

THE SOCIOLOGY OF MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE
SOCI 137
Prof. David Grazian

Department of Sociology
University of Pennsylvania
Fall 2006

Class Meeting: B1 Meyerson Hall, MW 11am-12pm, plus recitation section (required)

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Office Hours: By appointment on Mondays, 2-4pm

This course relies on a variety of sociological perspectives to examine the role of media and popular culture in everyday life, with a particular emphasis on the organization of the mass media industry, the relationship between cultural consumption and status, and the social significance of leisure activities from sports to shopping. Specific course topics will include the production of tabloid TV talk shows; the marketing of Disney, Nike and Starbucks; and the rise of new media technologies in the digital age.

The following paperback books are available for purchase at House of Our Own Bookstore (3920 Spruce Street):

Howard S. Becker. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay.

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador.

All additional readings, denoted below with an asterisk (*), are included in a bulk-pack available from the Campus Copy Store, and online at <https://courseweb.upenn.edu/> (under "Course Documents" on the Blackboard course site). All books and additional readings are also available on reserve at Van Pelt Library; all journal articles are available on JSTOR. Lecture slides shown in class, and review questions for selected readings, will also be made available online (under "Course Information" on the Blackboard course site) on the evening prior to each class meeting.

Recitations: All students must be enrolled in a recitation section; the Registrar's Office will automatically cancel the enrollment of any student not registered for a recitation within a few days. Attendance is mandatory for all recitation sections, and students are required to complete all course work assigned by their individual recitation instructors.

Course Requirements:

(1) **EXAMINATIONS:** There will be two in-class examinations, a midterm and a final. Students will be asked to select and identify key terms, and complete short essays on a range of topics, requiring students to employ materials from the classroom lectures as well as the assigned readings. **The midterm will be held in class on Wednesday, October 25th, and the final exam will be held on Friday, December 15th, at 12 noon** (Midterm Exam, 25% of final grade; Final Exam, 50% of final grade).

(2) **RECITATION COURSEWORK AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:** All students will be expected to complete all of the readings listed on the course schedule, attend all class lectures and recitation sessions

on time, actively contribute to recitation class discussions and complete all work assigned by the recitation instructor (20% of final grade).

(3) FIELDWORK ASSIGNMENT: All students will be required to complete a fieldwork assignment on city nightlife, to be explained in greater detail once the semester is underway. Student's work will contribute to an ongoing research project on urban entertainment (5% of final grade).

Please note the following:

ALL ASSIGNED GRADES ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE.

THE CASES OF STUDENTS WHO ARE SUSPECTED OF CHEATING ON THE ASSIGNMENT, MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ADJUDICATED BY THE PROFESSOR OR THE RECITATION INSTRUCTORS, BUT WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE FORWARDED TO THE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT FOR EVALUATION.

THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS FOR THE MIDTERM OR THE FINAL EXAM. STUDENTS WHO WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND THESE SESSIONS ARE ADVISED AGAINST ENROLLING IN THE COURSE.

PART ONE: THE SOCIOLOGY OF MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Week 1: Course Introduction

9.6

No readings are assigned for the first class meeting.

Week 2: The Social Organization of Popular Culture

9.11

Raymond Williams. 1985. "Culture," "Popular," "Folk," "Art," and "Media." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 87-93, 236-8, 136-7, 40-2, 203-4.

Howard S. Becker. 1982. "Art Worlds and Collective Activity," and "Conventions." Chapters 1 and 2 of *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-67.

9.13

Howard S. Becker. 1982. "Arts and Crafts." Chapter 9 of *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 272-299.

Gary Alan Fine. 1992. "The Culture of Production: Aesthetic Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work." *American Journal of Sociology* 97: 1268-94.

Week 3: The Importance of Competitive Games: A Functionalist Approach

9.18

H.G. Bissinger. 1990. *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, pp xi-xiv, 1-52.

9.20

Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic, pp. 412-53.

Film: *Strut!* A 2001 documentary about the Philadelphia Mummers and their annual New Year's Day parade will be shown in class.

Week 4: The Power of Advertising: A Critical Approach

9.25

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 3-61.

9.27

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 63-105.

Week 5: How Fads Become Popular: An Interaction Approach

10.2

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay, pp. 3-88.

10.4

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay, pp. 89-132, 169-215.

PART TWO: THE PRODUCTION OF MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Week 6: The Organization of the Culture Industry

10.9

Paul M. Hirsch. 1972. "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization Set Analysis of Culture Industry Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 77: 639-59.

10.11

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 129-91.

Guest Speaker: Robert J. Felton, Director of Business Development, Wizard Entertainment.

Week 7: Strategy and Decision-Making in Media Firms

10.16

Michael A. Cusumano, et al. 1992. "Strategic Maneuvering and Mass-Market Dynamics: The Triumph of VHS over Beta." *Business History Review* 66 (1): 51-94.

William T. Bielby and Denise D. Bielby. 1994. "'All Hits are Flukes': Institutional Decision-Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development." *American Journal of Sociology* 99: 1287-1313.

10.18

Keith Negus. 1998. "Cultural Production and the Corporation: Musical Genres and the Strategic Management of Creativity in the US Recording Industry." *Media, Culture & Society* 20: 359-379.

Malcolm Gladwell. 2005. "Kenna's Dilemma: The Right—and Wrong—Way to Ask People What They Want." Chapter 5 in *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown, pp. 147-88.

Guest Speaker: Michael J. Cimicata, Creative Department, RCA Records.

Week 8: Fall Break/Midterm Examination

10.23

Due to Fall Break, there will be no class.

10.25

The midterm exam will be administered in class.

PART THREE: THE CONSUMPTION OF MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Week 9: Cultural Consumption and Social Class

10.30

Lawrence W. Levine. [1984] 1991. "William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation." In *Rethinking Popular Culture*. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 157-97.

11.1

David Halle. 1992. "The Audience for Abstract Art: Class, Culture, and Power." In *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 131-151.

Richard A. Peterson. 1992. "Understanding Audience Segmentation: From Elite and Mass to Omnivore and Univore." *Poetics* 21: 243-258.

Week 10: The Consumption of Urban Nightlife

11.6

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. xv-xix; 1-59.

11.8

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 61-124.

The fieldwork assignment will be explained in class.

Week 11: Shopping and the Pleasures of Consumption

11.13

Margaret Crawford. 1992. "The World in a Shopping Mall." In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Michael Sorkin, ed. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 3-30.

Sharon Zukin. 2004. "How Brooks Brothers Came to Look Like Banana Republic." Chapter 8 in *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture*. New York: Routledge, pp. 197-225.

11.15

Virginia Postrel. 2003. "The Aesthetic Imperative," and "Surface and Substance." Chapters 1 and 3 of *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*. New York: Perennial, pp. 1-33, 66-92.

PART FOUR: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

Week 12: The Shifting Boundaries of Entertainment and Art

11.20

Shyon Baumann. 2001. "Intellectualization and Art World Development: Film in the United States." *American Sociological Review* 66: 404-26.

Alex Ross. 2003. "Rock 101: Academia Tunes In." *The New Yorker* 14 and 21 July, pp. 87-93.

Chuck Klosterman. 2003. "Appetite for Replication." Chapter 5 in *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto*. New York: Scribner, pp. 56-69.

11.22

Film: *The Merchants of Cool*. A 2000 PBS documentary about the marketing of teenage youth culture will be shown in class.

Week 13: The Production of Reality in Popular Culture

11.27

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-78.

Guest Speaker: Cyndi Butz, Location Coordinator, *Trading Spaces*; Production Manager, *Ambush Makeover*.

The fieldwork assignment will be due this week in your class recitation.

11.29

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 80-147.

Week 14: New Media and the Internet in the Digital Age

12.4

Adam Gopnik. 1999. "The Return of the Word." *The New Yorker* 6 December.

Natasha Dow Schull. 2005. "Digital Gambling: The Coincidence of Desire and Design." In *Cultural Production in a Digital Age*. Eric Klinenberg, ed. Vol. 597 of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, pp. 65-81.

Henry Jenkins. 2006. "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture." In *Media and Cultural Studies*, Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 549-76.

12.6

Alexander Stille. 1999. "Overload: There's Just No Way to Save All the Information of the Information Age." *The New Yorker* 8 March.

Eric Klinenberg. 2005. "Convergence: News Production in a Digital Age." In *Cultural Production in a Digital Age*. Eric Klinenberg, ed. Vol. 597 of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, pp. 48-64.

David Grazian. 2005. "A Digital Revolution? A Reassessment of New Media and Cultural Production in the Digital Age." In *Cultural Production in a Digital Age*. Eric Klinenberg, ed. Vol. 597 of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, pp. 209-22.

The final will be held on Friday, December 15th at 12 noon.