

Course Syllabus  
**SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE**  
(SOCI 160)

University of California, San Diego; Winter 2025  
Tuesdays 5:00 – 7:50 pm  
Location: York Hall 4080A

Instructor: Khasha Ostovany, PhD

Email: [kostovany@ucsd.edu](mailto:kostovany@ucsd.edu)

Office Location: Social Sciences Building (SSB); Room #496

Office Hours: By appointment, in-person (Tuesdays or Thursdays), or via Zoom

*(This syllabus is subject to occasional updates and revisions. This preliminary version is published on **01/07/2025**)*

## **Course Description**

The term “culture” remains notoriously difficult to define since it permeates essentially all corners of life. Culture is about shared meaning, and it infuses *all* social life. It is behaviors, beliefs, habits, customs, values, emotions, and so on. In the words of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor, culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” It is the way things are seen, perceived, and understood -and yet, it is also the arena where all those get to be contested and challenged. Applying to a wide range of meaning, the terms “culture” and “cultural” could refer to objects, genres, actions (especially conventional), mental representations, and even complex institutional structures, as culture permeates all of these.

The sociology of culture is a core subfield within the sociology discipline and a key point of juncture between sociology and other divisions in social science such as anthropology, history, psychology, philosophy, economics, and political science.

As an introduction to sociology of culture, this course will begin by discussing how sociologists have defined “culture”, how it has been attempted to be studied, and its impact on behavior and social interaction. It will then cover, within the limited time of the winter term, a few main topics on the relationships of culture to society, politics, the economy, arts, media, etc.

## **Course Format**

This course will be conducted in a hybrid format. After Week 3, a few class sessions will take place via Zoom. Those will be determined and announced by Week 3.

The structure of the course will consist of weekly reading assignments that you are expected to

keep up with, some lecturing by me on the readings and related topics, your questions and comments to encourage class discussions, and at least one oral presentation by you to the class of one of your weekly assignments. Some audio/visual material related to the topic of the week will be part of each session. (The videos indicated here are tentative and subject to substitution.)

## **Course Requirements**

### **Required Readings:**

- Hall, John R., Mary Jo Neitz, and Marshall Battani, *Sociology on Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 2003
- Billington, Rosamund, et al, *Culture and Society; A Sociology of Culture*. London: MacMillan Education, Ltd., 1991
- Bennett, Andy, *Culture and Everyday Life*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2005

**Attendance and Participation in Discussions:** This is *your* class! It is *you* who have decided to take this course in order to further excel your knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Attendance and informed participation in class discussions are essential to benefiting from this course. An unjustified absence would jeopardize this goal as well as affect your final grade. If you are unable to attend class, please let me know ahead of time as soon as you can, indicating your valid reason.

Through your faithfully keeping up with the readings and completing your weekly assignments, by being attentive in class and sharing your questions and comments on a regular basis, we can make this course a more interesting and enjoyable experience for all of us. I ask you to please refrain from calling and/or texting during class. There will be a 10-minute break around the middle of each week's session.

**Weekly Memos:** Starting with the reading assignments for Week 2 and ending (and including) with the readings for the last class session (Week 10), you are required to turn in a 3-page summary of what we had just covered (i.e. on Week 2) including the reading assignments, videos we watched, and major topics we discussed in class. Each memo is due 48 hours after the end of the corresponding class and should be emailed to me directly. Please: no late submissions. Should you miss this deadline, you will have up to another 48 hours to submit your memo, *but only at half the credit*. Beyond this second 48-hour deadline, your memo will not be accepted.

Please make sure to include on your memo your **NAME, COURSE #, DATE**, and indicate **"MEMO for WEEK\_\_"**.

There will be a total of eight (8) weekly memos. Please submit your memos in WORD format,

Font 12, double-spaced, with 1"-margin on all sides.

The purpose of these assignments is to help you review what had just been covered in the readings and class discussions. A satisfactory memo is one that gives a general and broad summary of the main points in each week's assigned readings, demonstrating that you have done the readings, understood the main points and can represent them in writing. Eventually, a well-done memo will result in you doing well on your midterm and final exams. Your memos will comprise 25% of your overall grade.

**Mid-Term Exam:** There will be a mid-term exam, scheduled to be held during the normal class time in **Week 6 (Feb. 11)**. It will consist of a combination of short answers and paragraph-long essays related to the assigned readings and the other material covered during our class sessions up to that week. There will be no readings assigned, nor a memo due, for that week. Memos will resume in the following week on the assigned readings.

**Final Exam:** There will be a comprehensive final exam during the Finals week consisting of a combination of short answers and paragraph-long essays related to the assigned readings and the other material covered during the entire course.

**Grading:**

Class attendance and participation.....	20%
Weekly memos.....	25%
Mid-term Exam.....	25%
Final Exam .....	30%

The following is a close approximation of the grading distribution criteria that will be used in this course. I will not be using an exact mathematical formula. The final grade will be at the discretion of the instructor taking into consideration your entire performance in this course.

<u>Exam Points</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
--------------------	---------------------

97-100	A+
94-96	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-

## **To Succeed in This Course**

In order to gain from and succeed in this course, the bulk of the responsibility rests on you. I play the role of the facilitator, but your part is primary and without fulfilling that you cannot expect to gain fully from this course. You would need to keep up with the reading assignments, pay close attention to the video documentaries we will be watching and discussing during our class sessions, and complete and turn in your weekly memos on time. Do your best to come up with questions and make informed comments. Use the opportunity to excel this quality in yourself. Do all this and you will finish this course most profitably and with a high grade.

## **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, you will be expected to have developed a wider perspective and a deeper understanding of what we mean by “culture” as far as the various areas of social life are concerned.

## **Academic Integrity**

All written work must represent your original work. Using “short-cuts” and presenting someone else’s work as your own undermines the whole purpose for being here, namely, to improve and excel your learning and creative process. You should by now be familiar with the UCSD Policy on the Integrity of Scholarship (<http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu>) which you are expected to follow.

Knowledge is to be shared and built upon -and sometimes also, applying reason and evidence, it is to be refuted. When you use the ideas or work of another person to augment your own argument, make sure to identify the original author. Whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or giving direct quotations, the original source needs to be clearly cited. It is your responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge and restatements of the ideas of others. If in doubt, let us discuss it.

## **Preferred Mode of Communication**

Although you can use Canvas for communication with me, I prefer you email me directly. Either way, please make sure to clearly include in the SUBJECT box the course # followed by the subject matter you are writing me about.

## **Course Schedule** (Subject to additions/modifications)

**Week 1 – Jan. 07\_\_ Introduction to the course and to one another**, and discussing the following:

What is “culture” in its broad definition(s)? How does one look at the various aspects of life from a “cultural” point of view?

No reading assignment.

### **Videos to watch and discuss in class:**

Symbols, Values, Norms \_A Crash Course (9 min):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGrVhM\\_Gi8k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGrVhM_Gi8k)

Cultures, Subcultures, Countercultures Crash Course (9 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV50AV7-Iwc>

More videos to be added.

## **Week 2 – Jan. 14\_\_ Theories and Methods of Studying Culture**

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter1 (Introduction); pp. 1-15.
- Billington, Rosamund, et al, *Culture and Society*, Chapters 1 (What Is Culture?) & Chapter 2 (Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Study of Culture); pp. 1-43.

Videos to watch and discuss in class:

- On the Three Major Perspectives in Sociology (10 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz1s55xGxRs>

## **Week 3 – Jan. 21\_\_ The Historical Origins of Our Modern Culture: The Age of Reason and the Dawn of Modernity; The Industrial Revolution, and the Rise of Modern Capitalism**

Readings:

- On the European Enlightenment and Modernity -pdf file to be sent to you.
- Additional reading assignments to be determined and sent to you in pdf format

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:

The Industrial Revolution: Crash Course European History #24 (17 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjK7PWmRRyg>

Coal, Steam, and The Industrial Revolution: Crash Course World History #32 (11 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhL5DCizj5c>

Charles Taylor Lecture: Master Narratives of Modernity (1:31:43 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m95ck7A2Ooc>

Stephen Hicks: Explaining Postmodernism (2:25:00 min; segments only):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BGbHG63x8w>

Other video clips may be added.

#### Week 4 – Jan. 28\_\_ Culture, Individual, and Society

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 2 (Culture, Self & Society) and Chapter 3 (Social Stratification and Culture); pp 19-66.

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:

The Perils of Individualism in America (12 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jIYd9y71oA>

The language of Insult and Humor across Cultures-Saba Safdar (17 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaOJ71czAGQ>

The Myth of the Rugged Individual (3:30 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rzn6GZxsF0>

8 Traits of a Narcissistic Personality Disorder (5 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ail9LucH7cw>

The Changing Role of Women in the 1920s America (5 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDZ93syAQfA&t=3s>

Revolutionary Transformation of Women's Role in Society (20 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WHJ4cHRL5E>

What is Patriarchy? (2:30 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0LXAC2PXuU>

Switch Gender Roles and See What Happens | Eleonore Pourriat (15 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyLInYcj0BA&t=93s>

How 'All in the Family' and 'The Jeffersons' changed TV (7:30 min):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSIZ623frMI>

Introduction to Bourdieu: Habitus (11:30 min):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvzahvBpd\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvzahvBpd_A)

Pierre Bourdieu on Habitus, Capital, Fields, Doxa, and Reflexive Sociology (8 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJAWhbSYMAE>

**Week 5– Feb. 04\_\_\_\_\_ Culture, Imperialism, and the Construction of “the Other”**

Readings assignments:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 4 (Cultural Construction of “the Other”); pp 69-92.
- Billington, Rosamund, et al, *Culture and Society*, Chapter 4 (Culture and Imperialism); pp. 64-80.
- Additional reading assignments to be sent to you in pdf format

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:

What is Postcolonialism? A Short Introduction (7 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nC428rtMB8&t=359s>

Professor Homi Bhabha on Postcolonial Studies (12 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGBnkk3-fS0&t=73s>

Samuel Huntington “The Clash of Civilization” (7 min):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT\\_moiU2WCU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT_moiU2WCU)

Edward Said’s Critique of Samuel Huntington’s Theory (Part 1, 10 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boBzrqF4vmo>

Edward Said’s Critique of Samuel Huntington’s Theory (Part 2, 10 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir1haaeeMSo>

Edward Said’s Critique of Samuel Huntington’s Theory (Part 3, 10 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHLCUti-J7A>

Edward Said on Orientalism (40 min):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd\\_Z\\_g&t=1927s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g&t=1927s)

David Maybury-Lewis: Millennium; Shock of the Other (57 min):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTy5G\\_A097k&list=PLptXIbS\\_Ik8UfOKPcttyzzmGaMsXR7xV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTy5G_A097k&list=PLptXIbS_Ik8UfOKPcttyzzmGaMsXR7xV)

**Week 6 – Feb. 11\_\_\_\_\_MID-TERM EXAM**

**Week 7– Feb. 18\_\_\_\_\_ Society from Preindustrial to Industrial: The Emergence of Mass Culture; On Postmodernism**

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 5 (Preindustrial Sources of Contemporary Culture) and Chapter 6 (Industrialism and Mass Culture); pp 93-139.  
Bennett, Andy, *Culture and Everyday Life*. Chapter 1 (The Mass Culture Debate); pp11-30. Also, Chapter 2 (Postmodernism); pp 32-53

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:

On Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School (14 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hn4hLq26P0>

On Taylor's Scientific Management (11 min):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNfy\\_AHG-MU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNfy_AHG-MU)

The Century of the Self (Part 1 of 4) (58 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnPmg0R1M04&t=88s>

Stephen Hicks: Explaining Postmodernism (2:25:00 min – segments):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BGbHG63x8w>

**Week 8 – Feb. 25 \_\_\_\_ Power and Culture: Class, Gender, and Education**

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 8 (Power and Culture), pp 167-189.
- Billington, Rosamund, et al, *Culture and Society*. Chapters 6 through 8 (on Class, Gender, and Education), pp. 101-155.

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class: TBD

**Week 09 – March 04 \_\_\_\_ The Role of Art and Media in Creating Culture**

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 9 (The Production of Culture) & Chapter 10 (Cultural Objects, Audiences & Meaning); pp 190-235.
- Billington, Rosamund, et al, *Culture and Society*. Chapter 3 (on Culture & Art), pp 44-63, AND Chapter 9 (on Media and Popular Culture), pp 156-171.

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:



On the negative effects of social media:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ9oEi3Yyg0&t=124s>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kc\\_Jq42Og7Q&t=16s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kc_Jq42Og7Q&t=16s)

On the relationship between power and corporate media in creating consent and shaping culture:

Noam Chomsky's "Manufacturing Consent":

The full documentary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2m3rvsO0I&t=1491s>

The 30th anniversary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf-tQYcZGM4>

John Berger: "Way of Seeing" (2:24:00 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXl4U1gFTto&t=3359s>

## **Week 10 – March 11\_\_\_ Challenging the Dominant Culture: Transforming Society through Collective Action; Disintegrating Social Cohesion through Theories of Conspiracies**

Readings:

- Hall, John R., et al, *Sociology on Culture*, Chapter 11 (Culture, Action, and Change); pp 236-259.
- Bennett, Andy, *Culture and Everyday Life*. Chapter 8 (Countercultures); pp 160-180.
- Additional reading assignments to be determined.

Videos to choose from to watch and discuss in class:

On the Shifting History of Confederate Monuments (6

min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAqUwum79W8>

What Stories DO America's Monuments Tell? (9 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8TVTlyOw64>

The "Unite the Right" Rally in Charlottesville in 2017 - A Quick Timeline

(2 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5F2kPRW6ZuA>

The Rise of Authoritarianism: Professor Jason Stanley Warns! (18 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xkcCmdE1u4&t=1s>

On the January 6, 2021 Insurrection and the Far-Right's Assault on American Democracy (1:23:11):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcGi4maiJW8>

## **Week 11 – March 18 \_\_\_\_\_ FINAL EXAM**