

SOC3NN3: POPULAR CULTURE AND INEQUALITY
Winter 2020 – ONLINE CLASSROOM

Instructor Information

Instructor: Chong, P
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Course Description

Culture is an intrinsic part of our daily lives: we see it, we think it, we shape it, and are shaped by it. Yet, exactly what culture is and how it works is notoriously difficult to pin down. This is partially because culture can mean so many different things. It can refer to the cultural norms, habits, and values shared by communities of people. It can also refer to cultural products such as art, aesthetics, and the offerings of mass media. What this course aims to do is to provide an overview of the sociological tools developed to systematically study this fuzzy yet significant thing we call “culture”; and to help us better how the production, reception, and consumption of art and popular culture are shaped by and reinforce race, class, and gender inequalities.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Students will gain a firm grounding in the basic tools and debates characterizing contemporary work in the sociology of art and culture
- Students will learn how to analyze a single cultural phenomena from multiple theoretical perspectives and critically evaluate the merits and failings of various sociological frameworks
- Students will be able to make connections between micro and meso-levels of organization through critical analysis of their own engagement in contemporary culture

Required Readings

There is no textbook for this class. All course materials comprise of articles, book chapters, and original writing that have been curated for this class and are available through Avenue to Learn. Please note that all assigned readings and course materials must be completed on a weekly basis as indicated in each course module.

Evaluation Components and Grading

Type	Description	Date(s) Due	Weight
Class participation activities	A combination of quizzes and responses to critical thinking prompts online	1 per week for 10 weeks @ 2% per week	20%
Test #1	Multiple Choice & Short Answer	Feb 3 –9	25%
Test #2	Multiple Choice, Short Answer & Case Study	Mar 16 –22	25%
Final Exam	Multiple Choice & Short Essay	TBD	30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1 (Jan 6 – Jan 12): What Is Culture?

Module 2 (Jan 13 – Jan 19) Functionalist Perspectives on Culture and Inequality.

Module 3 (Jan 20 – Jan 26): Conflict Perspectives on Culture and Inequality

Module 4 (Jan 27 – Feb 2): Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Culture and Inequality

Feb 3 – Feb 9: TEST #1

Module 5 (Feb 10 – Feb 16): The Art and Society Relation

Feb 17 – Feb 23: READING WEEK

Module 6 (Feb 24 – Mar 1): Explaining the Cultural Hierarchy

Module 7 (Mar 2 – Mar 8): Cultural Omnivorousness

Module 8 (Mar 9 – Mar 15): Class Culture Reproduction

Mar 16 – Mar 22: TEST #2

Module 9 (Mar 23 – Mar 29): Race in the Cultural Field

Module 10 (Mar 30 – Apr 5): Gender in the Cultural Field

TBD: FINAL EXAM

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, which can be downloaded from the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. In assignments, complete citations are required for all quotes and paraphrases. Consult the required writing style guide for information on how to properly cite the work of others.
2. Improper collaboration in group work. In this course, I encourage students to work together to understand concepts, discuss ideas, study for exams, etc. Improper collaboration would be defined as using the work of others to get out of doing your own work, claiming the work of others as your own, etc.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course, we will be using the "originality check" feature in Avenue to Learn.

Review of Marks

I will be diligent in marking all assignments fairly and accurately. Nonetheless, occasionally students disagree with the marks they receive. When this occurs, I will be happy to review the mark of any assignment or exam, if the procedure outlined below is followed. ***Please note that when a mark is reviewed, the new mark may be lower than the original.***

To request a review of a mark, write a brief (<1-page) memo describing in detail the nature of the perceived marking error. I recommend giving yourself a cooling-down period of 24 hours before submitting your request. Submit this memo to me via email. You may submit requests for review no later than two weeks after assignments/exams are handed back to the class.

Late Assignments and Absences

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf>) is a self-reporting tool for undergraduate students to report absences that last up to 3 days. This form allows students to request accommodation for any missed academic work. This tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of one Academic Work Missed request per term. It is your responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a non-medical reason, you must visit the office of the Associate Dean of your Faculty. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. Any disruption this causes to turning in assignments on time, completing exams, and so forth, must be addressed directly with your instructor as soon as possible.

For late assignments without approved excuses, you must make arrangements directly with your instructor to submit the assignment. Assignments will be marked down by five percentage points for each day it is late, including weekends and holidays.

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

I hope that this online course gives you all the flexibility you need for your observance of religious, Indigenous and spiritual observances. If you require additional accommodations, please contact me (Dr. Chong) as early in the term as possible to make individual arrangements. Here is McMaster University's official statement on religious, Indigenous and spiritual observances:

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Accommodations

I am committed to working with students with disabilities to make individualized accommodations according to each student's specific needs. All such arrangements must be made through Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Please submit a request for accommodations through the [SAS website](#) as early in the term as possible; these will be automatically sent to me (Dr. Chong) for approval. Please feel free to contact me to discuss individual arrangements or concerns. All discussions and arrangements will be kept confidential.

Email

Please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Students who write to their professors and teaching assistants are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Dear Dr. Chong," and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely, Jane Lee." For some items, it is also helpful to have your student number. Email failing to meet these standards may be returned unanswered. Email containing questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus or to Avenue to Learn may not be answered. All email communication must come from your mcmaster.ca email account.

Note on unforeseen circumstances

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and the Avenue to Learn course website weekly during the term and to note any changes.