

Hubbard
Fall
2000

Sociology 4461-002
CRITICAL THINKING IN SOCIOLOGY
Fall 2000

Instructor: Eleanor A. Hubbard
Class: 11-12:15 a.m.; T/R; EKL/C M203 **Office:** Ketchum 11A
Mailbox: Ketchum 220 (Sociology Department)
Office Hours: Before or after class, by email or phone, or by appointment
Home Phone: 303-494-9718; **Email:** hubbarde@stripe.colorado.edu

Course Content

The focus of this course is learning to think and write critically. We will be using popular culture as the arena for our exploration. Our sociological analysis of popular culture will include topics such as youth sub-cultures, media genres, and commodification, consumption, and appropriation of and resistance to popular culture. We will be using a variety of lenses to look at popular culture, including gender, race, class, age, disabilities, and sexual orientation. We will be exploring important personal and social issues, using a critical scholarship to understand and analyze them. You will not be a passive recipient of knowledge in this class, because you will be expected to actively participate in in-depth study, lively discussions, written and oral assignments, and individual and group assignments.

Required Texts

Dines, Gail and Jean M. Humez (eds.) (1995) Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text-Reader.
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Requirements

1. Four (4) 5-7 pp. critical studies assignments; see separate assignment sheet for details, due 9/7, 9/14, 9/28, 10/12, 10/19 (worth 20% of your grade)
2. A mid-term exam, 10/24 (worth 20% of your grade).
3. Individual and group in-class activities, due throughout the semester (worth 10% of your grade).
 - A. Attendance and participation
 - B. Short oral and written activities, as assigned
 - C. Team presentations,
 - D. Research proposal, due 9/21
 - E. Rough Draft, due 11/16
4. A 15 pp. Critical Thinking Research project; see separate assignment sheet for details, (worth 50% of your grade)
 - A. Oral presentation, due 12/9
 - B. Written presentation, due 12/14

Course Rules

1. Standard English is expected, as is careful editing of all written assignments for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In addition, all papers must be typed double-spaced, and page numbers included.
2. Appropriate citations are expected whenever you use an idea which is not your own. To acknowledge that an idea is not yours, insert in parenthesis the author's last name and the date of publication. If you use a direct quote, the page numbers should also be included within the parenthesis. Include all sources cited, in a works cited at the end of your paper, using a standard bibliographic format. Footnotes and/or endnotes are not necessary. For further detail check how citations are used in our texts.
3. All individual assignments must be the work of the individual student. Cooperating on assignments can be negotiated with the professor, but if this is not negotiated, then all assignments must be the work of the individual student. All group assignments must be (as nearly as possible) the equal work of all members. This means that each member attend all preparation meetings, that work is distributed by mutual agreement, and that presentations, both oral and written, reflect the work of all the participants. If group work is a hardship for any student, the professor may negotiate an alternate assignment; otherwise, students are expected to participate actively in any group assigned.
4. **Late assignments policy:** All written assignments are due at the beginning of the class of the day it was assigned. Late assignments may be turned in at any time until the end of the semester with a penalty of two letter grades lowered. If students know they will be unable to complete an assignment on-time, they may notify me in writing prior to the due date that the assignment will be late and indicate a date on which it will be completed. If students, due to an emergency, do not know they will be unable to complete an assignment on-time, they may notify me in writing up to five days after the assignment was due with proper documentation included (a doctor's note, or a funeral notice; for instance). No excuse is necessary if the professor is notified prior to the assignment's due date, and no penalty will be exacted if students meet their own deadlines. However, late papers will not be graded until all on-time assignments have been graded and will not receive written comments from the professor. Any assignment handed in no later than the class prior to the due date will be given a 5% increase in grade. These will be graded with the on-time assignments. All oral assignments must be presented on the date negotiated between the professor and the student or group, unless the professor is notified, and other arrangements can be made (this is usually impossible). If a student cannot do all the necessary work for a group assignment and/or appear on the date of a scheduled oral presentation, that student must do a written assignment, negotiated with the professor.
5. Attendance is expected, as is class participation. No student will be penalized for missing class or assignments due to religious holidays, but of course the student is expected to complete all work.
6. Grades will be distributed on a standard scale of 90-100 % equals A, etc. Extra credit will be given only in extreme circumstances, negotiated between the student and the instructor.
7. **Disability policy:** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 stipulates that no student shall be denied the benefits of an education "solely by reason of a handicap." Disabilities include a wide range of physical, psychiatric and learning disabilities, some visible and some not. If you believe you qualify for accommodation due to a disability, please see the Coordinator of Services to students with disabilities in the Disability Services Office, Willard 322 (phone 303-492-8671), who will provide you with appropriate documentation. Then talk to me as soon as possible.

Socy 4461
Course Outline

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Assignment</u> |
|-------------|-------------|---|--|
| 1 | 8/28, 30 | A Critical Cultural Studies | Preface/Introductions (pp. 1-4, 71-76, 161-68, 229-236, 319-24, 395-402, 479-87, 545-6). |
| 2 | 9/5, 7 | Thinking Critically "Reality TV" | Articles 1, 10, 17, 55 Assignment #1 due Student Information Sheet due |
| 3 | 9/12, 14 | Pluralism & Difference Race, Class, Gender | Articles 2, 13, 15, 19 Assignment #2 due |
| 4 | 9/19, 21 | Culture & Celebrity <i>Body Modification</i> | Article 9 Research Proposal/ Critical Analysis due |
| 5 | 9/26, 28 | The Entertainment Culture | Assignment #3 due |
| 6 | 10/4 | <i>Talk Shows</i> Fall Break | |
| 7 | 10/10, 12 | Sex and Violence | D-Articles 18, 21, 51 Assignment #4 due |
| 8 | 10/17, 19 | | Assignment # 5 due |
| 9 | 10/24, 26 | <u>Mid-term Exam</u> | |
| 10 | 10/31, 11/2 | <u>Library Days</u> | |
| 11 | 11/7, 9 | Pluralism & Difference | Team Presentations |
| 12 | 11/14, 16 | Appropriation and Resistance | Team Presentations <u>Rough Draft due</u> |
| 13 | 11/21 | Pornography Thanksgiving Break | Team Presentations |
| 14 | 11/28, 30 | Violence | Team Presentations |
| 15 | 12/5, 7 | | |
| 16 | 12/12, 14 | | |

Oral Presentation--Saturday, December 9, 8-12 a.m.
Final Paper due--December 14

CULTURAL STUDIES ASSIGNMENTS

The purpose of cultural studies assignments is for you to demonstrate from your own experience and research your knowledge of concepts presented in this class. All students are expected to complete assignment 1, and then you may choose any three of the remaining assignments. Article 1 in Dines and Humez will help provide theory and methodology for the various assignments. Each assignment should be no more than 5 pages, typed double-spaced, and due Thursday of the week assigned. Each is worth 5% of your total grade. Each assignment should cite an article from Dines and Humez, and the citation must follow the standard sociological format. My main criteria for grading these papers will be how well you have used your sociological imagination to understand the theory and to practice the method. Assignment # 3 and # 5 must be done in dyads (with another student in the class).

Assignment 1 (due 9/7) You have been given an advertisement from a current periodical. Using your sociological imagination, critique this ad. Please return the ad with the assignment and hand in your Student Information Sheet!

Assignment 2 (due 9/14) Choose one TV genre (i.e., soap operas, sports, drama, sitcoms, news programs, etc) and watch several (at least 3-5) different examples. For instance if you choose sitcoms, you might watch an episode of Friends, Seinfeld, the Mary Tyler Moore Show, and Shoot Me. Prepare a genre analysis: articles 20 and 37 in Dines and Humez are good examples of this type of analysis.

Assignment 3 (work in dyads, due 9/28) Select a movie and recruit 3-5 of your friends to watch and discuss it with you (probably if you rent a movie and provide popcorn or go out to a current movie and provide the expresso for the discussion session, there will be no problem with finding an audience for this assignment, but if this is a hardship for some reason, see me for an alternate assignment). Be prepared with questions which will help you discover the multiple perspectives of your audience and their different readings of the movie. Do an audience reception analysis: articles 42 and 47 in Dines and Humez are good examples of this.

Assignment 4 (due 10/12) Write a subject position paper on one of your "hidden pleasures;" enjoying something that is considered beneath you as an educated college person usually have something to do with sexuality or violence. Include a discussion of whether your readings of this cultural artifact are liberating or reactionary. Articles 35 and 54 in Dines and Humez are good examples of this.

Assignment 5 (work in dyads, due 10/19) Using one of your critical lenses (gender, race, class, or sexual orientation.), review a cultural artifact for its use of sex and/or violence. You may choose what methodology you would like to use for this assignment, but you might want to do a political economy analysis (articles 26 and 52 in Dines and Humez are good examples of this). For instance, you could look at ads that use camera angles that follow pornographic conventions and discuss how this particular emphasis might be read by different audiences.

Team Presentations
Each student will be assigned to a team; each team will be responsible for presenting to the class the articles assigned. The purpose of the team presentations is to become more familiar with the conceptual framework of cultural studies and its methodologies. An assignment sheet will be given with further details about these presentations.

Critical Thinking Research Project

Qualitative research and cultural studies methods are very labor intensive, but they should also be fun. The most important way to make the project fun, or at least interesting, is to choose your topic carefully. This is the first phase of research: choosing what you are interested in doing and deciding how you are going to accomplish it (the research proposal). The research proposal must include the question guiding your research (given you only have a semester to complete your research, I suggest strongly that you have no more than one narrowly defined question). The second phase of the research involves carefully collecting empirical materials (data collection). The last phase of the research is to make sense of your observations sociologically. This will require a literature review, thoughtful analysis, coding categories, and writing up your research. This is not research which can be accomplished a few days before the research paper is due.

There are many research topics and methods available for your use. You may choose to do production and political economy, textual analysis, or audience reception or use of media culture.

Rather than designing their own research, some students may prefer to participate in my on-going research (please see the attached proposal). In order to do so, follow the instructions on the proposal sheet.

You are expected to produce two final products: a written report approximately 15 pp. long and a 15 minute oral presentation of your research. The format of the written report should include a title page; an abstract; the text including but not limited to an introduction, methodology, findings and analysis of your empirical materials, a summary, and a conclusion; and works cited. The panel format of the oral presentations will allow each student the opportunity to present a brief overview of their research. You will be expected to present the research not read from your paper.

Deadlines

Proposal due--due 9/21
Rough Draft of Research Paper --due 11/16
Oral Presentation--Saturday, 12/9, 8-12 a.m.
Final Paper due--12/14

The Individual Research Experience

All learning is essentially an individual experience, although many students find that working cooperatively in a group enhances their individual learning. You will have opportunities to do both this semester. The assignments, your attendance and participation in class all must be accomplished as an individual. If you choose, you may also design and conduct research on your own, or if you prefer working on my research project or with a team (see below under group experience).

The Group Experience

Early in the semester, you will be assigned to a triad. This group of three will become research partners who will together learn to become researchers in cultural studies. You will regularly work on your research assignments and projects together through in-class and out-of-class group assignments. These assignments will be diverse and far-reaching, but will certainly include discussion of the readings as well as giving feedback to each others' assignments and research design.

Your research team may decide whether they prefer to do individual research which is shared with the group or to do the research collectively. For individual research, each of the group members will design their own research proposal and carry out the research themselves. During the group experience, the members will be expected to share their individual research with each other and accept feedback from the other members. For the collective research, one research proposal will be designed and conducted with each of the group members collaborating and contributing. The decision of which of these approaches to take will depend upon the interest of the group members and their work styles as well as the scope of the project undertaken.

Obviously the choice of team members is crucial to having a productive, educational experience. Please fill out the student information sheet to assist me in selecting research teams.

This is very important: All the research will be presented on Saturday, December 9, 8-12a.m. Everyone in the class will be expected to attend and to present their research with other team members in a panel format. Please clear your calendar now so that you can attend.

The Research Proposal due 9/21

The purpose of writing a proposal is to think clearly about your research and to receive feedback before proceeding with it. You must have your proposal approved by me before you begin your research. I have included two sample proposals. The first proposal is my on-going research: a content analysis of gender jokes. If you wish to participate in the research described in the first proposal then re-write this proposal indicating how you intend to contribute to this particular research. The second proposal is not on-going research, but gives you an idea of what can be done. If you wish to design your own research, follow the format of either proposal. Please follow the format given for your research proposal and in addition a 1-2 pp. critical analysis of a scholarly article (not from Dines and Humez) that might be useful to you in your research.

Research Proposal 1

Proposal Author: Eleanor A. Hubbard

Proposal Title: "That's Not Funny!": Gender Jokes and the Social Construction of Gender.

Proposal Abstract: Gender jokes are jokes which use gender stereotypes to assert the superiority of one gender over another. Using a gender perspective, I intend to investigate the social consequences of gender jokes. Some of the questions guiding my research are: For what purposes do women and men tell jokes about each other? Does the purpose change due to the tellers' gender and other social characteristics? What is the role of the setting in telling gender jokes? Are gender jokes a form of social control? I will be using grounded research methodology: gathering gender jokes by observing and participating in setting in which gender jokes are told, coding them for analysis, and reviewing the literature on the role of humor in a society, and writing a final research report.

Proposal Timeline:

- data collection--
- reviewing the literature-
- data analysis--
- writing the report--

Research Proposal 2

Proposal Title: Roseanne's Influence on the Television Sitcom

Proposal Abstract: I intend to trace the influence of Roseanne (aka Roseanne Barr, Roseanne Arnold) on the Sitcom. It is my assumption that her sitcom is unique in American television history in that lower class life is portrayed more faithfully than on prior sitcoms and its humor emerges from family life that more closely parallels contemporary American family life than has been previously represented. I will be reviewing the relevant sociological and cultural studies literature, taping and viewing as many episodes of her show as possible, and doing a textual analysis of the show. Since it is difficult to separate Roseanne's personality from her show, I will also be critiquing the media persona which she has created.

Proposal Timeline

- data collection--
- reviewing the literature-
- data analysis--
- writing the report--

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

Due 9/7

In order for me to tailor this class to the needs of the students and to teach a particular group of students well, please complete the following information. I appreciate your cooperation.

1. Name
2. ID Number
3. Email Address
4. Phone Number
5. A photocopy of your University Photo ID (on this form please).
6. Please write a paragraph about yourself with information you think would help me know you better and provide you with good instruction.