursuit of equal access and in compliance with state and federal laws, the University is required to provide accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is expected that a statement be placed on your syllabus informing students to contact you to arrange needed accommodations. A sample syllabus statement can be found here: https://uwm.edu/arc/wpcontent/uploads/sites/97/2015/08/Recommended-Syllabus-Statement.pdf.

**Religious Observances.** Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm

**Students called to active Military Duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following: https://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/

**Incompletes.** You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf

**Discriminatory Conduct** (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at:

https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discriminatory_Policy.pdf

**Academic Misconduct.** Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following:

https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/

**Complaint Procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at:

https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discriminatory_Policy.pdf

**Grade Appeal Procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the sociology department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at:

https://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades

Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at https://uwm.edu/graduateschool/appealing-academic-decisions/

**Final Examination Policy.** Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:

http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm

**Book Royalties.** In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.

Update 08/2018