

Sabancı University
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
CULT 501: Core Works in Cultural Studies
Spring 2023

Mondays 2:40 - 5:30 p.m. FASS 1001

Zoom link: <https://sabanciuniv.zoom.us/j/98084815578>

Disclaimer: We may have to revise the course plan according to the reassessment of higher education that will be made countrywide at the beginning of April. The method of course delivery, the number and dates of exams, and some other details are subject to change.

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 7). 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 11 (May 15).

Evaluation: The course grade will be composed of class participation (20%), the presentation (20%), and the final exam (60%). 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:

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|----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 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 four 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 27

- Wendy Griswold. 1992. "Recent Developments in the Sociology of Culture: Four Good Arguments (And One Bad One)." *Acta Sociologica* 35(4): 323-328.
- 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.

Week 2 | The Interpretive Turn | March 6

- Bachmann-Medick, Doris. 2016. "The Interpretive Turn." Pp. 39-71 in *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*. Trans. Adam Blauhut. DeGruyter.
- 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")

Week 3 | The Strong Program: Structural Hermeneutics | March 13

- 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")
- 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.

Week 4 | Narrative Genres in Politics | March 20

- 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. 2023. "'You Will Be Defeated by a Tripod and a Camera: Sedat Peker and the Anti-hero Narrative in Contemporary Politics.'" Unpublished Manuscript.

Week 5 | Social Performance Theory | March 27

- 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 and Power | April 3

- 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 10

- 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 17

- 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 | Popular Culture and Politics | April 24

- 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.

Week 10 | Class, Taste, Consumption | May 8

- 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 11 | Presentation of Paper Topics | May 15

Week 12 | Culture and Economy | May 22

- Zelizer, Viviana A. 1989. "The Social Meaning of Money: 'Special Monies.'" *American Journal of Sociology* 95(2): 342-377.
- Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. 2nd ed. University of California Press. Pp. 1-32.

Week 13 | Social Movements | May 29

- Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-639.
- Saguy, Abigail C. 2000. "Sexual Harassment in France and the United States: Activists and Public Figures Defend their Definitions." Pp. 56-93 in *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Politics and Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the U.S.* Eds. Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot. Cambridge University Press.

**** Final Exam Due | June 7 (Wednesday) ****