

SOS4510 – Cultural Sociology

Course content

The course gives a thorough introduction to central theories and empirical research areas belonging to the sociology of culture.

The course plan is divided in three clusters, each of which is meant to enter the matrix of culture, politics and participation from a different perspective.

1. The course investigates the very concept of culture and the different ways it has been theorized and defined. What *is* culture in the first place? Is it meaning, signs and symbols? Art or "high" culture? Forms of language and communication? Does it include the everyday? Popular culture? The emotions? The body?
2. The course investigates political themes and critical potential in relation to subculture, in popular culture, in art and in our love lives and sexualities. How to understand the political in relation to youth subcultures? Has contemporary youth become depoliticized? Should a sociology of culture always be "critical" and "political" – and in which sense? How to understand current youth – hipster – culture? In what sense is 'hipster irony' critical or political? Or is it only art – contrary to popular culture or "cultural industrial" forms – which carries an emancipative potential? How does new cultural tastes mirror inequalities? Or are the usual cleavages between "high" and "low" culture about to disappear? How does the way we consume culture and art change historically? What is taste anyway and how should it be understood? What role does new social media play in culture? How do they change our love life and our everyday interaction?
3. The course investigates the aspect of collectivity and participation as an important component to cultural phenomena. What does it really mean to have the feeling of participating in something cultural? What role does collective aspect play in subcultures and on the internet? What role does the affective and bodily play in our cultural and political life?

Learning objectives

Knowledge

The student will gain an introduction to the main empirical themes belonging to the sociology of culture: art and popular culture, emotional and affective culture, the imprint on culture of new (social) media, current developments in youth culture and art, - these are just some of the themes we will touch upon.

Theoretical skills

The student will learn to creatively theorize and analyse cultural phenomena on the basis of 'classic' and contemporary cultural theories: new and old sociologies of art, theories about the artwork and how to interpret it sociologically, new developments in theories of taste and distinction, 'critical theory' and the 'Birmingham school', theories about youth subculture, rituals and collectivity, theories about ritual, collectivity and affects, and theories about the increasing role of media in our cultural and emotional lives.

General competences

The course will provide the student with a broad and critical understanding of ongoing cultural transformations and tendencies and with competences, tools and knowledge for developing proper perspectives and analyses.

The student will achieve valuable competencies ~~of indispensable~~ for a future occupation in the cultural sector, public or private, or and for working in culturally oriented a number of cultural research

university institutions. The student will also gain competencies ~~in planning and event organization, and~~ on a more general level, into important tendencies and development in contemporary Western culture at large. Finally, learning to analyse concrete empirical phenomena on the basis of complex theories also, also contributes to the students overall ability to overview and analyse complex problems, to implement sociological perspectives on diverse situations and to enrich the sociological imagination and creativity of the student.