

Sociology of Culture/Cultural Sociology

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Office Hours: after class till
4:30, MTWR,
or by appointment

I imagine hell like this: Italian
punctuality, German humour
and English wine.
— Peter Ustinov

Required Books

Available at the College Bookstore
or online:

- Matt Wray, *Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reader* (2014).
- Joshua Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (1998).
- Asia Friedman, *Blind to Sameness: Sexpectations and the Social Construction of Male and Female Bodies* (2014).
- Black Hawk Hancock, *American Allegory: Lindy Hop and the Racial Imagination* (2014).

395-01

ARH 318

Spring 2014

TR 2:15-4:05 pm

Grinnell College

4 credits

So what's this class about?

Welcome.

"Culture" is one of the largest, fastest-growing, and amorphous subfields in sociology. It's a young sociologist's subfield: it's the largest section of the American Sociological Association, with the largest proportion of graduate students. "Culture" includes both the sociology of culture and cultural sociology – a distinction we will explore together. The "Culture" section says that it "considers material products, ideas, and symbolic means and their relation to social behavior". It comprises a variety of methodologies, a growing theoretical foundation, and pretty much any substantive topic you can think of. We cannot cover it all. Instead, we will go for some depth in just a few narrow areas of the field. If you want more reading in a different area, ask me for direction! We will begin with some basic theoretical, foundational texts, and then move on to explore microsociology and macrosociology of culture; mass culture, subcultures, resistance, and appropriation; language and race as culture; and classification, boundaries and cognition. Throughout the course, we will work to develop a definition of "culture", and with what culture has to do with inequality, hierarchy, and political action.

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.
— Amy Tan



Biology versus culture.

Writing Assignments

You will write three types of papers in this class. The first is a series of analytical memos, which will be revised throughout the course. These are short (1-2 page), dense, definitional assignments.

You will also write a book review, a 5-7 page summary and critique of a book we do NOT cover in class.

Finally, you will develop an analysis of a cultural object of your choice. This will also be a 5-7 page paper.

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class.

Some assignments will incorporate peer review; you will NOT know in advance which will be reviewed by peers or me, so turn in good work when it's due.



Yo no soy mexicano. Yo no soy gringo. Yo no soy chicano. No soy gringo en USA y mexicano en Mexico. Soy chicano en todas partes. No tengo que asimilarme a nada. Tengo mi propia historia.
— Carlos Fuentes

Assignments	Points	Due Date
• Analytical Memos (2, with revision)	25	Memo 1: Feb. 6 Memo 2: Feb. 27 Final revision: May 15
• Book review	20	Proposal: March 6 Paper: March 13
• Cultural object analysis	20	Proposal: April 15 Paper: May 8
• Seminar leader	15	See sign-up sheet
• Reading memos	10 * 1	See sign-up sheet
• Attendance & participation	10	Throughout
Total	100	

Readings & Reading Memos

This course is **reading-intensive**, some of it difficult and dense. lot of difficult material. **To make the most of this course, you will need to make time to read and make reading notes on a regular basis.** I suggest that you organize significant, uninterrupted blocks of reading/writing time into your schedule for this course.

You are responsible for writing 10 reading memos throughout the semester; these will be HIGHLY STRUCTURED, one-page assignments.

The required structure is:

- No more than 1/2 page summary of the author's main argument

- No more than 1/2 page noting connections & tensions with other class readings
- 2-3 questions you'd like the class to discuss

They are due 24 hours before the class period in which we discuss the reading (e.g., Monday at 2:15 for Tuesday's class, and Wednesday at 2:15 for Thursday's class). Please email them to me.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is required. Learning is about the interaction of minds and ideas in the classroom. Especially, since this course is structured around discussion and workshopping writing together, it's critical that you attend class to participate in the exchange of ideas and to support your classmates. You have the option to use, without penalty or question, **two "personal days"**. You might choose to save these for when you're sick; you might need to use them when you travel for athletics; you might wish to observe religious holidays; you might just want to go sledding or sleep in. You don't even have to tell me which. I suggest choosing carefully. You don't, of course, have to use all of them, but make sure you don't use them on a day you lead seminar.

Lively and respectful participation is expected; if you have concerns about this, please come talk to me for ideas about how to contribute.

Helpful Information

If class is hard for you, here are some steps you can take:

- Come to my office hours and talk about it!
- Seek out an ARC that will help with reading, writing, or time management
- Sign up for a Library Lab (one-on-one help)

The **Add/Drop Period** for Fall 2012 Courses ends Friday, September 21 for Regular Full-Semester Courses. Last day to withdraw from a course is Friday, November 9.

Connectivity problems will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing electronically-contingent assignments. I highly recommend that you work ahead, save to disk and/or print out the online readings well ahead of time.

Contacting me.

The best way to contact me is via **email**: devineau@grinnell.edu. Please read the syllabus thoroughly before emailing me with questions about the course. Don't email me an hour before class starts to ask me questions about the reading or papers; not only will I not have time to respond to you before class, but I will also know you put off the assignment until the last minute. You can expect me to respond to email every afternoon while I'm in my office (i.e., I might not check email between 5 pm and the start of class the next morning ... plan ahead!).

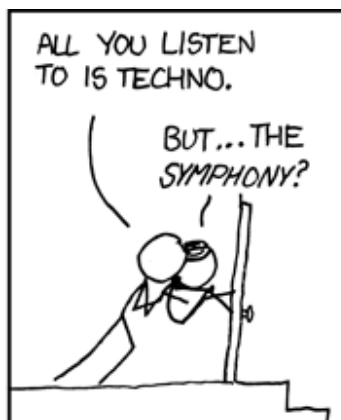
When you email, please put the name of the course (e.g., "Culture") in the subject heading and include your full name in the email. I don't like to respond to email when I don't know who it's from. I welcome anonymous emails with suggestions, critiques, or comments about the course.

Website. I will post announcements and readings on PWeb; please check it frequently.

Office hours. I have office hours every week, as listed on the first page of this syllabus. Feel free to just drop by or to make an appointment ahead of time; if two or more people show up at the same time, those with appointments will be given priority. If my scheduled office hours conflict with your schedule, email me or see me in class to set up an alternate time. **Mornings** are my writing time; if my door is closed, either I'm engrossed in work or I'm not in.

Habit is the great flywheel
of society.
- William James

I reserve the right to
make changes to this
syllabus, as I see fit or
necessary for the course.



It's a common mistake for vacationing Americans to assume that everyone around them is French and therefore speaks no English whatsoever. [...] An experienced traveler could have told by looking at my shoes that I wasn't French. And even if I were French, it's not as if English is some mysterious tribal dialect spoken only by anthropologists and a small population of cannibals.

— David Sedaris

Classroom Atmosphere.

Be respectful of me, of your classmates, of the College personnel and facilities. This means, at a minimum, silencing your cell phones and minimizing disruptive behavior in class, generally paying attention in class, arriving on time, and staying for the full class period.

Please choose your words carefully. The classroom must be a place in which everyone can participate. This means that every person must feel safe enough to express their opinions without fear of ridicule or intolerance. Remember that in good discussions, people critique ideas and not other people. The more heated the political issue we discuss, the more important it is to keep this in mind. It is normal to be or become emotionally connected to the concepts we discuss, and it is normal to have personal experiences related to those concepts. It is also normal for those experiences to be in conflict with the experiences of others in the room. For example, just as there will likely be someone in class who would prefer abortion not be legal, there will also likely be someone who has *had* an abortion. It's important to remember this diversity in our discussion so that we maximize, to the extent possible, the vibrancy and respectfulness of our intellectual inquiries.

Academic Integrity.

Grinnell College takes academic honesty very seriously. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) such behavior as **quoting** or **paraphrasing** without complete citation, collaborating with others on assignments or exams without

the explicit permission of the instructor, submitting work for more than one course without the instructors' permission, and presenting another's work as your own. Penalties range from a failing grade for the assignment to permanent expulsion from

the College, depending on the severity of the offense. As an instructor, I am **obligated** to report all suspected violations to the Academic Honesty Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Standing. In other words, as

soon as I suspect it, it is entirely out of my hands. Don't put me, or yourself, in this position. See the [full policy](#) for details. Please ask me if you have any questions.

Reasonable Accommodations.

Late Work. *I suggest that you begin your papers early enough to accommodate any last-minute emergencies.* As the saying goes, a failure to plan ahead on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part. On due dates, some assignments will get peer review and some will go straight to me for grading. **YOU WILL NOT KNOW WHICH IN ADVANCE.** Get your work in on time.

Classroom Accessibility. Please come see me as early as possible if you have special learning needs. I will work with you to make the classroom and the material accessible. The Academic Resource Centers (<http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/arc>) are fabulous resources for all students.

Unusual circumstances. You might face unusual circumstances that affect your attendance or your work this semester; these might include religious or athletic commitments, health or personal problems, or other things. Please contact me within the first week of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you. In the case of major emergencies, please talk to me as soon as you're able.

Grading policy. I will accept written rebuttals up to one week following the return of any assignment. A persuasive rebuttal includes a summary of the question or task involved, a copy of your original response with my comments/grades, and a statement about why you think you deserve more credit than you were given. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in the process of your own evaluation. Use it if you think you have just cause. Though I put a great deal of consideration into my teaching methods they are not perfect for every individual.