

St.FX UNIVERSITY
SOCI 244 – Cultures and Societies
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Fall, 2020
Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30pm
Bruce Brown, BB337
3-Credits

Instructor: Evan Curley
ecurley@stfx.ca
In-Person Office Hours: Tuesday's 1:30-3:30, NH608
Zoom Office Hours: Weekdays by Appointment

Course Description

Is the great artist an *individual* genius, or is their art an inherently *collective* endeavor? Does art and culture contribute to our health and wellbeing, or does it create social divisions and hierarchy? Has the era of storytelling come to an end? Do we *perform* our way through social life like actors on a stage, or is there an authentic person at the core of the self? Is there a *style* of art that defines a generation, country, or province? How does the *appropriation* of culture impact marginalized groups?

These are all questions coming from the vast and important sociological study of culture – they can, and will, be investigated in this course as we address the ways society impacts culture and the way culture impacts society. We begin with a few weeks of study on the theoretical foundations of cultural thought, considering diverse 20th-century approaches and exciting contemporary debates. We will focus here on through lines, meaning we will weave our way through various discussion, linking them together in chains and webs to understand the dominant challenges and triumphs of culture in our world. Next, we will narrow our focus, moving on to topical issues revolving around art specifically. We will discuss such things as artistic autonomy, art and class structures, indigenous art and identity in Canada, and much more. The primary goal in this course is to foster a welcoming and academically rich discussion of our cultural world in general, and art specifically. When this course concludes, students will have gained skills in reading and writing about diverse academic literatures and will have a much deeper understanding of the social forces influencing our cultural experiences.

Methods of Evaluation

1. Weekly reading reflection (36%) - 12 in total, due on the Sunday before class on the reading material for that week, submitted through Moodle, approximately 300 words each.
2. Mid-term Quizzes (2 at 15% each) – Written in class on Oct. 5 and Nov. 23.
3. Final Paper Proposal and Workshop (4%) – You will produce a short 300 word written proposal and submit it on Sunday November 28 on Moodle outlining your idea for a final paper. Then everyone will present their proposal (you can simply read the proposal) to the class to gain feedback on your idea for your final paper on November 30. These presentations will be short – it should be thought of as a discussion or collective brainstorming session. The 4% mark will include your writing and your involvement in the workshop of ideas.

4. Final Paper/Project (30%) – The final paper will involve using some of the texts we have read in class, and a few academic sources of your own selection to conduct a sociological analysis of a cultural phenomenon of your choosing. We will discuss the final paper in depth as we progress throughout the class. You will have flexibility in your topic and mode of presenting your ideas. Due December 17.

Reading Schedule

Week 1, Sept. 7: Introduction

No required reading

Week 2, Sept. 14 – Culture: A Sociological View

Becker, Howard S. 1982. "Culture: A Sociological View" *The Yale Review*. 71:513-528.

Week 3, Sept. 21 – Power and Violence in the Cultural World

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

Harling Stalker, L. Lynda and Patricia Cormack. 2021. "A Spectacle of Silencing: A Rural African-Canadian Woman's Media Trial." *Cultural Sociology*, 15(2):191-212.

Week 4, Sept. 28 – Language beyond Description

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. "1. Concepts We Live By", "2. The Systematicity of Metaphorical Concepts", and "3. Metaphorical Systematicity: Highlighting and Hiding" in *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Austin, J. L. 1962. "Lecture I" in *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Week 5, Oct. 5 – Performance and Gender

Schechner, Richard. 2006. "Chapter 2. What is Performance?" in *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, 40(4):519-531.

Midterm Quiz #1

Week 6, Oct. 12 – "For Folk's Sake": Nova Scotian Cultural Identity

McKay, Ian. 1994. "Prologue: A Postcard from the 'Shore of Songs'" and "Chapter 1. The Idea of the Folk" in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. Queens-McGill University Press.

Vaughn, R.M. 1994. "Lobster is King: Infantilizing Maritime Culture" in *Semiotext(e)* 17 Canadas, 6(2):169-172.

Supplementary Reading: Morton, Erin. 2016. *For Folk's Sake: Art and Economy in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Selections TBD.

Week 7, Oct. 19 – Art as the Economic World Reversed

Williams, Raymond. 1958. "The Romantic Artist" in *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1983. "The Field of Cultural Production, or: the Economic World Reversed." *Poetics*, 12:311-356.

Week 8, Oct. 26 – Art as an Agent of Change

Benjamin, Walter. 1970. "The Author as Producer." *New Left Review*, 62:83-96.

Evans, Mel. 2016. "Painting with Oil" *Dissent*, 63(2):11-15.

Week 9, Nov. 2 – Cultural Work in the Creative Economy

Murray, Catherine and Mirjam Gollmitzer. 2012. "Escaping the precarity trap: a call for creative labour policy." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 18(4):419–38.

McRobbie, Angela. 2011. "Re-Thinking Creative Economy as Radical Social Enterprise." *Variant*, Vol. 41: 32-33.

Week 10, Nov. 9 – No Class, Fall Study Break

Week 11, Nov. 16 – Gift-Giving and the Shared Goods of Poetry

Mauss, Marcel. 1990. "Introduction" and "Chapter 1. The Exchange of Gifts and the Obligation to Reciprocate (Polynesia)." In *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Craig, Ailsa. 2007. "Sustainability, Reciprocity, and the Shared Good(s) of Poetry." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 37:3, 257-270.

Week 12, Nov. 23 – Arts-based Research

Leavy, Patricia. 2012. "Fiction and Critical Perspectives on Social Research: A Research Note." *Humanity & Society*, 36(3): 251-259.

Lapum, Jennifer, Perin Ruttonsha, Kathryn Church, Terrence Yau, and Alison Mathews David. 2011. "Employing the Arts in Research as an Analytical Tool and Dissemination Method: Interpreting Experience Through the Aesthetic." *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(1):100-115.

Midterm Quiz # 2

Week 13, Nov. 30 – The Therapeutics of Craft

Sennett, Richard. 2012. “Chapter 7. The Workshop: Making and Repairing” in *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Morton, Erin. 2014. “‘Not a Vacation, But a Hardening Process’: The Self-Empowerment Work of Therapeutic Craft in Nova Scotia.” *Culture Unbound*, 6:773-789.

Final Paper/Project Proposal due Sunday November 28

Final Paper/Project Workshop in Class

Week 14, Dec. 7 – Canadian Traditions, Interrogating Whiteness

Linsley, Robert. 1996. “Landscapes in Motion: Lawren Harris, Emily Carr and the Heterogeneous Modern Nation.” *Oxford Art Journal* 19(1):80–95.

Woloshyn, Alexa. 2020. “Reclaiming the ‘Contemporary’ in Indigeneity: The Musical Practices of Cris Derksen and Jeremy Dutcher.” *Contemporary Music Review*, 39(2):206-230.

In addition to this week’s reading please feel free to listen to some of Cris Derksen’s *Orchestral Powwow* (album), and Jeremy Dutcher’s *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* (album). We will listen to a few selections from these albums in class, but it may be useful to listen to them before reading Woloshyn’s article.

Course Policies

a. Attendance

Because we have a relatively small class, collective discussion will be frequent - much of the learning will occur in this conversation with your peers and instructor. This means regular engaged attendance will be necessary for success in this course. However, occasional absences are perfectly fine. If you can inform the instructor ahead of time when you will miss a class, please do.

b. Late assignments and extensions

Late papers/projects/weekly reflections submitted without prior permission will incur a late penalty of 5% of the total assignment per day, including weekends. If you need an extension on any assignment, please let your instructor know as soon as possible.

c. Missed midterm quizzes

Please communicate to the instructor in advance of the midterm quizzes if you foresee not being able to come to class that day - we can arrange an alternative time for writing. If there is a valid unforeseen reason for missing a quiz, we can work together to mitigate the lost marks.

d. Accommodations

If you have or develop a prolonged illness or encounter a personal crisis that will impact your progress in the course, please contact the instructor as soon as the problem becomes apparent. Your best strategy for dealing with anything that may prevent you from completing the course in a way that is satisfactory to you is to discuss your concerns with the instructor as soon as possible so that a method of response can be devised. If you are a student with any form of disability that requires accommodation in teaching style or evaluation, you can speak with the instructor anytime so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

e. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Since this course requires you to complete written assignments, you should familiarize yourself with standards for proper referencing of all materials cited (i.e. books, journals, newspaper articles, internet resources etc.). Students who attempt to pass off someone else's work as their own (plagiarism) will be dealt with through the university policy on academic honesty.

f. Equity statement

I (your instructor Evan Curley) am committed to fostering an environment for learning that is inclusive for everyone regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability, age, class, etc. All students in this class, the instructor, and any guests should be treated with respect during all interactions. It is my hope that our class will support diversity of experience, thought, and perspective. Additionally, I recognize that much of the research and writing that has occurred in academia, including selections that have informed our course content is partially subjective because it has been created and conducted through a particular point of view. Historically in academia, this point of view has had a lack of inclusivity. I will strive to highlight these issues and promote critical thought about the nature of past research and its implications on our understanding in the present. Please feel free to contact me via email or in person to let me know about any experiences you have had related to this class that have made you feel uncomfortable. I will continually strive to create inclusive learning environments and would therefore appreciate your support and feedback.

g. Mental health statement

Being mentally healthy does not mean being "happy all the time" but rather, it is having the ability to cope with problems as they arise and enjoying and finding fulfillment in numerous and various aspects of life. Every single person experiences periods when they have no distress, as well as times when they experience mild or moderate mental distress. Mental health problems are real and we need to take them seriously. It is important to recognize that even though students (new and experienced alike) come to university with many strengths, at university they may not have access to all of the supports that they usually enjoy at home, and some of the coping strategies they have developed while living at home may no longer be as effective. As a result, many students experience some challenges adjusting to university life and they recognize that they need to learn new strategies to overcome these new challenges.

If you find yourself in distress, your instructor can provide immediate support and guidance in a safe environment. He can comfortably have a conversation about mental health related issues, and can provide you with information about professional and other supports. The Health and Counselling Centre is also a welcoming environment for all St.FX students, with medical and mental health professionals who are there to support student wellness, across all areas of health, including mental health. The Health and Counselling Centre is located in Bloomfield 305 (the Students' Union Building), around the corner from the Info Desk

and is open Monday through Friday; students can either stop by or call (902-867-2263) to make a private appointment with the Intake Nurse. No issue is too big or too small to ask for help with.

h. Deadline to drop course

Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before the relevant deadline. The final day to drop first-term three-credit courses is Tuesday November 3.

i. Copyright and Course Materials

These course materials are designed for use in Course SOCI244 at St.FX University and are the property of the instructor, unless otherwise stated by the instructor. Copying this material for distribution, online posting, or selling of this material to third parties without permission is subject to Canadian Copyright Law and is strictly prohibited.