

SYA 4930-02: CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Culture and Society in the United States! This course explores the meanings of culture in contemporary U.S. society, with a focus on cultural representation, cultural products, and cultural (re)production. Course readings and lectures will introduce students to sociological, feminist, critical race, and queer theoretical perspectives on “taste” (also known as cultural capital), power, and cultural representation, emphasizing how culture shapes our experiences and understandings of socially constructed phenomena such as class, race, sexuality, and gender. The class will be concerned with the role culture/cultural representation plays in the reproduction of inequality and, therefore, will ask students to turn a critical lens toward the cultural practices and representations around them, particularly in regard to current events that may or may not follow the scope of the syllabus. Through this course, students will develop communication skills, critical thinking skills, empirical and analytical skills, and social responsibility, fulfilling the social and behavioral sciences component of the University core curriculum.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

This course will be grounded in the principles of participatory and collaborative learning; this means that you will be encouraged to participate actively in your own learning. To facilitate successful active learning, we will engage in a variety of activities such as group/team discussions, class exercises, art, films, etc. Your active participation in the learning process is essential to enhancing your understanding and retention of the topics and issues that we will explore together this semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to attend lectures and complete **all** reading and written assignments by the date they appear on the syllabus. **Assignments will not be accepted late without prior permission; be cognizant of deadlines.** Readings for this course will either be located in the required textbook (see below) or posted on the course Canvas website, so students should plan their reading schedules accordingly.

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University."

(<http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>)

There are no required textbooks for this course; all required readings are available on Canvas and/or via the Florida State Library system.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

EXAMS (35%): There will be **three (3) multiple-choice exams** this semester. These exams will test comprehension of course readings, lectures, and students' ability to apply concepts from class material. **The exams will take place on February 12, 2019; March 28, 2019; and during finals week on May 2, 2019. Students will be able to drop their lowest exam grade.**

FILM CONCEPT ESSAYS (25%): Students will submit **two (2) essays in response to documentary films** shown in class: *Tough Guise 2* (2013) and *Americans in Bed* (2014). These essays will be 2-3 pages in length and engage these films alongside readings and other course materials. You will be expected to support your ideas with information that we have covered in order to demonstrate your ability to apply sociological concepts. **All papers must be given to me in hard copy during the class period in which it is due.** Formatting and content guidelines for these assignments will be provided.

READING JOURNALS (20%): Students will be expected to keep up with course readings; **six (6) reading journals on the assigned readings** will be submitted over the course of the semester. Three of these journals must be submitted during the first half of the semester (**by March 1st**) and three during the second half (**by April 26th**). These journals are to be submitted via Canvas, under the appropriate week under the "Assignments" tab. Directions for the content of these journals are on Canvas.

GROUP OBSERVATION ACTIVITY (10%): Students will form groups in which they will engage in a 30-minute ethnographic observation of some public location. As part of this activity, students will take notes on how people interact with each other, how they are dressed, what actions they are participating in, etc. as a means of unpacking social meanings in action and applying course concepts. **Groups will submit their observation notes via Canvas by Friday, March 1, 2019, at 12:00PM.**

END-OF-SEMESTER REFLECTION (5%): Students will complete an end of semester reflection post. This is an opportunity to share what you have learned over the semester; directions for the content of this reflection is on Canvas.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION (5%): Students will form groups in which they will engage in a 30-minute ethnographic observation of some public location. Although I will not be keeping daily attendance, **I will take attendance on six random days during the semester.** Students will be allowed to miss one with no impact on their grade; however, it will be in your best interest to attend class regularly. Lectures will contain information not located in the readings and the quizzes will feature questions based on class discussion and lecture materials, **so do not rely solely on the course readings to prepare.** Come to class having read the readings and be prepared to contribute to class discussions.

GRADING: Final grades will be determined based on the percentages above. **Scores will not be rounded up or down.** Thus, a B- will include all scores of 80.000 through 82.999.

A (100-93)	B+ (89-87)	C+ (79-77)	D+ (69-67)	F (59 and below)
A- (92-90)	B (86-83)	C (76-73)	D (66-63)	
	B- (82-80)	C- (72-70)	D- (62-60)	

COURSE POLICIES

ABSENCES: Though I will not be keeping attendance every day, note that it will be helpful to you to attend class regularly. Lectures will contain information not located in the readings and the exams will feature questions based on class discussion and lecture materials, **so do not rely solely on the course readings to prepare.** It will be in your best interest to come to class having read the readings and to be prepared to contribute to class discussions. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

ACCOMODATIONS: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center (<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu>)

COMMUNICATION: The best way to contact me is via email. I will strive to respond within 24 hours during the week (Monday-Friday), though students should not expect a response earlier than 9AM. Should you have questions or issues that cannot be addressed via email, I am also available during office hours or by appointment. If there are any updates, reminders, last minute instructions, or emergencies pertinent to the course, **the class will be contacted, so please, check your FSU email/Canvas.**

Further, I will not respond to emails that lack proper etiquette. Emails – particularly initial ones – should have an address (“Dear Professor”) a clearly stated question or comment, and a sign-off (“Sincerely” or “Thanks”). A polite, clearly structured email is the best way to have your concerns taken seriously and to make answering your questions easier.

DISCUSSION RULES: Class discussions of the issues we study can stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussions must be scholarly and respectful of all members of the class. Students who are repeatedly disrespectful may be removed from the class and may fail the course. **Scholarly comments are:** respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement; related to the class and course material; advance the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than only personal beliefs.

LATE WORK: All assignments will be due by the due date. **There will be no late submissions for assignments without prior permission.** Make-up exams will **only** be available for those with approved excuses and should be arranged for **in advance** of the exam date.

iANYTHINGS: Cell phones should not be out during class nor should I hear them ring. Ringers should be on silent – no vibrating, either. Laptops are allowed for note-taking purposes but I recommend taking notes by hand. Studies have actually proven that we retain information better when we write, rather than type, our notes! Should it be discovered that students are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, or any online shopping site rather than actively contributing to class, restrictions will occur.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: If you are experiencing any difficulty with this course or in some other area of your life, please get in touch with me. I will do my best to assist you and, if needed, can direct you to resources on campus that could be useful. Please note that Florida State University provides a variety of services to support students in achieving academic success and a healthy work-life balance:

- **Academic Center for Excellence:** Links to all of the academic support services across campus that can help you be a better student and cope with the stress of college, particularly tutoring services. (<https://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring/academic-support>)
- **Student Disability Resource Center:** Coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities (medical, learning or psychological). Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should follow the university’s accommodation procedure by contacting SDRC (850-644-9566; located in the Student Services Building). (<http://dos.fsu.edu/sdrc/services/>)
- **Office of Student Counseling Services:** Provides high quality integrated health, counseling, and wellness services to support our diverse student population in achieving their highest

potential. (850-645-8256; located in Medical Science Research Building).
<http://med.fsu.edu/index.cfm?page=StudentCounseling.home>

- **Victim Advocate Program (VAP):** Provides access to emotional support, instructor notification, referrals, and crisis intervention and assistance with student conduct, legal and medical matters in the event of victimization of and/or by FSU students, faculty, and staff. Services are available 24 hours a day, including holidays. To reach a confidential advocate, call 850-644-7161. Office is located in University Center A (<https://dos.fsu.edu/vap>).

MANDATORY REPORTER: I am happy to provide whatever support students need. Please know that if you disclose an incident of sexual harassment or assault to me (even in confidence), under the FSU Sexual Misconduct Policy I am mandated to report the information to the University Title IX office. For confidential support, you may disclose to the Victim Advocate Program or University Counseling Center.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANS: Emergency evacuation routes are marked on each floor of this building. Should an emergency situation arise and we need to evacuate the classroom, please calmly, and in a moderately organized fashion, make your way to the nearest exit, using only marked doors and stairwells. Note that the nearest exit may not be the door by which you entered this building.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are located as PDFs on Canvas (under “Modules”). All other readings can be located in the FSU Library catalogue.

DATE	TEXTS
UNIT I: What is Culture?	
Tue, Jan 8	Introduction
Thur, Jan 10	*Hall, Stuart. 2013. “Chapter 1: The Work of Representation” (p. 1-45) in <i>Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices</i> . [activities/exercises not required]
UNIT II: Theorizing Race, Racism, and Culture	
Tue, Jan 15	McGee, Kristin. 2012. “Orientalism and Erotic Multiculturalism in Popular Culture: From Princess Rajah to the Pussycat Dolls.” <i>Music, Sound, and the Moving Image</i> , 6(2); 209-238.
Thur, Jan 17	Strong, Pauline Turner. 2009. “Cultural Appropriation and the Crafting of Racialized Selves in American Youth Organizations.” <i>Cultural Studies</i> ← → <i>Critical Methodologies</i> , 9(2); 197-213.
UNIT III: Theorizing Gender, Sexuality, and Culture	
Tue, Jan 22	Martin, Karin A. 1998. “Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools.” <i>American Sociological Review</i> , 64; 494-511.
Thur, Jan 24	Katz, Jackson. 2013. <i>Tough Guise 2: Violence, Manhood & Culture</i> .

	[to be viewed in class]
Tue, Jan 29	<p>*Kitchens, Caroline. "Time to End 'Rape Culture' Hysteria." <i>TIME</i>, 20 Mar 2014.</p> <p>*Koul, Scaachi. "Rape Culture is Surveillance Culture." <i>BuzzFeed</i>, 23 June 2016.</p> <p>*Maxwell, Zerlina. "Rape Culture is Real." <i>TIME</i>, 27 Mar 2014.</p>
UNIT IV: Theorizing Class and Culture	
Thur, Jan 31	<p>Starrels, Majorie et al. 1994. "The Feminization of Poverty in the United States: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Family Factors." <i>Journal of Family Issues</i>, 15(4); 590-607.</p> <p>FIRST FILM CONCEPT ESSAY DUE</p>
Tue, Feb 5	<p>Wellman, David. 2009. "Reconfiguring the Color Line: Racializing Inner-City Youth and Rearticulating Class Hierarchy in Black America." <i>Transforming Anthropology</i>, 17(2); 131-146.</p> <p>FIRST EXAM REVIEW MADE AVAILABLE</p>
Thur, Feb 7	<p>Dumais, Susan A. and Aaryn Ward. 2010. "Cultural capital and first-generation college success." <i>Poetics</i>, 38(3); 245-265.</p>
Tue, Feb 12	FIRST EXAM
UNIT V: Culture(s) of the Body	
Thur, Feb 14	<p>Candelario, Ginetta. 2000. "Hair Race-ing: Dominican Beauty Culture and Identity Production." <i>Meridians</i>, 1(1); 128-156.</p>
Tue, Feb 19	<p>*McKenzie, Shelly. 2013. "Introduction: Fitness in American Culture" (p. 1-13) and "Epilogue: The Future of Fitness" (p. 178-182) in <i>Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America</i>.</p> <p>*Havrilesky, Heather. "Why Are Americans So Fascinated with Extreme Fitness?" <i>New York Times Magazine</i>, 14 Oct 2014.</p>
Thur, Feb 21	<p>*"Sorry that DNA test doesn't make you Indigenous." <i>The 180 with Jim Brown, CBC Radio</i>, 6 Nov 2016.</p>
UNIT VI: Fandom Culture – Comic Con, Gamers, and Sports	
Tue, Feb 26	NO CLASS – WORK ON OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT
Thur, Feb 28	<p>Brown, Jeffrey A. 1997. "Comic Book Fandom and Cultural Capital." <i>The Journal</i></p>

	<i>of Popular Culture</i> , 30(4); 13-31.
Tue, Mar 5	Shaw, Adrienne. 2012. "Do you identify as a gamer? Gender, race, sexuality, and gamer identity." <i>New Media & Society</i> , 14(1); 28-44. *Vineyard, Jennifer. "You Don't need to Care About Video Games to Care About Gamergate." <i>Vulture</i> , 16 Oct 2014.
Thur, Mar 7	Serazio, Michael. 2013. "The Elementary Forms of Sport Fandom: A Durkheimian Exploration of Team Myths, Kinship, and Totemic Rituals." <i>Communication & Sport</i> , 1(4); 303-325.
UNIT VII: Culture(s) of Protest and Resistance	
Tue, Mar 12	Betlemidze, Mariam. 2015. "Mediatized Controversies of Feminist Protest: FEMEN and Bodies as Affective Events." <i>Women's Studies in Communication</i> , 38(4); 374-379. *Crocker, Lizzie. "FEMEN's Topless Sextremists invade the US." <i>The Daily Beast</i> , 23 Feb 2014. McAlister, Joan Faber. 2015. "The Visual Politics of Un/Veiling the Female Body in Political Protest." <i>Women's Studies in Communication</i> , 38(4); 357-360.
Thur, Mar 14	*Hawkins, Derek. "Police defend use of water cannons on Dakota Access protestors in freezing weather." <i>The Washington Post</i> , 21 Nov 2016. *Jenkins, Colin. "Coming Home to Roost: American Militarism, War Culture and Police Brutality." <i>Truth-Out</i> , 16 Mar 2014. EXAM REVIEW MADE AVAILABLE
MAR 18-22	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
Tue, Mar 26	* <i>Selections from A (Brief) List of Protest/Political Songs, 1930-2019</i>
Thur, Mar 28	SECOND EXAM
UNIT VIII: Intimate Relationships	
Tue, Apr 2	*Ansari, Aziz. 2015. "Choice and Options" (p. 123-147) in <i>Modern Romance</i> .
Thur, Apr 4	*Levs, Josh. "There's An Invisible Workload That Drags Men Down, Too." <i>TIME</i> , 5 Jan 2017. *Wade, Lisa. "The Invisible Workload That Drags Women Down." <i>TIME</i> , 29 Dec 2016.

Tue, Apr 9	Robinson, Philippa. 2014. <i>Americans in Bed</i> . [to be viewed in class]
Thur, Apr 11	NO CLASS – READING/WRITING DAY
Tue, Apr 16	*Rockquomore, Kerry Ann et al. 2006. “It All Starts at Home: Racial Socialization in Multiracial Families” (p. 203-216) in <i>Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the ‘Color-Blind’ Era</i> . SECOND FILM CONCEPT ESSAY DUE
UNIT IX: Queer(ing) Culture	
Thur, Apr 18	Ng, Eve. 2013. “A ‘Post-Gay’ Era? Media Gaystreaming, Homonormativity, and the Politics of LGBT Integration.” <i>Communication, Culture & Critique</i> , 6(2); 258-283.
Tue, Apr 23	Schilt, Kristen and Laurel Westbrook. 2015. “Bathroom Battlegrounds and Penis Panics.” <i>Contexts</i> , 14(3); 26-31. FINAL EXAM REVIEW MADE AVAILABLE
Thur, Apr 25	Hammers, Corie. 2009. “An Examination of Lesbian/Queer Bathhouse Culture and the Social Organization of (Im)Personal Sex.” <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i> , 38(3); 308-335.

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, MAY 2ND, 7:30-9:30AM IN BEL 023