

**SOC6517HS: GRADUATE SEMINAR
CULTURE AND COGNITION
Professor Vanina Leschziner
Department of Sociology**

**University of Toronto
Winter 2009**

Location and Time:

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Brief Overview of the Course

Culture and Cognition is a new and small area in Sociology. This makes it a particularly exciting area for a discussion seminar, as there is much yet to figure out and debate. Culture and Cognition is not the sum of its two parts --some Culture and some Cognition. Rather, it consists of somewhat specific conceptual interests and empirical approaches to the study of patterns of the human mind, as phenomena that are *observable* in their association in particular social settings, and that are thus subject to systematic study.

As an area of study, Culture and Cognition is associated to, but nonetheless distinct from, the Sociology of Culture. Scholars in Culture and Cognition are interested in studying how actors actively use culture through shared cognitive schema that are embedded in institutional structures. They study the patterned actions, practices, or discourses through which actors put cognition at work. And they use methods to empirically identify how actors put their cognition at work rather than assume how they do it. BUT, what really is culture and cognition is a question that we will explore and debate *as* we learn about it throughout the course.

The course is organized as a discussion seminar, where readings and discussions will be heavily theory-oriented, as we will try to figure out what is culture and cognition and how best to study them. For these purposes, we will begin by gaining an understanding of the theoretical foundations of Culture and Cognition. We will revisit the classical sociological theories, and read foundational work in related areas, in particular anthropology and psychology. Then we will focus on contemporary literature, exploring a few perspectives and areas of research.

Class Format

Each class is organized around particular themes, and/or perspectives, and structured as a discussion seminar. I will provide background (when needed), and make connections between the readings and Culture and Cognition, and among the readings. A good part of each class will be devoted to critical discussion and assessment of the material.

Class Requirements

- 1. participation in class discussions 10%
- 2. leading class discussion on assigned dates 15%
- 3. 8 short memos 25%
- 4. final paper 50%

1. Students are expected to do all the readings before the class for which they are assigned, and to participate actively in class. The emphasis will be on mastery of the arguments presented in the readings and critical analysis.

2. Students are expected to lead discussion on assigned dates. The idea is to do an analytical presentation of the materials, with focus on critical assessments of the arguments developed in the readings, and on their connection with theory/evidence/methods used by authors (when applicable).

3. Students are responsible for submitting eight (8) short memos (1-2 pages) on the class' readings at the beginning of each class meeting. View these as 'reaction papers,' neither a summary of the texts, nor a final product. The focus here is on critically responding to the key points and implications of the readings, developing arguments or ideas that seem worth developing. These memos need not be solid essays, or perfectly polished. Consider them a venue to exercise your argument-building skills, and gradually develop your ideas for your final paper.

4. A paper to be submitted at the end of the term. The ideal choice would be a research paper, of manageable scope, that has the potential to further develop into a publication, and/or the dissertation. Students can also choose to write an analytical/theoretical paper, or a research proposal.

Readings

REPRO-TEXT A packet of readings (excluding journal articles) for the course is available at Three Cent Copy Center, 732 Spadina Avenue.

JOURNAL ARTICLES They are available through JSTOR or other indexes or databases.

Class Schedule

Week 1

January 8

INTRODUCTION: CULTURE AND COGNITION THEORY AND RESEARCH

Week 2

January 15

CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS I: DURKHEIM AND SIMMEL SOCIAL STRUCTURE, NETWORKS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF SELVES

Reading: Emile Durkheim, selections from “Introduction,” and “Conclusion” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (The Free Press, 1995), pp. 8-18, 433-448.

Reading: Georg Simmel, selections from “Sociability (An Example of Pure, or Formal, Sociology),” “The Isolated Individual and the Dyad,” “The Triad,” and “Secrecy” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff (The Free Press, 1950), pp. 40-44, 122-128, 135-136, 145-153, 330-333.

Supplemental: Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, “The Problem,” and “Conclusions,” chapter 5 in *Primitive Classification* (The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 3-9, 81-88.

Week 3

January 22

CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS II: MARX AND WEBER CULTURE, POWER, AND IDEAS

Reading: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, selection from *The German Ideology* in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1978), pp. 146-175.

Reading: Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities” from *Capital* in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1978), pp. 319-329.

Reading: Max Weber, “The Spirit of Capitalism,” chapter II, “Luther’s Conception of the Calling,” chapter III, and “Calvinism” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Routledge, 1930), pp. 47-78, 79-92, 98-128.

Week 4

January 29

MIND AND SOCIAL INTERACTION THE CONSTRUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF SELF

Reading: George H. Mead, selections from “Mind,” chapter 2, and “The Self,” chapter 3 in *Mind, Self, and Society* (The University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 75-82, 135-144, 152-178, 192-200.

Reading: Erving Goffman, selection from “Introduction,” and “The Anchoring of Activity,” chapter 8 in *Frame Analysis* (Harper Colophon Boos, 1974), pp. 1-16, 247-300.

Reading: Erving Goffman, “Introduction” in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 1-16.

Supplemental: Charles H. Cooley, selection from “The Social Self 1. The Meaning of ‘I,’” chapter 5 in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 183-200; Erving Goffman, “Embarrassment and Social Organization” in *Interaction Ritual* (Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 97-112.

Week 5

February 5

FROM STRUCTURE TO MEANING

THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE

Reading: Mary Douglas, “Introduction,” and selections from “The Abominations of Leviticus” *Purity and Danger* (Praeger, 1966), pp. 1-6, 41-44, 51-57, 94-104.

Reading: Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Science of the Concrete,” chapter 1, and “Categories, Elements, Species, Numbers,” chapter 5 in *The Savage Mind* (The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 1-33, 135-160.

Supplemental: Ferdinand de Saussure, selections from “Introduction,” and “General Principles” in *Course in General Linguistics* (Mc Graw-Hill, 1966), pp.7-17, 65-70, 81-87.

Week 6

February 12

COGNITION AND CULTURE

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF PRACTICE, MEANING, AND LEARNING

Reading: Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” chapter 1 in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

Reading: Marshall Sahlins, “Conclusion: Utility and the Cultural Order” in *Culture and Practical Reason* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 205-221.

Reading: Jean Lave, selections from “Introduction: Psychology and Anthropology I,” chapter 1, and “Inside the Supermarket (Outdoors) and from the Veranda,” chapter 5 in *Cognition in Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 6-18, 97-123, 148-169.

Supplemental: Viviana Zelizer, “The Marking of Money,” chapter 1 in *The Social Meaning of Money* (Basic Books, 1994), pp. 1-35.

February 19
HAPPY READING WEEK!

Week 7

February 26

PERCEIVING AND CLASSIFYING

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONDITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Reading: Ludwik Fleck, "How the Modern Concept of Syphilis Originated," chapter 1, and selections from "Epistemological Conclusions from the Established History of a Concept," chapter 2 in *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp.1-19, 20-23, 38-51.

Reading: Michael Baxandall, selections from "The Period Eye" in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 29-40, 94-102.

Reading: Michel Foucault, "Preface," selections from "Classifying," chapter 5 and "The Limits of Representation," chapter 7 in *The Order of Things* (Vintage Books, 1970), pp. xv-xxiv, 128-138, 157-162, 226-232.

Week 8

March 5

CATEGORIZING AND ATTENDING

MENTAL PROCESSES AND COGNITIVE SOCIALIZATION

Reading: Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization" in *Cognition and Categorization*, edited by Eleanor Rosch and Barbara Lloyd (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978), pp. 27-48.

Reading: Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Sociology of the Mind," chapter 1, "Social Optics," chapter 2, "The Social Gates of Consciousness," chapter 3, and "The Social Division of the World," chapter 4 in *Social Mindscapes* (Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1-22, 23-34, 35-52, 53-67.

Reading: Edwin Hutchins, selections from "introduction," "Navigation as Computation," chapter 2, "The Implementation of Contemporary Pilotage," chapter 3, "Cultural Cognition," chapter 9 in *Cognition in the Wild* (The MIT Press, 1995), pp. xi-xiv, 65-67, 92-99, 110-116, 164-174, 353-374.

Supplemental: Roy D'Andrade, "Cultural Representations and Psychological Processes," chapter 8 in *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 182-217; Karen Cerulo, "What's the Worst That Could Happen?," chapter 1, and selection from "Practicing Positive Asymmetry" in *Never Saw it Coming* (The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 1-16, 95-121.

Week 9

March 12

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

HABITUS OR REPERTOIRES?

Reading: Pierre Bourdieu, "Introduction," selection from "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles," chapter 3, and "Conclusion: Classes and Classifications" in *Distinction* (Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 1-7, 169-177, 466-484.

Reading: Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-286.

Reading: Ann Swidler, selections from "Introduction," "Finding Culture," chapter 1, "Repertoires," chapter 2, "Codes, Contexts, and Institutions," chapter 8, and "Conclusion: How Culture Matters" in *Talk of Love* (The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 1-6, 11-23, 24-34, 160-180, 187-196.

Week 10

March 19

SCHEMA AND BOUNDARIES

Reading: Paul DiMaggio, "Culture and Cognition," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 263-287.

Reading: Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman and Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 31-64.

Reading: Thomas Gieryn "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781-795.

Supplemental: Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167-195.

Week 11

March 26

INSTITUTIONALIZING COGNITIVE SCHEMA

Reading: Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 147-160.

Reading: Roger Friedland and Robert Alford, "Bringing Society Back in: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio (The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 232-263.

Reading: Josh Guetzkow, Michèle Lamont, and Grégoire Mallard, "What is Originality in the Humanities and the Social Sciences?," *American Sociological Review* 69 (2004): 190-212.

Supplemental: Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, "The Sociology of Critical Capacity," *European Journal of Social Theory* 2 (1999): 359-377.

Week 12

April 2

CLASSIFICATIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

Reading: Ezra Zuckerman, Tai-Young Kim, Kalinda Ukanwa, and James von Rittmann, "Robust Identities or Nonentities? Typecasting in the Feature-Film Labor Market," *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (2003): 1018-1074.

Reading: Damon Phillips and Ezra Zuckerman, "Middle Status Conformity: Theoretical Restatement and Empirical Demonstration in Two Markets," *American Journal of Sociology* 107 (2001): 379-429.

Reading: Hayagreeva Rao, Philippe Monin, and Rodolphe Durand, "Border Crossing: Bricolage and the Erosion of Categorical Boundaries in French Gastronomy," *American Sociological Review* 70 (2005): 968-991.

Supplemental: Brian Steensland, "Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State: The Case of Guaranteed Income Policy," *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (2006): 1273-1326.

Week 13

April 9

INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS FOR COGNITIVE INNOVATION

Reading: Ronald Burt, "Structural Holes and Good Ideas," *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (2004): 349-399.

Reading: Elizabeth Clemens and James Cook, "Politics and Institutionalism: Explaining Durability and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 441-466.

Reading: John Mohr and Vincent Duquenne, "The Duality of Culture and Practice: Poverty Relief in New York City, 1888-1917," *Theory and Society* 26 (1997): 305-356.

Supplemental: Neil McLaughlin, "Optimal Marginality: Innovation and Orthodoxy in Fromm's Revision of Psychoanalysis," *Sociological Quarterly* 42 (2001): 271-290.

Final Papers Due