

Sociology of Popular Culture

Sociology 3420 (Spring 2009)

Blair Hall 3103

Tuesday & Thursday 3:30-4:45 pm

Sociology & Anthropology

Eastern Illinois University

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Office Hours: T & Th 1-3;

W 11-12 and/or by appt.

Required Text:

Alexander, Victoria D. 2003. *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*.

Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.

Course Description and Objectives:

This course examines sociological issues in the study of American popular culture such as the production, distribution and reception of popular culture, how culture is influenced by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and other systems of stratification and how these influences are reflected in various arts.

Students will:

1. demonstrate an ability to apply the basic sociological terms, concepts and theories for analyzing popular culture;
2. display basic knowledge of how popular culture reflects and contributes to social change;
3. develop and demonstrate knowledge of meaning in popular culture and how it can be sociologically problematic; and
4. apply a sociological & organizational approach to analyzing the creation, production, distribution and consumption of popular culture.

Class Format:

The class will be based primarily on a guided discussion of the assigned readings and working through a variety of assignments on your own time. You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in the discussion; therefore, it is very important that you keep up with your readings and complete all homework assignments in a timely manner. As your exams are based partly on your readings, it is to your disadvantage to consider the readings optional. Also, at times, you will be expected to participate in small group or class activities that focus on either completed homework assignments, readings, or other impromptu activities.

Class Policies:

As with any course, class discussion may, at times, concern controversial issues. You are expected to respect the viewpoints expressed by others. If you disagree with what someone has said, you are encouraged to express your disagreement but are expected to do so in a civil, respectful, and polite manner. Failure to comply will result in a dismissal from the course.

Attendance/tardiness - You are expected to attend class regularly. Attendance is of critical importance as lectures will supplement textbook readings and provide additional information that cannot be gathered by reading the text. Excessive absences from class will negatively affect your final course grade. Furthermore, you should come to class on time. Walking into class late is

disrespectful to both your instructor and your fellow students and will not be tolerated. Also, turn off all electronic devices (i.e. cell phones) before entering the classroom!

Missed Work - Any deadlines regarding written work or student meetings will be announced well in advance of due dates and late work is generally not accepted in this course. Work can only be turned in late if you have a reasonable excuse for your absence and **all grades assigned for late work will be reduced by 20%**.

It should not be assumed that you will be given make-up exams if you miss a test day. Exams missed because of serious illness, death in the family, or other serious emergencies (automobile breakdowns do not qualify), require informing your professor **within 24 hours** of the class meeting missed. I expect that you are able to provide adequate documentation if you are to miss an exam...**this means a doctor's excuse or other official document.** At that time, appropriate measures will be discussed to complete the course requirements. Otherwise, failure to show up for an exam on the scheduled day will result in the score of a zero.

Assignments- Any assigned work to be turned in must be typed or word-processed. Handwritten work will not be accepted in this course unless otherwise instructed.

Plagiarism - You should be aware of plagiarism in every paper or assignment you write. Plagiarism is the use, without adequate attribution, of another person's words or thoughts as if they were your own. You will receive a zero for any work that shows evidence of plagiarism and documentation will be filed with the Office of Student Standards (a.k.a. Judicial Affairs) as a violation of the student code of conduct (which could result in being expelled from EIU).

Readings - I will not discuss everything that your text covers. I see no point in simply telling you what your book has already told you. However, you are responsible for all of the information I ask you to read. This means that if you read something that you do not understand, it is up to you to ask me for clarification. We will use class time to discuss and build on the readings. I write each lecture with the assumption that you have read the assigned readings for the day. It is necessary to do the readings before coming to class to follow the lecture and participate in the class discussions.

Office Hours - You should make use of my office hours. If you have any concerns about the class I will be quite happy to discuss them with you. I realize some people feel uncomfortable speaking out in a group. It is fine to come and talk to me during office hours about issues that interest you. I prefer you interact with the class but speaking to me during my office hours or after class is also encouraged.

Assignments:

Midterm Exam	100 pts.
Final Exam	100 pts.
Homework (10*10pts)	100 pts.
<u>Project</u>	<u>100 pts.</u>
TOTAL	400 pts.

Grading Scale:

A=(100-90%)	400-360
B= (89-80%)	359-320
C= (79-70%)	319-280
D= (69-60%)	279-240
F= (0-59%)	239 or below

Grades will be determined by homework assignments and quizzes, a research project & presentation, and a midterm and final exam.

Research projects are a very important part of the course and each person will conduct a research project that will sociologically analyze some aspect of current or historical American popular culture. You are also required to present your project/findings to the class at the end of the semester.

WebCT:

You are required to use WebCT for this course. Your User ID is your E-mail User ID. Once you successfully log in, our class will be listed as one of the following: *SOC3420 – Popular Culture*. Click the link to our course. There you will find links to the syllabus, assignments, grade book, ASA style guide, additional handouts and websites of interest.

Disabilities Statement

Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) if they wish to discuss any necessary academic accommodations.

Medical Emergency Statement

For medical emergencies, go to the nearest phone and call 911. All faculty offices have telephones and during normal business hours (8-12 and 1-4:30), the Sociology Office (Blair 3170) is open. Be sure to state the floor and room number of the emergency to the 911 operator. If possible, someone should go to the central entrance of Blair Hall to direct EMS personnel to the medical emergency scene. If the medical emergency is on the second or third floor, someone else should hold the elevator on the first floor for EMS use.

Tornado Statement

In case of a tornado warning, proceed to the center of the hallway on the first floor, near the posted severe weather signs. Under no circumstances should you attempt to leave the building.

Building Fire Statement

In case of fire, activate the fire alarm and exit the building. When a fire alarm sounds, everyone must exit the building and cannot re-enter the building until allowed by the building coordinator or fire department official. Fire alarms are located at the north and south ends of the corridors just inside the fire doors. The closest exits for all classrooms in Blair are on the north and south ends of the building. Under no circumstance should the elevator be used. Group assembly areas for all classes in Blair are either on the patio area between Blair and Old Main or on the southeast corner of the North Quad. As you exit the building, continue moving well away from the exits so that you do not impede the egress of other students or the work of fire officials. Move a safe distance away from the building.

3420 Lecture & Assignment Schedule:

WEEK	TOPIC (ASSIGNMENTS)	READINGS	ASSN DUE DATE
1/13,15	Defining popular culture: What is Art?	Alexander Chapter 1 Blacking "Making Artistic Popular Music"	
1/20,22	Reflection Approach: Does pop culture reflect society?	Alexander Chapter 2	<i>Asn 1: 1/2-Blacking</i>
1/27,29	Shaping Approach & Mediated View: Does popular culture shape society?	Alexander Ch's 3 & 4	<i>Asn 2: 1/29-Quiz</i>
2/3,5	Production of Culture: Art Worlds & Conventions	Alexander Chapter 5	<i>Asn 3:Project Topics 2/5</i>
2/10,12	Production: Businesses & Industries	Alexander Chapter 6 Shimmel "Take Me Out to the Ball Game"	<i>Asn 4: 2/12-Shimmel</i>
2/17,19	Production: Networks & Nonprofits	Alexander Chapter 7 Frank "Alternative to What?"	<i>Asn 5:Project Progress Report 2/19</i>
2/24,26			EXAM 1- Due 3/5
3/3,5			
3/10,12	Production: Artists	Alexander Chapter 8	<i>Asn 6: 3/10- Case Study 8.1 (10 pts)</i>
3/24,26	Audience Studies: The Meaning of Cultural Items	Alexander Chapter 11	<i>Asn 7: 3/26- Case Study 11.1(15 pts)</i>
3/31,4/2	Social Functions of Popular Culture/Art	Alexander Chapter 12 "Bobo's in Paradise" NO CLASS 4/2	<i>Asn 8:4/7- Case Study 12.1 (15 pts)</i>
4/7,9	Finish Social Functions Begin Art in Society	Alexander Chapter 14	<i>Asn 9: 4/14- Case Study 14.1 (10 pts)</i>
4/14,16	Art in Society		Project Papers 4/16
4/21,23	<i>Presentations</i>	<i>Presentations</i>	<i>Presentations</i>
4/28,30	<i>Presentations</i>	<i>Presentations</i>	<i>Presentations</i>
5/7	Thursday 12:30 am–2:30 pm	Blair 3103	FINAL EXAM

**Spring Break---March 16-20

***This syllabus serves as a contract between the student and instructor and the student is responsible for all information contained within this syllabus. This syllabus may be amended and any changes that the instructor deems necessary will be announced in class.