American Studies Center, University of Warsaw
Sociological Perspectives on Contemporary American Culture

2010-2011

Instructor: Dr. Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow
Date and Time: Every Other Sunday, 13:30 – 15:45
Place: American Studies Center, Al. Niepodległości 22, Room 311
Seminar Website: http://sociologyofculture.wordpress.com/
Instructor’s Email: jdubrow2000@yahoo.com

Seminar Description

This seminar focuses on cultural aspects of contemporary American society viewed from a sociological perspective. Topics that reflect instructor interests include: Sociological Conceptions of Culture; Social and Political Events of September 11, 2001; American Inequality - Race and Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality, Social Class, the American Elite, and Intersectionality; American Political Culture; Sport and Society; and Religion and Community. M.A. theses concerning these and related topics are welcome, as are interdisciplinary approaches in theory and methods. While sociological inquiries may take many forms, I encourage M.A. students to ask interesting and important research questions situated in social theory and use appropriate methods.

Seminar Objectives

The seminar objectives are:

(a) Introduce students to sociological perspectives on contemporary American culture;
(b) Provide students with an intellectually stimulating environment in which they can freely discuss and debate the key ideas in sociology of American culture and their MA thesis topic;
(c) Enhance student competency in research methods needed for conducting an MA thesis;
(d) Guide students to produce a high-quality MA thesis.

Seminar Structure

First Semester:

In the first hour, the instructor will present basic issues in American studies and sociology as they relate to culture. In the second hour, the instructor will present basic issues in sociological research methodology. Throughout, students are encouraged to discuss with the class their issues relating to the development of their MA prospectus. At the end of the semester, students are expected to have written a detailed MA thesis prospectus, including the first draft of the literature review.

Second Semester:

We will begin individualized consultations on the MA thesis. Each class period, each student will meet with the instructor for a one-on-one discussion regarding the progress of their thesis. At the end of the semester, students are expected to have written the substantive part of their MA thesis.

Third Semester:

We will continue individualized consultations on the MA thesis. Every time class is scheduled, the instructor will schedule meetings with students based on particular issues. At the end of the semester, students are expected to have completed their MA thesis and prepare for the MA exam.
Evaluation

Grades are based on 20% class participation, 10% final presentation of the MA thesis prospectus, 70% on MA thesis prospectus and first chapter.

Class Participation. Students are expected to discuss assigned readings on the due date and to participate in in-class projects. Each class, some students will be designated as discussion leaders, whose job is to provide a short summary of required readings and at least one discussion question stemming from these readings. These are not written assignments (i.e., they do not have to be submitted in written form) but the oral presentation must reflect the discussion leaders’ scrupulous preparation based on the readings. Students are also required to be actively engaged in developing and revising their MA prospectus and first chapter. Students are required to be able to deliver short presentations on their progress and problems, as appropriate.

Final Presentation. Students will be allotted 10 minutes to formally present their completed MA prospectus to the class, including the fielding of questions. For each presentation, along with the instructor, two students will be assigned to critique the written MA prospectus and first chapter.

MA Thesis Prospectus. Students are to develop an MA thesis prospectus. Details will be explained in class.

Course Outline and Readings

Readings are available in the ASC library. Students are expected to have read and be prepared to discuss the readings on the date they are assigned.

Feb. 28
Topics: Introduction to the seminar. What is an MA thesis supposed to be?
Readings: None.

March 7
Topics: What is American studies? What is sociology? What is the sociology of culture? What is the relationship between American studies and sociology? Basic research methods: definitions, conceptualization and measurement.
Readings:

March 21
Topics: Basic concepts in social inequality. Race and racial inequality in America. What is theory?
Readings:
**April 11**  

*Readings*:  

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**April 25**  

*Readings*:  

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**May 16**  

*Readings*:  


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**May 30**  

*Readings*:  

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**June 13**  

*Readings*:  

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**MA Thesis Prospectus due June 20, 2010.**
Supplemental Readings

The following is a list of supplemental readings. These readings are not required, but suggested.


