

## **Sociology 190: Cultural Production**

The Institutional Underpinnings of the Arts and Media

**Spring 2018**

### **Instructor: Matt Rowe**

E-mail: mrowe@berkeley.edu

Mailbox: 410 Barrows Hall

Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

### **Class Time, Location**

TBD

### **Course Overview**

News and entertainment media are a constant presence in our everyday lives. Music, television, websites—all of the media we consume are potential cultural resources. They reinforce what we already know about ourselves, inform us about other people's experiences, and give us something to talk about.

In addition to being culturally vibrant, sociologists see the arts and media as modes of economic activity that share certain key features. Often studied in terms of “culture industries,” media are produced in particular ways, at particular times, for particular reasons. The purpose of this course is to understand those reasons. How are different kinds of cultural products created? How are these industries structured, and why? What is it like to work in these fields? What does their content tell us about the society that produces them?

In addition to studies of media industries, cultural production can include any form of creative expression that is organized and commodified. In this course, we'll consider cuisine and advertising, along with fine art, film, television, music, and social media.

The objectives for this course are simple. By the end of the semester, students will become proficient in applying the themes of the course—technology, uncertainty, identity, and opportunity—to contemporary arts and media. The course culminates in a paper, giving students the opportunity to develop their knowledge of a topic of their choice. Reading responses, in-class discussions, and a series of assignments leading up to the paper will help students engage fully in the seminar format of the course and write a successful paper.

### **Required texts**

The course reader is available at Copy Central, 2576 Bancroft Way. I will also post .pdfs of all readings on bCourses.

## GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Participation	20%
In-class facilitation	10%
Reading responses	25%
Final project	45%
Paper proposal	10%
Paper meeting	5%
Final paper	30%

### Important dates: TBD

**Class participation** is an important part of your grade, for two reasons. First, with only one meeting per week, missing class will make it impossible for you to stay caught up. Second, you will not be able to achieve the learning objectives solely by reading the material—you must also verbalize the concepts, share ideas, and work together to do well in this course. There are a variety of ways to participate, including in-class discussion, online discussions, and office hours visits.

**In-class facilitation.** Beginning in week 4, a small group of students will help to facilitate in-class discussion of the week's readings. You will sign up for a topic (and class date) in the first 2 weeks of class. Working together (and with my help) you should identify a few discussion questions. You may also plan activities, if you like, such as a small group discussions, a debate, a game, etc. You may introduce additional resources to use during class time, such as a short video or other visual display. You must meet with me as a group before class to get approval for your plan, and clear up any questions you have. You will be graded on how well prepared you are going into class, the facilitation of class itself, and how well you work together. You will have a chance to evaluate yourselves (and each other) as a group, as part of the assignment. Your self-evaluation won't form the entire grade, but I will take it into account in my grading.

**Reading responses.** You are responsible for submitting 4 reading response papers during the semester. The responses are short essays, 2-3 pp. double-spaced. They should demonstrate an understanding of the week's readings, based on the prompt for that week that I distribute. Reading responses must be submitted online by midnight on (the day before class). Those that are turned in late will not be graded.

### Final project

The paper is an opportunity for you to learn more about one of the forms of cultural production that we discuss in class. You will analyze your chosen topic using one or more of the course's themes (technology, uncertainty, identity, and opportunity), citing course readings and additional sources that you identify. You may write about the same

topic as your in-class presentation, but you do not have to. There are three steps in the preparation of the paper:

1. Paper proposal. The proposal should clearly identify your topic and the approach you will use to discuss it. It must be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and include a reference list. In other words, you should do most of the research required for the paper by the time the proposal is due.
2. Meeting: You must meet with me in office hours to discuss your paper. This is your chance to ask for help if you're having trouble finding sources, or to talk through any problems you're having in framing the essay.
3. Final paper: The paper must be 10-12 pages, double spaced. You should build on what we learned about the topic in class by citing at least three sources in your paper, in addition to sources from the course. At least one of these must be academic in nature (an article published in an academic journal or a book chapter published by an academic press). The paper will be due during finals week, in lieu of an exam.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance** in class is mandatory. This is a seminar, which means participation is an important part of the grade. Come to class ready to discuss the readings.

**Office hours** appointments are on a drop-in basis (except for the mandatory group and paper topic meetings). If you cannot make the regular time, please e-mail me to make an appointment at another time. During office hours, I can answer questions about the readings, clarify something from discussion, discuss grading, or any other topic related to the course. Please come to office hours with specific questions in mind.

I will use **bCourses** to post resources (readings and lecture slides), make announcements, report grades, and set up online discussions. You are responsible for checking the course's site on a regular basis. Please let me know if you have difficulty using bCourses. You can add and contribute to a discussion topic at any time, as part of your participation grade.

You may use **laptops** during class for note-taking only. Please do not distract me or your classmates by using them for anything else. This excludes **cell phones**—please keep your phones off during class.

**Late papers.** Assignments must be turned in on time. Extensions will only be given in extreme circumstances, with prior notification and appropriate documentation explaining the reason that the paper cannot be turned in on time.

**Missed assignments.** Except in the case of a real and verifiable emergency, students will not be allowed to make up missed assignments. In the case of a real and verifiable emergency, you must notify me within 24 hours after the time the missed class ends. All approved make-ups must be completed within one week of the original due date.

**Plagiarism** means representing the work of others as your own. This includes copying sentences, passages, or entire papers from the Internet, other students, or any other source. It also includes quoting class materials without using quotation marks and providing a citation. Any case of plagiarism will be taken seriously and will result in you failing the course.

**Grading policy.** I am happy to discuss your grade with you in office hours, to help you improve. If you want to dispute a grade, please follow these steps: (1) write a short memo describing the specific reason that you believe the grade is inaccurate or unfair; (2) e-mail the memo to me within two days after the work is handed back to you; (3) come to the next office hours session to discuss the issue with me. Keep in mind that re-grading can result in a lower grade.

**Students with disabilities** who require any kind of accommodation should contact me as soon as possible so that I can make appropriate arrangements. Be sure to have an accommodation letter from the Cal's Disabled Students Program.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

**Week 1: Course introduction** [no readings]

**Week 2: Social processes of arts and media production**

Becker, "Art as Collective Action"

Peterson, "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music"

selection from Mayer, *Below the Line*, "Introduction" (pp. 4-22)

**Week 3: Power, labor, and exploitation**

Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-Expressive Creative Worker"

Mayer, *Below the Line*, chapter 1, "Producers as Creatives"

NPR article: "Cultural Appropriation Is, in Fact, Indefensible"

**Week 4: Fine art**

White & White, "Institutional Change in the French Painting World," in *The Arts in Society*, ed. Wilson

selection from Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, "The Fair"

Bain, "Constructing an Artistic Identity"

**Week 5: Outsider art**

Fine, *Everyday Genius*, chapter 2, "Creating Biography"

Lachmann, "Graffiti as Career and Ideology" (pp. 232-48 only)

*L.A. Times* article, "Art Wars on Urban Canvas"

**Week 6: Cuisine**

Fine, "The Culture of Production"

NPR article, "The Stark Racial Divide In Pay For Restaurant Workers"

Blog posts, “Breaking the Culinary Ceiling”; “Six Times Anthony Bourdain Has Spoken Out About Latinos’ Struggles in the Food Industry”

**Week 7: Fashion**

Mears, “Size Zero High-End Ethnic”

Collins, *Threads*, chapter 6, “Local Labor and Global Capital”

**Week 8: Hollywood, part 1**

Bielby & Bielby, “Organizational Mediation of Project-Based Labor Markets: Talent Agencies and the Careers of Screenwriters”

Quinn, “Black Talent and Conglomerate Hollywood: Will Smith, Tyler Perry, and the Continuing Significance of Race”

*N.Y. Times* article, “They’re in on the Joke”

selections from *Gig*, “Film Development Assistant” and “Film Director,” pp. 220-7, 217-20

**Week 9: Hollywood, part 2**

Bielby & Bielby, “‘All Hits are Flukes’: Institutionalized Decision Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development”

*Wired* article, “Green Scream”

*N.Y. Times* and *Business Insider* articles on blockbusters

**Week 10: Popular music**

Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously*, “Art vs. Technology,” pp. 77-92.

*Guardian* article, “Steve Albini on the Surprisingly Sturdy State of the Music Industry”

Frenette, “Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern”

**Week 11: Advertising**

Grabher, “The Project Ecology of Advertising: Tasks, Talents and Teams”

Fisk, *Writing for Hire*, chapter 7, “Pencils for Hire and Mad Men in Grey Flannel Suits”

*N.Y. Times* articles, “An Ad Woman at the Top of an Industry That She Thinks Still Has Far to Go” and “Brands to Agencies: Diversify or Else”

**Week 12: Journalism**

Klinenberg, “Convergence”

*New Yorker* article, “Out of Print”

Tuchmann & Ostertag, “When Innovation Meets Legacy: Citizen Journalists, Ink Reporters, and Television News”

**Week 13: Social and Streaming Media**

Selections from Curtain et al., eds., *Distribution Revolution*

*Economist* articles, “The Gazillion-Dollar Question” and “Streaming on Screens Near You”

*N.Y. Times* article, “Women in Start-Up World Speak Up About Harassment”

**Week 14: User-generated online content**

Schradie, “The Digital Production Gap: The Digital Divide and Web 2.0 Collide”

Kim, “The Institutionalization of YouTube: From User-Generated Content to Professionally Generated Content”

YouTube video: “How to be Instagram Famous”