

Sabancı University
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
CULT 501: Core Works in Cultural Studies
Spring 2024

Mondays 2:40 - 5:30 p.m. FASS G050

Instructor: Ateş Altınordu (FASS 2083, ext. 9283, atesaltinordu@sabanciuniv.edu; meeting by appointment)

Course description: This course is designed to broaden and deepen students' knowledge of cultural theories and their empirical applications through a discussion of key works in cultural sociology. Readings will focus on the relationship of culture to politics, social class, and the economy.

Requirements: Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class and actively participate in class discussions. The course requirements include an in-class presentation (~25 minutes) and a final exam (14-16 pages to be completed outside of class, due June 5). The presentation should briefly summarize essential points from the readings and conclude with two critical questions for discussion. We will discuss final exam topics on Week 12 (May 13).

Evaluation: The course grade will be composed of class participation (10%), the presentation (20%), and the final exam (70%). Late submission of final exams is allowed up to five days after the deadline and will be subject to a 3-point (out of 100) reduction for each day late.

Letter grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

93-100 A	83-86 B -	73-76 C	60-66 D
90-92 A-	80-82 B	70-72 C-	0-59 F
87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	

Attendance Policy: Students who miss more than five class meetings without official excuses will receive N/A as their course grade. Only (1) a report from the University Health Center or (2) a permission note from the university administration for participation at a university event *for the date of the class in question* count as official excuses. Those who enter class more than 20 minutes after its start will be considered absent on that date. *Please do not ask for exceptions.*

Academic integrity: Cases of plagiarism, cheating, and fraud will result in an F for the course grade and will be referred to the relevant Faculty Dean for potential disciplinary action. For Sabancı University's Academic Integrity Statement, see

<https://www.sabanciuniv.edu/en/academic-integrity-statement> (ENG) or <https://www.sabanciuniv.edu/tr/akademik-durustluk> (TR).

Readings: All reading are available as pdf files on the course page at SuCourse.

Week 1 | Introduction | February 19

- Sewell, Jr., William H. 2005. "The Concept(s) of Culture." Pp. 152-174 in *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Schudson, Michael. 1989. "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory and Society* 18:153-180.

Week 2 | The Interpretive Turn & Structural Hermeneutics | February 26

- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 3-30, 87-125. ("Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" / "Religion as a Cultural System")
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2003. *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 3-26. ("Introduction" / "The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics")

Week 3 | Cultural Trauma | March 4

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2002. "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(1), 5-85.
- Şahin, Sena. Forthcoming. "From Heroism to Victimhood: The Deep Story of Sèvres and 'Enemies' of the Turkish Nation."

Week 4 | Narrative Genres in Politics | March 11

- Smith, Philip. 2015. *Why War: The Cultural Logic of Iraq, The Gulf War, and Suez*. The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 3-34, 154-204. ("Why War? Theorizing the Role of Culture and Civil Discourse" / "The War in Iraq of 2003.")
- Altınordu, Ateş. forthcoming. "'You Will Be Defeated by a Tripod and a Camera:' Sedat Peker and the Anti-hero Narrative in Contemporary Politics."

Week 5 | Social Performance Theory | March 18

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy." *Sociological Theory* 22(4): 527-573.
- Karakaya, Yağmur. 2020. "The Conquest of Hearts: The Central Role of Ottoman Nostalgia within Contemporary Turkish Populism." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 8(2): 125-157.

Week 6 | Performance & Political Power | March 25

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2017. "Seizing the Stage: Social Performances from Mao Zedong to Martin Luther King Jr., and Black Lives Matter Today." *TDR/The Drama Review* 61(1): 14-42.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. "Believing in Spectacles." Pp. 1-32 in *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Signals in Contemporary Syria*. University of Chicago Press.
- Pisano, Jessica. 2022. "Introduction: Performances of Democracy" and "Staging Performances." Pp. 1-17 and 70-89 in *Staging Democracy: Political Performance in Ukraine, Russia, and Beyond*. Cornell University Press.

Week 7 | Emotions | April 1

- Jasper, James M. 2018. *The Emotions of Protest*. University of Chicago Press. 1-14, 127-158.
- Aslan, Senem. 2021. "Public Tears: Populism and the Politics of Emotion in AKP'S Turkey." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53(1), 1-17.

Week 8 | Events | April 15

- Sewell Jr, William H. 1996. "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille." *Theory and Society* 25(6): 841-881.
- Altınordu, Ateş. 2017. "A Midsummer Night's Coup: Performance and Power in Turkey's July 15 Coup Attempt." *Qualitative Sociology* 40(2): 139-164.

Week 9 | Class, Taste, Consumption | April 22

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press. Pp. 1-96.
- Sherman, Rachel. 2018. "'A Very Expensive Ordinary Life:' Consumption, Symbolic Boundaries and Moral Legitimacy Among New York Elites." *Socio-Economic Review* 16(2), 411-433.

Week 10 | Culture and Cognition | April 29

- Lizardo, Omar. 2017. "Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes." *American Sociological Review* 82(1), 88-115.
- Winchester, Daniel. 2016. "A Hunger for God: Embodied Metaphor as Cultural Cognition in Action." *Social Forces* 95(2), 585-606.

Week 11 | Materiality and Meaning | May 6

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2010. "Iconic Consciousness: The Material Feeling of Meaning." *Thesis Eleven* 103(1), 10-25.
- Zubrzycki, G. 2011. "History and the National Sensorium: Making Sense of Polish Mythology." *Qualitative Sociology* 34(1), 21-57.

Week 12 | Discussion of Paper Topics | May 13

**** no class meeting on May 20 ****

Week 13 | Popular Culture and Politics | May 27

- Street, John. 1997. *Politics and Popular Culture*. Polity. Pp. 3-62
- Hintz, Lisel. 2021. "The Empire's Opposition Strikes Back: Popular Culture as Creative Resistance Tool under Turkey's AKP." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48(1), 24-43.

**** Final Exam Due | June 5 (Wednesday) ****