EDL 282: CULTURAL STUDIES, POWER, and education

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performance
LECTURES

Introduction to EDL1, EDL 282, Cultural Studies, & Culture
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INTRODUCTION TO EDL1, EDL 282, CULTURAL STUDIES, & CULTURE

Welcome to the EDL1 thematic sequence "Cultural Studies and Public Life." Because the first-tier courses in this thematic sequences are located in different departments and provide quite different and often minimal introductions to the field of Cultural Studies, this is in many ways your first course that is completely dedicated to the thematic sequence. Most of you probably took EDL 204: Sociocultural Studies in Education as your first-tier course. In that course Cultural Studies is combined with the Social Foundations of Education in a way that does not distinguish between them even though there is quite a bit of difference between the two fields. This course is the one course that is required of all students in the thematic sequence and its purpose is to introduce you to the basic theories and concepts of Cultural Studies. Please understand that this course is not designed as a "professional education" course but as a liberal education course in Cultural Studies. To the extent that we will center on education, we will be using the broadest understanding of education. That is, the field of Cultural Studies is interested in all educative aspects of society. This includes schools, but it also includes the media, youth services, governmental bodies, popular culture and any other aspect of society through which we "learn" who we are, or who they are, or how the world works. In other words, this course is about schooling only incidentally. Its purpose is to help provide a "liberal education" about life in general, not a "professional education" about the world of schools. Hopefully you will find this course of use to you whatever profession you may choose in your future including teaching school. But its purpose is to help you learn more about your self, your society, and your world so that you may find it a more interesting place and (more importantly given the title of this sequence) so that you will be more able and willing to play your part in the public life of this nation outside, as well as inside, your professional life.

Cultural Studies as a Field

Before we actually start to look at the theories and concepts of the field of Cultural Studies, it might be useful to spend some time talking about Cultural Studies as a field. One thing to understand at the outset. While scholars in the field of Cultural Studies study culture, not everyone who studies culture is in the field of Cultural Studies. In fact, few are. Cultural Studies is a young, though rapidly growing, interdisciplinary field of study. It draws on the work of sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, historians, literary critics, film critics, drama critics, art critics, and philosophers. It studies people in everyday life that includes the study of popular culture as well as "high culture." Its focus is on the complex cultures of contemporary industrialized societies. Besides trying to understand these cultures and how culture works, scholars in Cultural Studies are overt in their commitment to the political goals of progressive democracy—a democracy in which more people play an active part in their everyday lives. These scholars believe that our society today is not as democratic, as equitable, as it can and should be. While the field of Cultural Studies is "progressive" in its politics, it is not dogmatic in its politics. It is a field of study that genuinely attempts to understand the very complex struggles and forces that come to make up our contemporary life and to use these understandings to work for a more democratic world.

With its focus on contemporary culture and its commitment to democratic politics, there may be no other field of study that is likely to be as closely
connected to your everyday life than that of Cultural Studies. As you progress through this course, I expect that you will begin to look at your own life and that of those around you in a very different light. How you decide (if you decide) to act on your new understandings will vary from person to person, but I fully anticipate that the way you see your world today will be dramatically altered by the end of this semester. For some that may mean little more than a deepening understanding of why you believe as you do now. For others it may mean some important rethinking of what it is that you believe and, more importantly, what you are willing to publicly commit yourself to. I very much hope that you enjoy and have fun during this journey. This course is intended to be "enjoyed," though more like the "enjoyment" of the long distance runner than that of the Comedy Club audience.

The Concept of Culture

Let's begin your introduction to the concepts of Cultural Studies by looking at its central concept, "culture." The concept of "culture" has traditionally been a vague and confusing one. It is sometimes suggested that if we were to get a hundred and one scholars to tell us what they mean when they use the term "culture," we would likely get a hundred and one different explanations. (Perhaps as many as a hundred thirty, since many probably can't make up their mind what they mean when they use the term.) Given the variety of ways in which the term "culture" is used don't expect this course to give you the "correct" one. Instead what we will do is explore some of the variations of meaning given to the term "culture" and point to some of the ways in which those interested in Cultural Studies tend to prefer its use.

One good place to start is to point out that there are two broad ways in which the term "culture" is used: one way for social scientists such as anthropologists and sociologists and another way for those in the fine arts and humanities such as art historians and literary critics. Social scientists seem to use "culture" to refer to something that has to do with ordinary life of ordinary people whereas those in the humanities and fine arts seem to typically use the term to refer only to those products created by people of high education and status. Let us first look at the social sciences.

Culture in the Social Sciences

For many years anthropologists claimed to study culture while sociologists claimed to study society. But such a distinction has always been more myth than reality and today it is far from the truth. The historical distinction that was at one time captured in these two disciplines does, however, provide us with a useful starting place for our discussion. What is the difference between "culture" and "society"? In the modern world of social science this distinction refers to two distinct aspects of human association. In this modern usage, society refers to that aspect of human association that is governed by certain structural constraints or social laws; whereas culture refers to those arbitrary patterns of behavior that one learns from ones fellow members of the group. In this way of thinking, the social follows certain social laws which govern or structure everyone's behavior whether they are aware of it or not and it does not vary from one culture to another (though different social situations may create different influences). Perhaps the first, "social law" suggested was Durkheim's finding that suicide rates were related not to incidence of mental illness, but to the degree of integration of a society: The more integrated a society, the lower the suicide rate; the less integrated a society the higher the suicide rate. By "integration" Durkheim meant the close-knittedness, community-connectedness of the people. Tribal societies are the most integrated communities we know and suicide is almost unheard of in tribal societies. Large modern, industrial societies, such as the United States, where there is little
social integration have the highest suicide rates. We also now know that suicide rates are closely related to things such as the unemployment rate and inflation. These "social laws" suggest that it makes little difference what a people believe in or what their cultural choices might be or what any particular individual's psychological state might be, the number of people who will take their lives next year is closely related to social things such as social integration, unemployment, and inflation. So when we are talking about things as being social, we are referring to things such as bureaucracy, power, social class, sex, race, group size, deviance, coercion, peace, war, social stability, social chaos, economic depressions, and social wealth: Things that seem to govern or constrain or organize our lives even if we are completely unaware of the way they work in our lives.

Traditionally, modern social scientists have thought of "culture" as the patterns of life that a particular group adopts. E. B. Tylor introduced the term "culture" in its modern anthropological sense in 1871. Tylor wrote, "Culture, or civilization, . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."*

While anthropologists and sociologists have some very deep divisions in what they mean by culture, they do seem to share certain ideas. One is that culture is something that is learned in society. Whereas things social affect us whether we have learned them or not, things cultural must be learned. So that while the amount of wealth our family possesses affects our life whether we realize it or not, our decision on how to express our family's wealth will depend on our culture. In the United States we have a culture that honors "wealth" but disdains "class," so that even extremely wealthy people try to present themselves as "middle-class," whereas in England, where "class" still has its privileges, people with little wealth by U. S. standards will present themselves as "upper class." In both nations, the wealthy exercise great privilege as a result of their social power, but how that social status is expressed varies as a result of culture.

But not everything that is learned is cultural. Much of what we learn is individual. We all have individual preferences. For example, some of us prefer chocolate ice-cream while others prefer vanilla and still others prefer Rocky Road. Which flavor we like is perhaps individual rather than cultural; though ice-cream itself may be seen as a very American cultural treat (a cultural marker left over from the time when the average American had access to a home freezer while most of the rest of the world had little or no refrigeration in the home.) Of course certain flavors might also be seen as cultural. For example, the flavor called Spumoni is associated with Italian culture and the Brown Cow with a particular period in American history (early to mid-twentieth century).

While social scientists have traditionally agreed that the world of humans can be divided into two spheres one called "social" and the other "cultural," they disagree about whether the relationship is one in which the social completely determines the cultural, or whether the cultural largely determines the social, or whether there is a dialectical relationship in which each partly affects the other. When talking about culture as sociologists and anthropologists do, we might think of it as "lived culture" in that what we mean by culture is the way in which ordinary people live their lives. Part of what Cultural Studies is about is the attempt to better understand the

relationship between social (particularly political) things and lived culture.

Culture in the Humanities & Fine Arts

Whereas sociologists and anthropologists consider culture in terms of lived culture; those in the fine arts and humanities traditionally think of culture in quite different terms. As you note in the above Tylor definition, the term "culture" derives from discourse connected to the idea of "civilization." The history of "culture" in the fine arts and humanities has remained closer to the concept of "civilization" than it has in the social sciences. Traditionally, in the humanities and fine arts, "culture" has been located only in the highest of human accomplishments. In this way of thinking, "culture" became associated with the great literature and art and music of an age. To go to school was to acquire "culture." To be "cultured" was to be graceful and knowledgeable about the arts and letters. It was the belief that the literature of the "best" authors and compositions of the "best" composers and the work of the "best" artists were to be considered culture; whereas the paperback books of the romance, science fiction, mystery and other "dime novels" and "pulp fiction"; the popular music of jazz, country, and rock and roll; and the mass art of the magazine covers and TV graphics were not considered culture.

The roots of Cultural Studies began in the 1950s in the United Kingdom as scholars in the humanities, particularly in the area of literature and media, began to treat the products of popular culture with the same respect as had been formerly reserved only for the work of the "great men" (and too frequently women were excluded from these canonical lists). Cultural Studies began to focus attention on the "low" instead of the "high" culture and on the mass and popular culture. Today, those in Cultural Studies see any distinction between high and low cultures as primarily one of class politics. Those of the elite cultures have the power to define "high culture" and so the forms and particular artifacts of approved products represents the political interests of the upper classes (or perhaps the upper-middle classes). The "low" cultures that ordinary people are attracted to reflect the politics of their particular interests.

At first, those in the area of Cultural Studies focused on the conservative capitalist ideologies that were imbedded in mass culture—the corporately produced, mass distributed culture such as magazines, books, movies, television, and records. But as postmodern ideas have begun to influence those in the field of Cultural Studies, we find more and more interest in not only the ideology presented to the consumer, but in the way in which these cultural artifacts are read and used by ordinary people. One of the reasons there is so much interest in youth subcultures is that these youth groups seem to be willing and able to break the rules of culture. They seem able to appropriate items that appear to be imbedded with one status quo ideological meaning and turn them to their own use as resistance to the standard, status quo orientation. The field of Cultural Studies has come to understand culture, not as a mere tool of the social elite to control the masses, but as a site of multiple political struggles. By studying rock and roll, country music, movies, television and other areas of mass expression, those in Cultural Studies feel that they can chart the way in which power and politics is played out in ordinary life.

What we have is two ways of thinking about culture: one that focuses on lived culture and the other that focuses on the products produced by people. One is a social science way of thinking about culture and the other is a humanities or fine arts approach. The field of Cultural Studies has come to believe that these two different ways of thinking about culture are really two sides of the same coin. They have come to believe that by studying only the lived culture without considering the products of our lives is to be incomplete whereas the studying of the
products outside of the lived culture of those who use those products is just as incomplete. The field of Cultural Studies has developed specifically to try and bring these two ways of thinking about culture together. One way to think of this is to understand culture as a production that includes a product and a process and a producer and a consumer (or user). Richard Johnson, one of the former directors of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England, has suggested that we think of cultural production as a circle of interconnecting parts.

At the top and bottom of this circle we have the two forms of culture described in the preceding paragraphs. At the bottom we have the "lived culture" that is associated with anthropology and sociology and at the top we have the "products as cultural productions" that is associated with the fine arts and humanities. On the left and right of this circle, we have processes that interconnect the two types of cultures. On the left we have the process of production while on the right we have the process of consumption or use. What Johnson's concept of cultural production suggests is that whenever we consider any aspect of culture, it should always be understood to be in a context of interconnecting circles of culture. So that if we were to take a particular issue of Seventeen magazine as an example of a cultural production, we would need to locate it within the whole circle to have a full cultural understanding of the magazine. We would need to investigate the politics and economics and history of the production of the magazine as a successful enterprise as well as the production of this particular issue. We would also need to study the way in which the readers of the magazine made sense out of what they read. How do they give meaning to it? How does it affect their lives? Of course, to understand the processes of production and consumption (or use), we must understand the lived cultures that are related to the two processes. If we are to better understand the production process, we need to understand the way in which our society organizes culture. For one thing, we need to recognize the way in which we construct the idea of the "teen" and particularly the "teenage girl." We need to understand that if our teenagers did not have surplus income to spend, we would not likely see the kind of magazine that we do: that is, one which is geared toward selling teenage girls the products found advertised on its pages. One study of Seventeen has shown that it has changed its approach to sexuality at least three times in its history. Studies of MTV suggest that this cable television channel changes every couple of years in order to adjust to the changing target market. On the other hand, what teenage girls see in Seventeen or MTV may change from generation to generation and from region to region and from income group to income group and from race to race. In other words, depending on how particular groups of these young women are living their lives depends on whether they like or dislike Seventeen or MTV or whether they pay any attention at all. Understanding culture as occurring within Johnson's cultural circle makes for a very complex and flexible understanding of culture. Few in the field of Cultural Studies actually use Johnson's circle as a template for the study of a cultural production (for an excellent exception see "Object as Image: the Italian Scooter Cycle" in Dick...
Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*. Routledge: London, 1988; however, most who work in the field have some sense of the interconnections that Johnson wants us to pay attention to. It may not be necessary in every article or even book to formally address every point on the circle, but it is necessary as a reader to keep in mind where on that circle any particular piece of work might be located and where on that circle you may be focused at any particular time while engaged in cultural analysis.

Recently Stuart Hall, another former director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and his colleagues at the Open University in England have expanded Johnson’s Circle of Culture into what they call the Circuit of Culture. This circuit has 5 points on the circle: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. Their Open University Press book series attempts to look at Cultural Studies through the lens of the Circuit of Culture. The series includes a book on each of the 5 points as well as an introductory book that looks at the Sony Walkman as a cultural production from each of the five points. Henry Giroux has written a book on the Disney company (*The Mouse that Roared*) which uses Hall’s Circuit of Culture as an organizing principle.

While Stuart Hall’s series is designed to stress the need to look at all five points on the Circuit of Culture, most instructors of courses in Cultural Studies seem to rely on only one of those volumes: *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* edited by Stuart Hall. That many instructors of Cultural Studies use only one of these six books as the major text in a Cultural Studies course suggests that despite the attempt by the field of Cultural Studies to bring integration to the various aspects of culture, most of the time the field tends to focus on only one aspect of it—that part that deals with "representation." "Representation" refers to the part of the circuit that Johnson called "text." In this course I will tend to use the term "cultural production" as the broad term for this same thing. In each case, what we are focusing on are the products of culture that have embedded within them the cultural politics and conflicts of our world. The other parts of Hall’s circuit or Johnson’s circle are much less frequently addressed though they are never entirely forgotten. In this course, we too will spend an inordinate amount of time focused on analyzing cultural representations (or as I shall typically refer to them "cultural productions"). We will do so not so much because the study of representation is the most important part of the field, but because it is here where the approach to the study of culture found in the field of Cultural Studies is particularly unique. As such we will begin with an examination of language.
LECTURE #1: THE SIGN, LANGUAGE, AGENCY, AND THE SOCIAL SELF

One characteristic of human societies is that we give meaning to our world. We name our world. The biblical reference to “Adam,” the “first human,” as the “name giver” is not without sociological support. To name our world is to give meaning to it.

While humans form societies, humans are not the only animals to do so. Wolves, chimpanzees, and baboons are just some of the nonhuman animals that form social groups. In some ways human groups and other animal groups are very much alike. For example, they all involve communication around signals of care, anger, deference, dominance, aggression, play, fear, sexuality, protection, parenthood, mutual support, food, grief and other such things. What makes human societies different from other animal societies is that our communication signals involve signs. While I'll define a sign more formally in lecture #3, for now we can consider a sign to be a gesture that is able to point to things which are not present. Signs are able to invoke a response from others as if the referent of the sign were present. Chimps have various signals that refer to specific things such as a threat signal, a fear signal, and a submission signal, but they are unable to use these signals in a conversation that invokes their referents outside of time and place. For example, if a clan of chimps were foraging for food one afternoon when a cheetah approached and one of the chimps gave the danger signal as a warning, at the sound of the signal all of the chimps would run off or hide. The signal communicates danger and the animals take evasive action. But later that night while settling down to rest, we would be surprised if one of the chimps turned to another and said, "Remember earlier today, when we were foraging for food and we faced the danger of the cheetah." Basically all that would happen would be that when the chimp gave the signal for danger, all of the others would repeat their earlier performance and run away or hide because the gesture for danger means "Danger! Now!" The signal can't be given to invoke the memory of something in the past.

On the other hand, humans are capable of using signs to make the communication of basic animal signals abstract and, hence, removed from time and place and, ultimately, making communications much more complex. While humans and other social animals may communicate about the same things, because humans use signs, rather then just signals, we are able to make our communications about such things more complex and complicated. (And its a good thing too, because if we couldn't make our discussions of things such as food, aggression, sexuality, play, and caring more complicated, there would be no need for college, let alone thematic sequences!)

Traditional Language Theory

Typically, language scholars have assumed that language is primarily a communication device through which individuals relay to other individuals ideas they hold independently in their own mind. That is to say, traditionally people have believed that language works through a process where one person gets a concept or idea in his/her mind which s/he then attaches to a word (or a series of words). This word is then externalized (spoken or written) and is, in turn, heard or seen by someone else who associates that word with a concept in his/her own mind. If the speaker is clear and the two are speaking the same language then the listener is able to conjure up in his/her mind the same concept or idea held by the speaker.
Therefore, according to traditional language theory, the primary purpose of language in social action is to communicate independently held ideas from one person to another.

Vygotskian Language Theory

Contemporary language theorists reject this traditional conception of language. Instead they argue that language helps construct the concepts and ideas in the first place. That is, language doesn't merely communicate independently held ideas from one individual to another; language actually plays a role in the construction of the idea in the mind. One of the first scholars to recognize and provide empirical proof for this point was Lev Vygotsky.

Vygotsky argued that language is a social activity from the start. When a child learns language, s/he internalizes a social construction of the world. Vygotsky might have explained it this way: Imagine a hungry 13-month old child who spies a bottle of milk on the other side of the blanket she is sitting on. Seeing that bottle, she reaches out with both hands to try to grasp the bottle. At the same time her whole body shakes with effort and she accompanies the grasping with vocalizations—grunts and other sounds. What happens? An adult caretaker attracted by the sound and the movements figures out what the child wants and picks up the bottle and gives it to the child while saying "bottle" in the sweet, sing-song voice adults tend to use with children. After several similar experiences, the child comes to realize that she doesn't actually have to go get the bottle whenever it appears on her horizon. If she just makes the sounds and physical gestures, someone else will bring her the bottle. And after a while she learns how to streamline or abbreviate those gestures into patterned gestures. Perhaps the grunts begin to mimic the adult's vocalization and the child begins to say something that sounds like "ba-al." Of course, when the child says "ba-al" she doesn't mean literally "bottle." What she means is "Hey! I'm hungry! You! Get over here and bring me that bottle of milk!" The point here is that the learning of language, right from the beginning, is a social act. The child learns language only as part of social communication. This suggests that language is not related primarily to a particular concept in the independent mind of an autonomous individual but to the activity of social relations. It is not a communication device for relating thoughts already held in mind to others but an aspect of social activity which finds its meaning in the social encounter itself.

Let me explain why this is important by explaining Vygotsky's criticism of Piaget's interpretation of "egocentric talk." "Egocentric talk" is the term given to a phenomenon found when children ages 3 to 5 meet together in a play situation such as kindergarten. Whenever children of
this age find themselves in groups of other children their talking increases even though their play is primarily side-by-side play. That is to say that even though children of this age play independently while next to each other, their talking increases. Now it is true that their talk is not particularly effective in creating dialogue, it is more like they are talking out loud to themselves. Piaget used this "egocentric talk" as evidence of a transition stage between "infancy" when, he believed, individuals are caught up in their own conceptualization of the world and "adulthood" when people become socially oriented. Egocentric talk, according to Piaget, is that stage when children are accommodating their own unique conceptualizations to those of the people around them. This early talk, found as children play next to each other, is their nascent attempts to engage others in conversation.

Vygotsky rejected this interpretation. Vygotsky conducted a series of experiments which showed that children of this age increase their talking whenever they are trying to solve problems. That is, when faced with a problem to solve, children ages 3 to 5 talk out loud to themselves as an aid in solving the problem. The egocentric talk found in children's side-by-side play, Vygotsky argued, is not evidence of nascent attempts of isolated individuals learning how to accommodate to the social, but of social beings trying to solve problems. *Egocentric talk is not the middle stage of transition as one moves from an egocentric individual to a social adult, but the middle stage of transition as one moves from a social child to an individualized adult.* Children stop exhibiting egocentric talk when they are five or six not because they have developed social skills for appropriate conversation, but because they internalize their talk. They still talk to themselves when thinking, but they learn to do so without actually saying it out loud. We all talk to ourselves in the quiet of our own minds. Try to think about something without "inner speech." It is not easy. Vygotsky does not argue that all thought is through inner speech, but certainly most is.*

If we conduct our thinking about the world through language, than our understanding of the world is constrained and ordered by the language we speak. Because we speak in the English of the late 20th century United States, there are certain things that are difficult for us to think about because we don't have the language with which to think them. Anyone who learns a foreign language well, knows that there are some things that are much easier to say in one language than in another. One simple example. In English we get caught by the word "love." We actually use the same word to mean some very different things. We say that we love our mother or our brother, that we love our friends, and that we love our lover. We even love our lover in different ways. Sometimes when we tell our lover "I love you," we are referring to a deep emotional bond of respect and loyalty and appreciation. At other times we are referring to lust and desire. Yet for all these different meanings we use the same word. This can get us into trouble when we say to someone that we love him or her. Exactly what do we mean? In other languages they use more then one word to represent differing meanings. For example, in Spanish when one wishes to express one's love for a friend or family member, it is expressed through the phrase "te ámo." However if in the passion of romance, one wishes to

*Einstein, for example, claimed that all of his great theoretical discoveries were first conceived through imagery. He first "saw" his theories and then had to translate them into mathematics (which he needed help with because he wasn't a particularly strong mathematician) and then translated them into words. For example, his well known assertion that the speed of light is the universal constant came to him as he was riding a tram. He happened to be watching a clock on a tower when it occurred to him that if he could ride a light beam away from the clock that time would stand still, because the clock would always read the same time as long as he were riding the light beam.
express love to one's lover, it is expressed through the phrase "te quiéro" (literally meaning "I want you"). No confusion there! The point is not that we can not conceive of things that our language does not name, but that it is very difficult to do so, and even if we can think something that can not be expressed through our language, it is even more difficult to communicate that idea to someone else without a language to do so. In other words, thought is actually formed through language as much as language represents thought. We are, therefore, limited and constrained by our culture. We are acting, at least in part, as sociocultural beings.

**Socialization**

Through language we internalize the rules and orderings of our social groups. Through language, we bring our cultures inside of our body. This is one way to understand the processes of socialization and enculturation. Whenever we think about our world, whenever we try to understand what is going on around us, whenever we assume the world to be a particular way instead of another way, we do so through a particular language and, therefore, through a particular sociocultural orientation. Even when we are alone thinking our own thoughts, we are constrained by the sociocultural. And yet, we come to confuse our thinking-in-language for autonomous thinking of the world. We act as if we are completely autonomous, while we are really locked in a social world.

**Autonomy and Agency**

One characteristic of the culture of the United States is an extreme commitment to the idea of the individual. Forged partly through the political liberal philosophy that formed the thinking of those who founded our nation as well as partly through the capitalism that marks our economy and also through the characteristics needed by immigrants to leave their native lands and family to forge a new life in a new world, we, as a people, have placed "individualism" at the pinnacle of our world-view. While other national cultures respect the individual, none places so much emphasis on the idea of an autonomous individual as that of the United States. Autonomy is the belief that individuals have the capacity and the moral duty to think things through for themselves—indeed of ones culture and ones friends and associates. In the concept of autonomy there is the assumption that individuals have the capacity to separate themselves from their social and cultural bonds to think through any issue rationally and objectively. But as contemporary language theory shows, to do so would require people to think outside of language and this is an extremely difficult thing to do. (Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that even when we think outside of language, we are influenced by cultural patterns that we might call "visual languages" and "music languages" and such.) Even when we think we are thinking as an autonomous individual, we are, at the very least, doing so in a language which categorizes, organizes, and norms our world in such a way as to create the category "autonomous individual" and, therefore, we are not acting autonomously.

Some use the above insight to suggest, therefore, that we are all slaves to our social-cultural world, unable to make any but the most minimal of choices. This view, however, seems to be as inaccurate as the belief that we can make autonomous decisions. While our thinking is constrained by the sociocultural world of which we are a part, we are able to make individual choices. The capacity to make choices from a limited range of alternatives presented to us by our sociocultural surroundings is sometimes referred to as agency. While we may not be autonomous individuals, we are agents in our world. While we may not be able to act independently of our culture, we are able to make unique combinations of our limited choices which helps make unique individuals
Mead's Social Self

George Herbert Mead attempted to explain the "Self" in a manner consistent with the idea of agency rather than autonomy. He suggested that we can think of the "Self" as having two intertwining parts. One part he referred to as the "I" and the other part he called the "me." The "I" part of the "Self" is that unique part of all people that initiates and directs action. It is the part that suggests the individual acts upon her/his world (hence the subjective case of the first-person singular pronoun "I"). The "me" is that part of the "Self" that is an internalized understanding of the relationship between positions in the broader society. It is the part that suggests the individual has been acted upon (hence the objective case of the first-person singular pronoun "me"). One of the most important aspects of Mead's conceptualization of the "Self" is that while made up of both an "I" and a "me," the smallest unit of analysis is always the "Self." That is to say, that while we can recognize that a Self is made of two parts, when examining any particular Self, we can never distinguish the "I" from the "Me." Whenever speaking of individuals, we must always conceive of them as a "Social Self" and never as an "I" or a "me." So that all individuals are at the same time both a unique and a socialized individual. Every individual is always partly independent of and partly embedded in culture. When we construct a sense of "Self" a sense of who we are, we must recognize that we are always partly a unique core being and partly a construction of our society and that these two parts can never be isolated or separated from each other. In other words, we can never know the "I." We can never know something that might be called the "true self." Our self is always a "Social Self."

Conclusion

By organizing our world through signs, humans are able to abstract and complicate the world. We are also able to socialize and enculturate our young into our particular cultural view of the world. And, in doing so, we provide them with a sense of social organization and sense of Self. While we are definitely agents in our world able to make choices and decisions, we are not fully autonomous in the sense that we can completely separate ourselves from the social and cultural worlds within which we live. We are social beings to the core and our ability to separate out the social from some autonomous individual is simply not possible. We must recognize that all people, our own Self included, understand their world through culture. That all people use the cultural and social categories available to them to make sense of the world they inhabit.

Exercise #1

When trying to understand our own Self one thing we can do is to draw a circle graph of the various positions we associate with and the importance of each position in our lives. This approach allows us to describe Self in a way that recognizes both the social and the unique individual within us. For example, imagine two women who are both 23 years old from Finneytown. Both come from Irish-American families work as sales representatives for a major corporation. Both are mothers, wives, recent graduates of Miami University and live the life-style that is sometimes referred to as "young professionals." According to Mead's theory of Social Self, their understanding of Self would partly depend on their own understanding of how each of these positions relates to each other and to other possible positions available in the society. One would expect that they have, at least some, different understandings of these relationships. They would also place different importance on these categories in their own constructions of Self. While I can't think of a way to graph their differing understandings of the relationship among positions, we can graph the differing importance each places on these categories. Here is an example of what the differing importance might look like when graphed.
As you can see, both women are located in nearly the same social positions and yet each constructs their Self differently. Each is, at one and the same time, a social and a unique Self. Your assignment is to list some of the social categories that you would place yourself into and then to distribute them in the form of a graph. You can draw this freehand or use a computer.*

* If you wish to use a computer but don't have a graphing program on your own computer, you should be able to find graphing software on a computer in one of Miami’s labs. If you don’t know how to use the graphing software, one of the lab assistants will be able to show you how. It’s really pretty simple.
LECTURE #2: IDENTITY

While the "Self" is always partially constructed through sign systems (especially language), there is an aspect of Self (the "I" in Mead's terms) that can't be named and hence is outside of any sign system. On the other hand, "identity" is almost entirely located in sign systems. Identity might be thought of as the way we present our "Self" to others and to ourselves through socially defined categories. In other words, identity might be thought of as the way we make meaning of our Self. If the Self is a socially constructed sense of one's own being, than identity may be that link between the Self and specific social categories. All specific social categories such as teacher, father, woman, or Jew are positioned in specific discursive practices. Many contemporary scholars, particularly those influenced by postmodern ideas, have stopped talking about a "Self" at all and, instead, have substituted the concept of "identity." Since the concept of a "Self" implies an entity that exists outside of meaning-making (it exists even if we don't give it meaning) and since postmodernists tend to emphasize the reality of the world as we give it meaning, it does not seem to make sense to talk of both a "Self" and an "identity." Since the concept of a "Self" implies an entity that exists outside of meaning-making (it exists even if we don't give it meaning) and since postmodernists tend to emphasize the reality of the world as we give it meaning, it does not seem to make sense to talk of both a "Self" and an "identity." For this reason, much contemporary scholarship only addresses identity.

Discursive practices is a term introduced by the French social historian Michel Foucault and suggests that all social action is located, at one and the same time, in both discourses and practices. So that we might speak of European (or Western) discursive practices or of Anglo-American discursive practices, or of educational discursive practices, or of popular discursive practices, or of the discursive practices of capitalism, or the discursive practices of patriarchy. The discourse part of discursive practices might be understood as the language, themes, myths, grammars, texts, performances, etc. of any particular long term "conversation." It refers to the fact that any situation in which people having addressed each other verbally (or through cultural productions such as articles, books, movies, or music) develop certain specialized words (i.e., jargon), recurring themes, underlying myths, structuring grammars, and canonical texts (texts which are recognized by the leading figures of that conversation as the most important and are, therefore, frequently referenced). The "practices" part of discursive practices refers to the institutionalized human relationships and technologies that exist at any particular time for any particular people. For example, the practice of schooling in contemporary America includes such things as massing children by age cohort in a building with rooms that hold about 30 people under the surveillance of a nonrelated adult and separated from the ordinary activities of the rest of the community. In the field of Cultural Studies you will frequently find authors using the term "discourse" instead of "discursive practices," usually, however, when they say "discourse" they mean "discursive practices" because discourses and practices are so intertwined that it is difficult to know where one begins and the other ends. In fact, any discourse can be practiced and any practice is discourse made concrete. Therefore, in this course it will not be important to be able to distinguish a "discourse" from a "practice" but only to be able to characterize different aspects of "discursive practices."

What do we mean, then, when we say that all social categories are positioned in specific discursive practices. One thing that it means is that when we construct our own identity out of socially given discursive categories, we are limited by the availability of categories. And since these categories have socially loaded meanings there may or may not be an exact match for our sense of Self. For example, what difference does it make if I
consider myself a "professor" or a "teacher"? Many people I know make a large distinction between those two categories reserving "teacher" for those who teach in elementary and secondary schools. Some of the teachers who are students in my graduate classes might suggest that I don't understand what it is like to be a "teacher" today because I am a "professor." And some of my colleagues in other university divisions never think of themselves as a "teacher"—an "instructor," yes; but a "teacher," no.

How do I construct an identity for myself given the different meanings associated with these terms? Am I a professor, a teacher, or an instructor? Of course, I am all three, but what does it mean when I present myself as one or other of these categories? What if I were to consider myself a "pedagogue" instead? Or, as some of my colleagues might suggest, a "cultural worker"? My point here is that when I give myself an identity, I must choose from among socially available (i.e., discursively available) categories. As a result, others position me through these categories and treat me accordingly. Do you treat a "professor" the same as a "teacher"? How about in comparison to an "instructor"? For many these terms' major differences are in the prestige associated with each term. For most, though not all, the term "professor" holds more prestige than either of the other two terms. To be a professor is socially more honored than being a teacher. The difference in prestige associated with such categories is generally a social recognition of differing positions of power.

This is a second important implication of our construction of identity from discursively available categories: When we take on an identity, we are positioned in a set of power relationships. When I accept the category of "professor" for my identity, I accept a position of social prestige that provides a greater access to power than that of "teacher." If nothing else, my salary is likely higher. On the other hand, it would be inappropriate to infer that it is the taking up of the category "professor" that gives me the position of power. More likely it is the position of power that allows me to take up the identity of "professor." The French have recently officially extended the title of "professor" to elementary teachers, so that students are now expected to refer to their fourth grade teacher as "professeur" not "instituteur" (which is the traditional title for elementary school teachers). French high school teachers have traditionally been called "professeur" and enjoyed a social prestige similar to university professors. The attempt to change the status of elementary teachers by using the same title as their more prestigious colleagues at the higher levels has not yet seemed to have provided them with the prestige normally associated with that term, but it is still early yet and as the use of the new term becomes more and more widespread perhaps the extra prestige will be extended to elementary teachers. Here is a situation in which elementary teachers have gained the political power to change the way they are addressed. It will be seen whether or not this results in a change in their informal social prestige.

I have been talking about categories of teaching, but what about other social categories that we use for the construction of identity. For example, in what ways are the discursive categories around race, gender, class, and sexuality inadequate for capturing our identities. When is a person "white" or "black"? Is being "Latino" the same as being "brown"? Is that a racial or an ethnic difference? What does it mean to be an Asian American? Should one be considered a Japanese American or a Japanese-American? What does the addition of the hyphen imply? What if my father is an Inuit and my mother "white"? What is the difference between referring to someone as "black" or as "African-American"? What is the difference between referring to a person as "white," "Caucasian," or "EuroAmerican"? What does it mean when we identify our self as a "woman" as contrasted to a "man"? What does it mean to be a "real woman" or a "real man"? What is the alternative? Are there
fake women or fake men? Today we make a big distinction among "heterosexuals," "homosexuals," and "bisexuals," but in the past these categories were not so hard and fast and did not have to be proclaimed to the world. When we are forced to tell the world "I am straight" or "I am gay" or "I am bi," it does not allow for the ambiguities that many people feel toward others especially during early adolescence. When we take up one of these discursively defined categories, we publicly proclaim that we are like the others in that category and not like those in the other categories. In so doing we may be making two very important errors. One is that we may ourselves not be as clear-cut in our understanding of Self as the categories suggest ("yes, I am male, but I'm not very aggressive" "yes, I am white, but we Muslims are not a prestigious social category in the U. S." "yes, I am gay, but I am a very religious, conservative Republican."). The second error is that we may, in fact, have much more in common with people in the other category than we do with those in our own (Steve Ray Vaughn, the "late and great" white blues guitarist used to say that he was a black man trapped in a white body and Albert King, the still great black bluesman, publicly proclaimed himself to be Steve Ray's "real" father though not his biological father.)

Besides the problems of meaning that results from taking up a discursive category, we also have the problem that results from the inequitable distribution of power associated with differing categories. In the United States more prestige is typically (though not always) associated with being white, male, middle-class (or upper-class), and straight. There are plenty of examples of individuals who have "passed" for members of other groups; typically this occurs when members of the less prestigious category pass as a member of the more prestigious category (as, Thomas Woodson—the son of Sallie Hemmings, a slave, and (purportedly) Thomas Jefferson—did when he lived as a white man). Given the way in which discursive categories bestow social power on some while removing it from others, helps us realize that identity categories are an area in which people are continuously engaged in a struggle around what these categories are to mean and how they are to be recognized.

The struggle around these categories can be seen in our culture. The way in which certain identity categories are positioned in our discursive practices and the way in which these positions are challenged and subverted is one of the things that cultural studies pays much attention to. For example, in the discursive practices of advertising, women have traditionally been positioned in a few relatively uncomplicated ways.

They are either caring and hardworking domestics/hostesses or they are thin and alluring sex objects for the male gaze or they are the complete woman (which
might be thought of as a combination of competent professional and sex object) or they are the wholesome, unflawed, and unflustered classic beauty in control of life. I'm sure that you might be able to name a couple of other pervasive "positions" for women found in advertising, but there has not been a large variety.

Nor have women been portrayed in more complex ways in other areas either. In U. S. history textbooks, except for a paragraph or two on the suffrage movement, women have traditionally been positioned as peripheral to the real history of the nation. They are mostly companions of important men. Of course, men are also positioned in those discursive practices, but most scholars argue that there is a wider variety of positions available for men especially more positions in which men are in charge and with the power. The way in which men are positioned in discursive practices informs a man's construction of identity (what it means to him to be a "man") as much as the way in which women are positioned in discursive practices informs a woman's construction of identity (what it means to her to be a "woman").

One other important point to consider is that we not only develop an identity through our connections with our own social categories but we develop an identity in distinction to other categories. In other words, how a woman "takes up" the idea of being a woman is drawn not only from the way in which women are positioned in discursive practices, but the way in which men are positioned and vice versa. So that what it means to be a "woman" depends, to a large extent, on what it means to be a "man." Signithia Fordham found that black high school students in an all black high school in the Washington, D. C. area constructed a sense of "being black" that was pitted against their construction of "whiteness." For these students certain markers of "whiteness" included things such as listening to classical music, dressing in particular ways, and learning the culture taught in schools. The result of this was that any black student who listened to classical music or dressed in the American mainstream style, or got good grades in school was not "black," but was, instead, "acting white." Cordeiro and Carspecken found the same thing with Latino students in Texas, though in that case the "deviant" students were not accused of acting "white" but of acting "Anglo." And Paul Willis found that working-class boys in Wolverhampton, England associated the characteristics of success in school as feminine and, hence, in order to maintain their masculine identity these "lads" resisted the education presented in school.*

For many years scholars have focused on how specific social categories are positioned in the publicly available discourses. They have spent a lot of time pointing out the inequities and shortcomings and hidden power, politics, and values of these positionings. This work is important, but one of the major contributions of those who work in the field of Cultural Studies is the recognition that just because specific social categories are positioned a particular way in these discursive practices doesn't mean that ordinary people "take up" these positions uncritically. If we construct our identity through discursive practices, then we must utilize some combination of the positions made available to us as we try to bring meaning to our lives. But Cultural Studies scholars have shown that ordinary people do not just take these positions as given. People do have a certain agency and, therefore, they have some ability to choose and to be creative in their use of

these positions. While Cultural Studies scholars do not go so far as to say people are free to create anything they wish for their identities, they do argue that people can pick and choose from among the variety of things available to them. John Clarke, an early Cultural Studies theorist, has called this practice "bricolage.

**Bricolage** is a term first used in cultural theory by the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss. In French the term means "bricklaying" or "masonry" and is used by Clarke to suggest that in the construction of identity, we operate like a bricklayer/mason (bricoleur). That is, we can build a wall of bricks or stones in any direction and pattern we wish, but we are limited by the material we have on hand at the time. It suggests that while we have a certain freedom to be creative; we are limited in our creativity by the discursive practices within which we live. We have some choices, but we are not fully autonomous.

So far we have been talking of identity as if it is only something that we take up for our own Self. But identity can also be something that we bestow upon others. In other words, while we participate in the construction of our own identity, we also participate in the construction of social identity for others. Just as we “take up” positions in the construction of our own identity, we can be thought of as placing positions gathered from discursive practices upon others. In this way we create an identity for "Others"—those who are not part of "us." But just as our self-identity might be thought of as involving bricolage, so can the construction of the identity of "Others" be understood as involving bricolage. For example, American's construction of the social category "Iraqi" derives, in part, from the way in which Iraqis have been presented in the media and, particularly, in their role as enemies in a recent war. And in the last year the social category "Serb" has been reconstructed in the same manner.

**Conclusion**

Identity, like Self, results from individuals in interaction with their social world. Both identity and Self intertwine the unique individual with the social so that it is simply not possible to know where one starts and the other ends. While individuals have some agency in their construction of Self and identity, they are also positioned through discursive practices which both reflect and bestow power on some while removing it from others. As agents, or as bricoleurs, all of us are engaged in a process of creative, but also restricted, construction of our Self and our identity as well as others and their social identity. It is a process that can be done consciously and critically or one that can be done unconsciously and uncritically. Part of the project of Cultural Studies is to try and bring more consciousness and critical awareness to the process.

**Exercise #2**

Take a look at the social categories you included on your pie graph from Exercise 1. (1) Select one of those categories and (2) select a specific cultural production (i.e., movie, newspaper article, advertisement, song, etc.) that in some way represents that category (includes something about one of the categories), then (3) Analyse some of the ways that category is positioned in the cultural production.
LECTURE #3: POWER AND CULTURE

In the introduction of these lectures I presented the traditional social science understanding of the difference between the social and the cultural. This traditional approach might be understood to be a "modern" and "structural" approach to understanding the sociocultural. Later in this course, you will be introduced to conceptions of the sociocultural which might be called "postmodern" and "poststructural," but for now it is important to understand the modern, structural conceptions.

Structuralist conceptions of power derive from the modern social sciences that developed at the end of the 19th century and monopolized the social sciences until the mid-nineteen-sixties and (though under challenge today) continue to dominate today. If you remember, in the introduction to these lectures the "cultural" was designated as that part of the human world that was learned from and shared with others. The "social" was that part of the human world that organized and influenced our lives whether or not we learned about it or even knew of its existence. Structuralism accepts this basic dualism and argues that the social "structures" the cultural. The social realm might be thought of as the structures around which the cultural must form. An analogy might be the relationship between the girders and beams of a building and the walls and facades placed around that frame. One can build the girders and beams to make a frame and then imagine many different walls and facades to close the structure in. You could build the walls of plaster and wood or of metal or of rough stone or polished marble. You can apply a facade of curly-cues or bright colors or flush sleek lines. By changing the material and look of the walls and by applying different facades, the building can look quite different. But while you can change the walls and facade, you must make them follow the form of the structure of the girders and beams. The real power of the building lies in the basic structure. You can't make a high-rise out of a bungalow structure. You can't make a fortress out of cabin structure. You will find in a later lecture that poststructuralists are a bit troubled by so clear a distinction between the structural social and the superstructural culture, but this dichotomy is central to understanding structuralism.

Structuralist's Understandings of Power

A structuralist understanding of power locates power in that part of social life that seems to exist outside of the control of individual actors. While individuals can act as agents in their own and in other's interests by utilizing existing power, they are not able to change power itself. In other words, individuals can harness power for their own ends, but can have only minimal effect on the basic sources of such power that lie at the structural level. While there are many different structural approaches to the study of society, some of the more influential in Cultural Studies come from a study of the basic economic, gender, and racial structures.

Marxism and Power. Marxism, as a social theory, suggests that the social world can be better understood if we recognize that much of what we accept as true at the cultural level results from the particular socioeconomic structures that organize the society. In Marxist theories the socioeconomic structures are called the "base" and the culture is called the "superstructure" ("super" meaning "on top of" or "above" as in superstratosphere). Marxism argues that in feudal times, Europe's culture was largely constructed to be congruent with a socioeconomic base that was centered around the ownership of land. This was because a feudal society's economy was based on land. There was little industry in feudal times and so wealth resulted
from the ownership of land. Modern times came about because of the development of trade and, later, industry. Colonialism, world trade, the rise of large commercial organizations eventually overcame land development as the source of great wealth. As a result, the power shifted from those who controlled great amounts of land (the aristocracy) to those who controlled great amounts of capital (the bourgeoisie or townsmen or capitalists). As the power shifted from the aristocracy to the capitalists so did the superstructure.

One of the most recognizable changes in the culture (i.e., the superstructure) was the shift from a monarchy to a democracy that reflected the shift of power away from the aristocracy to the capitalists. Another recognizable change was the discrediting of inherited position in favor of the "self-made man." The latter cultural ideal is, of course, stressed more in a young nation such as the United States which was born in modern times, then it is in an old nation such as England whose culture maintains more of the remnants of feudal times more strongly than we do. (Though exceptions such as Walt Disney continue to champion some of the values associated with feudalism such as the legitimacy of inherited privilege and the benefits of romantic chivalry.) From a Marxian understanding, society can always be understood better by recognizing that underneath all of the conflicts lies the most basic conflict of all: the struggle at the "base" between those who control the means of production and those who do not. In a feudal society that struggle lay primarily between the landowners and the peasants. In a capitalist society that struggle lies primarily between the capitalists and the proletariat (i.e., workers). In both societies, the "real" struggle over the "material" world that occurs in the "base" is reflected in the culture of the "superstructure." Since we live in a capitalist society, we can better understand our culture, when we recognize that the struggle between those who control wealth and those who do not is reflected in our culture. Though our cultural institutions are obviously dominated by those who control the capital, those who resist that control have their own ways of showing that resistance in our culture. As such, our dominant culture works to maintain a status quo that favors those who are already in control of capital and against those who do not control capital. But outside the dominant culture, at the margins, we can find evidence of resistance to that dominant power relationship. One place where we can find evidence of that resistance is in the culture of the "spectacular youth subcultures." We can find it in the resistance of working-class and black and Latino students to their schooling. We can find it in those "underground" movies and books and magazines. We can find it on the internet. We can even find it at the center of major cultural events such as the way in which rock and roll has been a struggle between the aggressive resistance of the working class found in rock and roll's roots and the hegemonic attempts of the record industry to "tame" rock and roll with the likes of Pat Boone, the Monkees, Donna Summers, and Celine Dion. Those in Cultural Studies are more interested in trying to understand the way in which the struggle between those who control wealth and those who challenge that control gets played out in our culture, than they are in those cultural forms that appear to neither challenge nor advance one or the other side of that struggle. For that reason, much of Cultural Studies is an analysis, elaboration, and critique of class politics as represented in our culture.

Sex/Gender and Power. While Marxist understandings of power have certainly had their influence in Cultural Studies, there are several other concepts of power that challenge this basic Marxian approach. One of the most important is feminism. Whereas a Marxian sense of power locates the structures of power in the class relations that develop around the means of production, some feminist conceptions of power locate it in the sex/gender relations
that develop in patriarchal structures. Whereas Marxists see power as deriving from the class system of economic distribution, feminists see power as deriving from the gendered distribution of sociocultural privilege. While Marxists point out the shift in power from feudal to modern times, these feminists point out that in both feudal and modern times, patriarchy has been supreme. At the structural level, patriotism refers to the system of sex/gender relations that places the bulk of the power in hands of males at all levels of society and, particularly, in all aspects of public life. At the cultural level patriotism might be understood to refer to the process of forming the life of a society around masculine traits or through customs and laws that privilege males. As a result of the recognition that much power is located in sex/gender structures, many in Cultural Studies see the struggle over culture as being much more than just a struggle between the capitalists and the workers, but one between those who work to maintain the inequality and inequity of patriarchy (perhaps we could call them "non-feminists" or "patriarchs") and those who work to eliminate the inequality and inequity of patriarchy (i.e., feminists). These non-feminists, or patriarchs, are not to be considered all males, not even all white males, but rather anyone who works for the maintenance of the present unequal and inequitable system of relations between males and females. Feminists include anyone who works to make the relations between males and females more equal and more equitable. In cultural productions we can often find this struggle between patriarchy and feminism occurring as those who dominate the patriarchal system regularly reinforce patriarchy while those who are attempting to challenge that system find ways to show their resistance.

Traditionally Hollywood has been a hotbed of patriarchy. Walt Disney is a good example of this. I have never seen a Walt Disney cartoon that has not been willing to walk a hundred miles out of its way to take a patriarchal attitude even if it is easier not to do so (even the most recent Disney cartoon, Mulan, which pretends to challenge patriarchy does much to reinforce it). While traditionally Hollywood has been overwhelmingly patriarchal, in the last year, Hollywood has proclaimed that the new economic consumer power is in the hands of young adolescent women. Given that for the last twenty years Hollywood has understood the consumer power to be in the hands of adolescent males, it will be interesting to see if feminist themes start to challenge those of patriarchy or if feminist themes are deflected to ward of the challenge of the new gendered economic power. At the moment the shift in attitude in Hollywood has resulted in the rapid increase in a new style female lead that combines the athletic prowess and physical power of former male leads with the sexual attractiveness of past female leads. Mulan is a good example of this. But no show symbolically represents this shift better than Buffey, The Vampire Slayer. When you realize that the original Dracula feeding on the blood of women in Victorian England is a symbolic act of rape in a sexually constricted moment of history, you see the symbolism of a vampire slayer in the age of "girl power." Now we have Buffey to symbolically avenge all those years of wrong. But for every Buffey, The Vampire Slayer, the new feminine focus in Hollywood may be just more of blockbusters in the style of Titanic (a movie that owes its economic success to the repeat visits of young adolescent women).

Of course, the new power of adolescent females is not only found in Hollywood. We can find it in comic books in the form of Tank Girl. In the success of the WNBA. And, of course, in the world of pop music, we have the Spice Girls who made "girl power" a central theme. As young adolescent women gain the power of the purse (real material power), we see that structural power being reflected in our cultural production (pop culture). As someone embedded in Cultural Studies, I would be skeptical of those who claim that Buffey, Tank Girl,
and the Spice Girls are clear signs of the
decline of patriarchy, but I would also be
skeptical of those who suggest that they
are just new manifestations of patriarchy
in the same sexualized female body.
Instead I see these new pop images of
young women as excellent sites to view
the political struggle that is occurring at
the structural level around gender.

Race and Power. While many have
focused on the base social struggle
around class structures and others have
focused on the base social struggle
around patriarchal structures, still others
have pointed to the way in which race
seems to organize all societies and interest
groups including workers and feminists.
The strongest influence in Cultural
Studies along this line comes from
postcolonialists. Race as we understand it
today is clearly the result of European
colonialism. While the concept existed in
Europe before colonialism, it was a vague
and little used term. Before colonialism,
race seemed to refer primarily to
categories of people that might be called
nationalities or that were associated with
certain regions of the world such as
"latins" and "celts."

During the European colonization of
the world, the concept of race took on new
importance. Think about the ethical issue
that Europeans faced as they colonized
other continents dominating less
sophisticated weaponry in war and
exploiting these people's land and
resources and even, particularly in the
case of slavery, the people themselves. In
a Christian nation, as all the colonizing
nations were, how do you justify this
slaughtering, stealing, and enslaving?
How do you remain a good Christian and
engage in the brutal acts that colonization
required? One obvious answer is to argue
that these non-Christian people needed to
be brought to Christianity. But the
Christian tradition is to convert, not to
oppress and steal. Colonization was more
about the latter than the former. The
solution was to point to the biblical
command for "man" to take dominion of
the earth. Humans were seen to be at the
top of the animal and plant hierarchy and,
as such, were responsible for the proper
husbandry of the earth. Just as the
monarch must take responsibility for
leading his (or, occasionally, her)
dominions, humans must take
responsibility for cultivating the lesser
plants and animals of the earth. Now if
the earth's creatures can be understood as
existing in a hierarchy, then why not
humans themselves. If humans, by God's
commandment, are at the top of the plant
and animal hierarchy, maybe some human
"subspecies" are above other human
"subspecies" as well? That we now
recognize that the smallest unit of
biological division is the species and not
the subspecies was not (and for many
today, still not) considered an important
reason for denying the claim that was
made. What the Europeans did was to
treat "race" as a subspecies and, therefore,
justify whatever actions Europeans took
toward people of other races as doing
their Christian duty.

We have been stuck with this
misunderstanding of race in our culture
ever since. Still today, the overwhelming
majority of Americans believe that race is
a real biological category. For Americans
the issue is simple. You are either white
or black or yellow. Those are the only
three legitimate races. I was taught in my
elementary school textbook that there are
three races: Caucasian, Negroid, and
Mongoloid. But there are problems with
these divisions. If these are biological
categories, then they violate the basic
biological principle that the species is the
smallest unit of natural division (since all
three groups are of the same species).
But the problem is even more confusing
than that.

When is someone to be considered
white, black, or Asian? Traditionally we
have considered anyone with one-eighth
or even one-sixteenth of their heritage to
be "black." Why? What is so powerful
about African descent that it is able to
overcome the genes of Europeans with
just one great grandparent or one great
great grandparent as the source of your
biological category? Given that the estimate of the number of black Americans who have at least one American Indian as an ancestor is extremely high (as high as a majority in some estimates), how are we to consider their biological category. American Indians were considered in my elementary school social studies book to be "Mongoloid." (Today we no longer use that term. Many use the term "oriental" instead, though those who are placed in that category prefer "Asian" to the term "oriental" which is associated with things (art, food, clothes) not people.) So are blacks with Asian blood still biologically "black"? There is a growing movement in the United States by children of a black parent and a white parent to reject the definition of their racial category as "black" that earlier generations have accepted and refer to themselves as bi-racial. In Puerto Rico, they have three basic racial categories. "Whites" are considered white in much the same way as in the United States. A person is "white" if essentially all his/her great great grandparents are white. But a person is only considered "black" in Puerto Rico if all of his/her great great grandparents are black or, actually, if they are very "black" in their color and features. Anyone who appears to have parentage that is both black and white is considered "Puerto Rican." I once had a conversation with a fifth-generation white lawyer in Puerto Rico. To test the above point I asked him if he was Puerto Rican. He responded that he was not. I pointed out that his family had been in Puerto Rico for five generations. He himself had been born and raised there and had spent all but 9 months of his life in Puerto Rico. He still refused to accept the label of "Puerto Rican." Today there are some who are still trying to make the claim that there is a biological concept called "race." Some of these defenders of this idea have turned to "gene pools" as a basis for this distinction. There does seem to be a basis for some sort of biological claim to "gene pools." Unfortunately, these "gene pools" do not seem to correspond very well to the social categories that we use to determine race. How many races are there anyway? Right now we tend to think of three, but we also sometimes consider Latinos a "race" (brown) and American Indians as a race ("red") though the federal government considers neither a race.

Postcolonialists have brought to our attention that the way in which we construct the image of the exotic foreigner whether he or she is Turkish or Xosa or Pakastani or Malasian is a cultural construction. And they also point out that the cultural construction has been created to justify the very real material politics that divided the world into the present day wealthy industrial nations and everyone else. That the continued use of race as a concept for dividing the world's peoples into claimed subspecies is a continuing justification for the unequal and inequitable distribution of the world's resources and power. These postcolonialists, while decrying the continued use of these categories as biological categories, point out that they are indeed social categories. While race needs to be rejected as a biological category, as social categories races sometimes need to be claimed by the people who are included in these categories as a way to develop the political power to survive a world in which they have less power. Furthermore, race as a social category needs to be constructed by the members of the group to represent them as they wish to be represented. Race is to become a category of self-identity rather than a tool to politically and economically oppress others.

We can see much of the struggle around race (what it means and what its role in our lives should be) in our popular culture. As various groups attempt to put a racial identity out front and then use it to build social solidarity in their struggle for political and economic equality and equity, race becomes another site of cultural politics. Much of the place of race in our popular culture has recently been pushed by members of minority groups who are attempting to develop
symbolic identity and solidarity for the struggle at the structural level. We can understand "hip-hop" with its "rap music" as such a move and particularly the "rastafarians" with their "reggae music" as an attempt to take control of their own identity. We can also understand "pachucas" and "cholas" and "technobando" as such moves among Mexican-Americans and "salsa" more generally among Latinos. As with class and sex/gender, our culture can be seen to be a site of struggle at the symbolic level for a very real conflict at the material social level.

Reproduction and Hegemony

While the social structures organize and constrain our lives without our having to learn anything about them, that does not mean that these social structures exist as natural phenomena. We do not live in a capitalist society, a patriarchal society, a racist society because capitalism, patriarchy, and racism are natural conditions of human existence, but because we live in history. We live in the type of society that we do because of actions taken at earlier times by others and because of actions taken in the present by ourselves as a society. The present system does not continue automatically, but must be produced again and again through history. Capitalism is an economic system that privileges those who control large amounts of capital. There is a continuous struggle between those capitalists and those without much capital over social power. There are struggles between those who have patriarchal power and those who do not and between those who hold racist power and those who do not. In order to replicate the system of power division around class, gender, and race the social system must be actively reproduced. The process of reproduction is the process through which societies replicate their social organization from generation to generation. There are several theories on how reproduction actually works. We are going to focus on the approach that argues that reproduction results from mechanisms of hegemony.

One question of reproduction wonders how it is that the ruling groups are able to maintain their position of power. One way to maintain power is through guns. Those groups who are able to maintain control of the military and the police are able to keep the others out of power through the coercion of prisons and executions. But regimes that maintain their power through force find that coercion breeds resistance. When ruling groups start to rely on the gun to maintain their power, they breed revolutionary groups who eventually create problems for the elites. Is there a better way to maintain control over the non-elites? A way that does not so easily lead to resistance and revolution? Yes, hegemony.

Hegemony is the process through which the ruling groups convince those without power and without wealth that they do not deserve power and wealth and that those who have power and wealth deserve to have it. Through the process of hegemony the ruling elites are able to maintain power without the threat of resistance and revolution. The process works by having the coalition of elite groups control the major institutions of society. By controlling the institutions such as schools, churches, government, police, and media the elites are able to make sure that the people come to understand the world in a way that benefits the elite. Consider the schools, for example. Most Americans believe that everyone has an equal chance to "make it" in the United States because everyone has an equal chance to go to school and do well. Those who are smart and work hard in school deserve all the wealth and power they are able to accumulate. Those who are not smart and who do not take advantage of school do not deserve such wealth and power unless they learn it outside of school in the "school of hard knocks." But if you do not do well in school, you have no business complaining if you do not have the wealth and social power that you might want. Most of those who did not do well in school believe that they do not deserve anything more than they get. "I had my chance,"

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they think, "and I blew it." Think of the way in which the courts create the idea that only the guilty go to jail. Think of the way the media creates the idea that good guys succeed and bad guys fail. When you look at all of the social institutions and realize that they all seem to support the interests of the coalition of ruling groups, you realize how it is that reproduction works through hegemony.

One of the things that Cultural Studies scholars are very interested in is understanding better how the process of hegemony works. By studying the culture of these institutions, we can better understand how they work for the interests of the elites and against the general interest of democracy. Through this study, however, one surprising idea has been realized. While the ruling elites may control these institutions, they do not control how the people make meaning of these institutions. Furthermore, there is not a single, unified elite group that controls all aspects of all institutions. The result is that these institutions do not have a monopoly over the construction of culture. It is far better to understand our cultural as being a site of contestation over meanings than of being only in the interest of the status quo. While these ruling elites may have more power than other groups, that does not mean that the rest do not have any power at all. As we study cultural productions, we should be looking for both how the dominant, hegemonic, reproductive interests of the ruling elites permeate those productions, but we should also be looking for how the nondominant, resistant, and transformative interests of the nonruling groups insert themselves into the struggle over our cultural productions.

Cultural Studies takes these cultural struggles around race, gender, and class seriously and attempts to better understand our social conflicts by better understanding our culture. When I ask you to analyze and critique a cultural productions, I am asking you to connect the cultural meanings being played out in the cultural productions with the social conflicts at the structural level. I am asking you to analyze what you see in the cultural struggle that reflects an underlying struggle around "real" material power. When you analyze a magazine article or photograph, a movie, a CD, a Web page, a toy, a youth subculture or any other cultural production, you should be trying to clarify the way in which the struggle around the distribution of power is being played out in our culture. Those who work in Cultural Studies are overwhelmingly committed to working for a distribution of power that is equal and equitable and democratic. You will need to decide for yourself where you stand morally in the cultural struggles that fill our cultural lives and that reflect the very real struggles at the social level.

Exercise #3

Select a cultural production that helps bring insight to an underlying struggle around power that occurs at the social structural level. Write an analysis and critique that helps clarify the cultural struggle that points to underlying structural conflicts. Please try to make your critique about 2 pages.
LECTURE #4: MAKING MEANING OF MEANING-MAKING: THE SIGN AND THE UTTERANCE?

When we construct our own identity and the identity of others, we are all *bricoleurs*. We build our identity from the cultural material available to us. If we identify our Self as a "woman" or a "man," we use terms that come from our culture. If we identify our Self as "black," or "Asian," or "Latino," or "Indian," or "white," we use categories that have been created by our culture. But how does our culture construct these terms and categories? How do we understand what it means to be a "woman" or a "man"? By "understand" I do not mean the denotative definition, but the full sense of it. How is it that we know that real men don't cry or that a real woman (one who is "all woman") is a sexual bombshell designed for the male eye.

In the last unit I suggested that underneath our culture, at the social level, there are real material conflicts occurring. For example, there is an on-going struggle between those who have wealth and those who do not. In our society the poor and the rich live very different lifestyles. It isn't the lifestyle that creates wealth or poverty, but the wealth or poverty that creates the lifestyle. There are also real material conflicts apparent in patriarchy. Women, on average, do earn less than men. They are more likely to live in poverty. They are more likely to be physically abused by those they care for. And racism also creates real material conflict. To be a person of color in our society is to greatly increase your chance of being poor, of not finishing high school, of being unemployed, and of spending time in prison. These are real material conflicts. No one can dispute these things. But what do they mean? What does it mean that the wealthy live one way and the poor another, that women are more likely to live in poverty, that black males more likely to be unemployed. How do we come to understand the meaning of the social facts that surround us? We construct the meaning for ourselves from the cultural material available to us. We are not only *bricoleurs* when it comes to constructing our identity, we are *bicoleurs* when it comes to making meaning of our society. We turn to the cultural productions that surround us and put them together into narratives that give meaning to our lives and to our society.

But those cultural productions to not appear through immaculate conception. They are not innocently born. The cultural productions that we use to construct our meanings are themselves created. And they are created in the midst of those material conflicts around race, class, gender and other structural divisions. When we try to make meaning of class, we rely on the narratives and myths of social class available to us in our culture. But those very narratives and myths have been created by people who have interests in one or more sides of those material conflicts. When we try to make sense out of social class, we tend to turn to narratives and myths that exist in our American culture which tend to serve the interests of the status quo. We shouldn't be too surprised to find out that the dominant narratives and myths available to us are those that reinforce the distribution of power as it now exists. After all, those who have more power than others are likely to use that power to construct hegemony. They are likely to permeate our cultural productions with narratives and myths that serve the interests of the powerful and are less likely to allow narratives and myths that challenge their power.

This unit will introduce you to tools that are frequently used in Cultural Studies to try and analyze and critique the meaning of cultural productions so that we can help understand the cultural politics and how they relate to the underlying material conflicts. We will be using a semiotic approach. *Semiotics* is the *study of signs and sign systems*. It
provides those interested in Cultural Studies with certain concepts and tools that help us clarify the relationships among meanings and the interests they serve. It includes concepts such as utterance, myth, narrative, and articulation, but it starts with the sign.

Signs

Understanding the process of meaning-making begins with understanding signs. In lecture #1 I stated that signs are gestures that are able to point to things that are not present—which is fine as far as it goes, but what exactly are these things that point to things not present? There are several approaches to this question, but we will focus on one: Saussurian

Saussurian Concept of the Sign.
Ferdinand de Saussure was one of the most important early linguists. His theory of language became the basis for most of the theorizing about language that followed him. Saussure divided the study of language into two parts—langue (the system of language or the rules that we use to speak) and parole (speech itself or the act of speaking).

Saussure argued that langue was a relatively stable pattern of rules and categories that made the science of language a possibility, but that parole was a spontaneous, unpredictable activity that made a science of speech impossible. Since Saussure was interested in developing a science of language, he focused on the study of langue and ignored parole. Accordingly Saussure argued that the smallest unit of meaning in language or communication was an aspect of langue that he called the sign. According to Saussure the sign has two parts called the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the perception of the concrete, material part of the sign. It is the perception in our mind of the actual ink marks of a word written on paper or the perception in our mind of the actual sound waves of a word spoken out loud. The signified is the concept that a person holds in his/her mind that becomes associated with a signifier.

signifier + signified

(percept) + (concept)

SIGN

So a sign is made of both the perception and a conception. If I present to you a sign such as "bridge," the signifier would be the percept of the actual ink marks of the word that you are able to see when you look at the page. The signified is that concept that you picture in your mind when you read the signifier that brings meaning to the perception of those ink marks. According to Saussure, a signifier is not a sign: it is nothing but the perception of marks on a page (or sounds in the air). A signified alone is also not a sign since it does not take form in the world and, therefore, can not be perceived. A sign, according to this Saussurian construction, must always have both a signifier and a signified or it is not a sign. Since, according to Saussure, a signifier unconnected to a signified has no meaning and a signified can not be communicated unless it is associated with the perception of the concrete form of a signifier. A sign, in Saussurian semiotics, is the smallest unit of communication. Neither a signifier nor a signified communicates anything alone.

In modernist, Saussurian theory the meaning of a sign is located in the
connection between the signifier and the signified. The meaning of a sign is not the concept we hold in our minds. The meaning of a sign is the relationship between the concept we have in our mind and the percept of the material manifestation of that sign. So that the meaning of signs are held in individual minds, but, like "self," depends on the social realm external to individual minds as well. That is, the meaning of the sign "bridge" is located in the relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to Saussurian modernists, as suggested in Lecture #1, we understand what a bridge is because we are able to connect the idea of a bridge that we hold in our mind with the perception of a material form of the word as it appears on the page. This connection between the signifier and the signified is what we know as semantics. In other words in Saussurian semiotics, semantics may be understood to be the meaning of any particular sign found in the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

While the meaning of any particular signifier is found in its relationship with its signified, we are all aware that any particular signifier may be connected to several different signifieds so that the word "bat" can refer to a flying mammal, a piece of baseball equipment, a piece of cricket equipment, or a club. In its verb form it can mean to hit with a club, a particular play in the game of baseball or cricket, or to wink an eye. In order to know which particular signified to attach to a particular signifier, we need more information. This other information often comes in the form of sign-sets, syntax, and pragmatics.

A sign-set is a set of signs associated with each other. We might be able to distinguish among the various possible meanings of "bat" mentioned above through the examination of the sign-set that it is connected to in the text. For example, if besides reading the word "bat" we were to read in close proximity to that signifier the words "glove," "base," and "pitcher," we would have reasonable assurance that the signifier "bat," in this case, referred to the baseball equipment. That is because they all belong to the same sign-set we might refer to as "baseball."

Syntax refers to the relationship among signs or the way the signs are ordered by rules or codes. It is the relationship of the parts to each other. So that we can understand the meaning of any particular sign by its rule-based relationship with other signs. If I were to write, "The catcher picked up the bat and swung it from shoulder to shoulder," you would understand one meaning for "bat"; but if I were to write, "The catcher was eager to bat in this inning," you would understand its meaning differently. The shift in meaning is the result of the rules which allow you to recognize the word as a noun in one sentence and as a verb in the other. The syntax of a short unit such as a sentence or paragraph is referred to as grammar while the syntax of a larger text such as a novel is referred to as poetics. Part of making meaning of any linguistic event requires us to understand its semantic, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic aspects. We are able to do this without consciously understanding what we are actually doing, but we do it none-the-less. Those in Cultural Studies argue that we should be more conscious of this process because by doing so we may be able to see some of the hidden political and moral aspects of our meaning-making.

Bakhtinian Concept of the Utterance. While Saussurian theory has held center-stage in linguistics, it is not the only theoretical approach to the sign. There is, for example, the semiotics of C. S. Pierce who was very influential to American pragmatism. In recent years there has been a strong challenge to Saussurian linguistics from a group of theorists often referred to as "poststructuralists." Typically those interested in a poststructural approach to linguistics base their work on the ideas of one of two (or both) French theorists working in the
latter part of the twentieth century—Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault. But there is another older tradition that also challenges Saussurian linguistics and that is the work of a group of Russians referred to as the "Bakhtin Circle" named after M. M. Bakhtin and including V. N. Volosinov and P.N. Medvedev who produced the bulk of their work in the twenties and thirties (though Bakhtin actually continued to publish into the fifties).

What all of these theorists (both the French and the Russians) have in common is a rejection of the Saussurian restriction of the study of language to the study of *langue*. While Saussure might have been right when he argued that only *langue* provides the needed regularity and abstraction for a science of language, these "poststructuralists" argue that language stripped of *parole*; (that is, language stripped of speech) is language without meaning. When Saussure argues that the sign is the smallest unit of communication, the Bakhtin Circle argues that the sign has no meaning until it is used in an act of communication—that is, until it is uttered. For the Bakhtinians, the sign only gains its meaning in the particular context of the speech act. A sign, in isolation, not connected in dialogue, is without meaning. For this reason, the *smallest unit of meaning for the Bakhtinians can not be the sign, but the utterance.*

There are several important implications of shifting our attention from the sign to the utterance. One is to understand that the meaning of any particular utterance (i.e., gesture, text, or performance) can change as the context of that utterance changes. So that Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* which was originally controversial because of Twain's use of the vernacular is now controversial because of his use of some terms that are recognized today as unacceptably racist. The characters in the old TV show *Father Knows Best* which were once thought of as representing good, wholesome American values are now regarded by many to be hopelessly and uncritically patriarchal. If we are to provide good cultural analyses, we must be prepared to treat the meaning of texts and performances as utterances located in particular historical contexts. While we can certainly address signs and their signifiers and signifieds, we must always remember that *meaning* is located in the historical context of particular conversations and not in the limited abstraction of the relationship between a signifier and signified.

**An Example**

We have introduced some of the important elements of cultural analysis in this lecture—things such as semantics, syntax, and sign-sets. While there is much more to a cultural analysis than these elements, a cultural analysis might begin by identifying the sign-sets, semantics, signs and utterances. Take, for example, Woody Guthrie's well-known song, "This Land is Your Land." Just to remind you of the words, here they are as sung at a local elementary school's music program.

This Land is Your Land

[Chorus]
This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York Island
From the Redwood Forests to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me.
As I went walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway,
And saw below me the golden valley, I said,
This land was made for you and me.

[Chorus]

I roamed and rambled, and followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond desserts,
And all around me a voice was sounding,
This land was made for you and me.

[Chorus]

When the sun came shining, then I was strolling
In wheat fields waving, and dust clouds rolling;
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting:
This land was made for you and me.

[Chorus]

Woody Guthrie

One obvious sign-set is that pertaining to the natural environment of the United States. Besides the repeated use of the word "land" there are also references to New York Island, redwood forests, the gulf stream, big skies, golden valleys, sparkling sands, diamond desserts, wheat fields, dust clouds. But while it may be true that one doesn't find redwood forests in most nations around the world, one does find forests in most places. And many have islands, and valleys, and big skies, and sand, and desserts, and wheat fields, and dust clouds. So how does Guthrie give us the sense that this is something uniquely American? He does, of course, name California and New York in the chorus which makes it impossible to confuse this song as being about Russia or Germany, but he also uses some other techniques to evoke "Americanness" in his song. Besides the point that few nations can boast the variety of natural phenomena as expressed in this song, I think, perhaps, it is Guthrie's connecting these aspects of the land with openness, wandering, and, therefore, freedom. It seems to me that the "land" in this song is equated with democracy; that his celebration is not just of the great wonders of our natural environment, but that in a democracy, we can all call this land "our land." This powerful imagery makes this an ideal patriotic song and it is in this vain that it is usually sung and understood. It is certainly in that vain that it was sung at the elementary school's concert that I recently visited. So far I have conducted a very simple semiotic analysis: one that focuses primarily on identifying a sign-set and imagery and that could have been conducted in any English class. But those of us in Cultural Studies are interested in carrying out analyses that go beyond a simple discussion of the aesthetics of a text. This task is aided when we focus on utterances rather than signs.

If we think about "This Land is Your Land" as an utterance, then we need to think about it as one statement in a larger conversation. Among other things this requires us to historicize it. The above paragraph actually does allude to a specific historical context: this song was sung at a particular elementary school's music program. I'll return to this context in just a moment, but first I would like to focus on the context in which this song was originally "uttered." The song was written by Woody Guthrie in 1940 during the Great Depression years. Guthrie was one of thousands of young men who had "bummed" around the United States during the thirties hitching rides on trains while looking for work. Guthrie was, of course, a musician who became wrapped up in the plight of those farmers who had lost their farms and those workers who had lost their jobs. He became involved with union and wrote many songs that were used in the union movement. Guthrie was a populist and a strong believer in democracy as something that required ordinary people to participate in
their own fate. He was quite irate about the way in which the wealthy had apparently distorted and corrupted democracy in this country. Among the songs that he wrote was "This Land is Your Land." Here is the song as Guthrie wrote it.

This Land is Your Land
This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York Island
From the Redwood Forests to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway,
And saw below me the golden valley, I said,
This land was made for you and me.

I roamed and rambled, and followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond desserts,
And all around me a voice was sounding,
This land was made for you and me.

Was a big high wall there that tried to stop me
A sign was painted said, Private Property,
But on the back side, it didn’t say nothing
This land was made for you and me.

When the sun came shining, then I was strolling
In wheat fields waving, and dust clouds rolling;
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting:
This land was made for you and me.

One bright sunny morning in the shadow of the steeple
By the relief office I saw my people—
As they stood hungry, I stood by wondering if
This land was made for you and me.

(As originally written)
Woody Guthrie
February 23, 1940

What does the additional two stanzas suggest about this song? Knowing what we do about Guthrie: that he wrote this song during the depression, that he was involved with the union movement and he was committed to participatory democracy, we find that his active rejection of the right to wall off the land by the wealthy and his ending contemplation of whether or not democracy really does exist in the United States puts a different color on the utterance. Perhaps it is still to be considered a patriotic song, but a patriotism of a different sort. No longer is it used to celebrate an existing freedom and democracy, but an ideal—an ideal that was being sorely challenged by the reality of the times. The "you and me" in the song is no longer all Americans as much as it is all Americans who have been left out, that is to say, all ordinary Americans—all working people.

Now let us return to the elementary school music program. What does it mean that the two stanzas that give the song its particular potency have been left out? One might say that these stanzas are "too political." That public schools can't be seen as taking such strong political positions. But when those stanzas are removed it is just as strong a political position. To leave out those stanzas is to teach our children to sing a song of praise for the status quo. When we drop the stanzas, we are not removing the politics from the song but we are inverting the politics of the song. Rather than being a song that works in the interest of ordinary working people, it becomes a song that works in the interest of the wealthy by glossing over the fact that the wealthy have, in fact, constructed "walls" around all kinds of aspects of this country from the land in a literal sense, to the government through the power of campaign financing, to the courts through the power of high powered legal teams, to the schools which are disproportionately funded and unequally successful in providing effective schooling.
When we complete a semantic analysis of this song by looking at the sign-set and placing it in historical contexts, the semantics takes on new meanings. For example, think of the title of the song again. After reading Guthrie's original text, what do you think the meaning is? What do you think Guthrie wants us to understand when he tells you that this land is "your" land? Does the signified of the signifier "your" change a little? Or perhaps we should reverse the question in line with history. How do you think the meaning of the song (and particularly its title) changes when the school decides to drop those two stanzas from the original? Are you able to see how the signifier "your" is disconnected from the original signified and reattached to a new, politically conservative, signified?

Conclusion

Nothing has meaning in and of itself. People are required to make meaning of things. This lecture has introduced you to two major approaches to meaning-making. One is a "modernist" approach based on the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure in which language is reduced to langue and in which the sign is understood to be the smallest unit of meaning in communication. The other is a "postmodernist" approach based on the work of the French "poststructuralists" such as Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault or based on the work of the Russian Bakhtin Circle in which it is argued that langue can never be separated from parole, so that the utterance should be understood to be the smallest unit of meaning in communication. When we focus on the utterance rather than the sign, we recognize that meaning is always located in specific dialogical and ideological contexts. Any analysis based on utterance will want to locate the text in an on-going conversation and place that conversation in its specific context. By focusing on signs and sign-sets we are able to recognize small units of meaning. Recognizing that any signifier may become detached from one signified and re-attached to another, allows us to understand the way popular culture (particularly advertisers) attempt to reconstruct our understanding of the underlying events of our time. Focusing on utterances enables us to place texts into the context of the underlying material conflicts. The semiotic concepts of sign and utterance are tools that allow us to understand the bricolage that is our culture; to recognize how the power of hegemony works to make us complicit in maintenance of the status quo through making some signs and utterances more readily available to us than others and, therefore, making it more likely that through our own process of bricolage, we construct meanings that work in the interest of the dominant elite.

Exercise #4

Do a semiotic analysis of a cultural production addressing the semantics, sign-set, and syntax of the production. Treat it as an utterance and place it within the larger "conversation" or context that gives it specific meaning. Who is making the utterance and to whom is it addressed? What is the larger conversation that this utterance might be considered a part of? I would prefer that it not be part of an advertisement because you will be required to use an ad in the next exercise. Remember that a cultural analysis is particularly interested in understanding the cultural struggles that reflect underlying material (structural) conflicts.
LECTURE #5: MAKING MEANING-MAKING: IMAGERY AND MYTH

So far this course has focused on the role language plays in meaning-making. But when we talk about signs and utterances, we are really talking about much more than language. Language is only one sign system out of many. Consider the way in which art has its own visual language that is built around space, line, contrast, color and other formal elements as well as the historical conversation organized around movements such as formalism, impressionism, surrealism, cubism, colorists, minimalists and many other "discourses." Or consider the way music has its own language built around tempo, pitch, rhythm, timbre and other formal elements as well as musical conversations such as baroque, classical, romantic, modern, minimalist, avant garde, swing, be-bop, reggae, and many other "discourses." We can also talk about the "language" of film, photography, TV, clothes, the internet, and many others. In other words, culture is made up of much more than language. The process of hegemony works as much through these other "languages" as much as it does through that of ordinary language. When the bricolage that we call culture is constructed, the building blocks used include images, music, performance, and style as well. When we realize that we can think of these other areas of human endeavor as forming around sign systems in the same way that language builds on signs, we realize that we can analyze these areas using the same techniques as we use when analyzing language. In lecture #4 I introduced to you some of the important elements of semiotics—signs, sign-sets, semantics, and utterance. In this lecture I wish to introduce you to some other elements of semiotic analysis such as text, performance, imagery, and myth.

Let's begin by thinking about texts. Those of you who took EDL 204 as you first-level course in this thematic sequence talked about "text" a lot. As you learned in that course, any particular cultural production can be thought of as a "text." So that we can think of a movie such as "Titanic," a particular episode of "South Park," a specific issue of Vanity Fair, or "Wannabe" by the Spice Girls each as a text. Texts may be analyzed using the techniques mentioned in Lecture #4 such as isolating and examining the sign-sets and clarifying the semantics. As we analyze a text we can sometimes begin to understand some of the different levels of meaning that a single text might have and we can also begin to understand the way in which some texts work in our lives. Engaging in textual analysis is a particularly useful exercise, but many in Cultural Studies are beginning to suggest that we start thinking of many cultural productions less as "texts" and more as "performances." What is the difference between thinking in terms of a text versus a performance? One difference lies in the idea that a text is a thing that is able to be moved around from context to context and read and re-read. When we think of Sassy, the magazine for early adolescent girls, as a text, we are interested in studying its sign-sets, semantics, and metaphors to try to unravel its meanings. But a performance is always a single thing in a particular moment of time. It is never able to be moved from one context to another because each time it is performed again, it is a different performance. We might begin to think of Sassy as not only a text, but as one element in regularly repeated performances. That is what Sarah Shuster did when she talked with young adolescent girls about the magazines they read. Shuster didn't just ask them questions about the magazines, she actually brought the magazines to her meeting with the young women and sat with them and they read them together in much the same way these young women
would do with their girlfriends. In this way, Shuster was able to see the way in which these girls (as they preferred to refer to themselves) acted out their ambivalence with their nascent womanhood. When we recognize texts as typically (or, at least, frequently) located in performances, than we begin to think in terms of the utterance instead of the sign. In this course, it will be perfectly acceptable to analyze cultural productions as texts, but I hope that we will also begin to think in terms of performances wherever that seems helpful. I hope that we will start to pay attention to the way in which meaning is uttered, the way in which it is acted out in public; the way in which they are located in particular historical moments and not just to the details of the texts themselves.

While it is important to study semantics of texts or performances, we also need to pay attention to some other technical elements of semiotics. Specifically I would like to address imagery, connotation, and myth. Imagery (also called figures of speech or tropes) refers to the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, and understatement. Imagery (figures of speech, tropes) alters a sign from its common meaning to some other meaning by making uncommon connections and associations with other signs. While we are used to using these terms in literary analysis, the use of tropes in the analysis of other than literary texts and performances may seem strange at first. In contemporary academic writing much attention has been placed on the tropes people use to give meaning to their world. By understanding the figures of speech used in any particular text or performance, we can often gain insights into its controlling logic or emotional appeal. Advertisers rely heavily on tropes to make their ads rhetorically effective. The Marlboro man is one of the most effective metaphors in advertising. By using the rugged individual, the rough outdoorsman as a metaphor for Marlboro, the advertisers were able to take an inanimate object (a cigarette) and give it gender and freedom and power. Nike's use of Michael Jordan's reputation for "hang time" enabled them to successfully use metonymy (the use of one thing to represent another that is closely associated with it) and hyperbole (exaggeration or overstatement) in marketing their "Air Jordan" line of shoes. In the similar way, the advertisers for Michelin tires were able to use metonymy and synecdoche (the use of a part to represent the whole) when they associated their tires with automobile safety and the protection of a baby.

Semantics has to do with the relationship between the signifier and the signified and since all signifiers have multiple potential signifieds, which particular signified is connected with a signifier may be open to different interpretations. The differing ways in which a signifier may be connected to signifieds can be understood in terms of connotation and denotation. While these terms are familiar to you from their ordinary usage in English, we will be using them slightly differently in this course. Connotation will refer to the full set of possible signifieds associated with a particular signifier. Denotation will refer to the dominant usage. The term "dominant" is used advisedly since it implies that the choice of which signified is to be selected is a matter of social power. In textual and performance analysis, one should always attempt to recognize both the denotative and connotative meanings associated with any particular sign. That is, when doing an analysis of a text one should not automatically assume the common meaning of a sign, but should begin to recognize the potential multiple meanings. Denotation is only the socially dominant meaning. When reading denotatively, we naturalize the message. By assuming the literalness of the message, we permit the text to present itself as the natural truth—the "way it is." Textbooks are almost always written with the intention of being read denotatively. When people watch the videotape presented on the television news, they tend to read it.
denotatively. They accept the highly edited and carefully framed video as “the truth.” When, during the Gulf War, CNN showed videotape given to it by the U. S. military of cruise missiles blowing up bridges and going down smokestacks and when we were able to see live explosions in the skies over Jerusalem providing visual “proof” that the Patriot missiles actually “worked,” we were accepting the denotative meaning of the visual text. We did not find out until later that these images were carefully edited and their readings "fixed." Today there are people who still believe that the Patriot missiles actually "worked," when evidence suggests that very few enemy warheads were actually exploded in air and many people still believe that our "smart" weapons caused extensive military damage with few civilian casualties even though we now know that these missiles were much less accurate then those few examples broadcast on television suggested. We found the military much less willing to present such denotative texts to the public during the more recent Serbian bombing, though they couldn't resist at least some of the same kind of clips.

Closely associated with denotation is myth. Myth might be understood to be the denotative reading of a text. That is to say that when a text comes to have a dominant reading so that it appears to be the natural and only legitimate reading, it can be called a myth or when the reading of a particular text depends on our acceptance of a naturalized storyline, it becomes part of the larger myth. Most of what we take to be "common sense" is built upon culturally accepted myths. When the connotations of a text appear to be limited to one denotation, so that the meaning of the text appears transparent, or normal, or truthful, we have a myth.

Myth is one of the primary vehicles for the presentation of the dominant ideologies. It is through myth that Americans come to accept as the natural state of humankind the existence of the autonomous individual, the superiority and beneficence of capitalism, and the inherent caring of women and the inherent aggression of men. When readers fail to get beneath the surface of a text or performance, they accept as natural that which is socially constructed. And that which is socially constructed often works to the interest of some more than others, so that even the most innocent cultural productions participate in cultural politics. The Marlboro ads, by appealing to the cowboy on a horse in the wilderness plays on the myth of the cowboy in American society; one which implies a rugged individualism that not only requires "men" to stand on their own, but allows them to appear to escape the boundaries and pressures of society especially the regulation of government. This message would appeal to many people in our stressed-out society today, but it might be particularly appealing to teens who feel constrained by school and parents and by the "angry white male" who feels burdened by economic uncertainties, dead-end jobs, and changing cultural norms. It may look like it is just a picture of a cowboy, but it really is one more salvo in the cultural war with which society is always engaged.

Many people feel that scholars go too far when they "seek messages" in everyday things. As one critic of scholarly critique put it, "Even Freud said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." But our point is not that every cultural production carries with it deep psychological scars, but that cultural productions which appear natural have built within them specific (even if unrecognized) political agendas. And the point is not that these agendas are necessarily inappropriate or conspiratorial, but that when unrecognized can continue to influence our culture in deep ways that we may not want. People often say that advertising or popular culture doesn't influence them. But what they usually mean is that the obvious messages of these cultural productions don't influence them. Advertisements that try to sell you Wendy's instead of McDonald's or Coke rather than Pepsi
probably don't influence many people, too often. But the underlying myth of consumerism that these ads present when added up to all of the thousands of unrecognized retellings of the consumer myth, do influence the whole nation into believing that the myth of consumerism is not a myth, but is the natural state of human affairs. So that today, in our society, individuals produce almost nothing. As a student you are required to produce some things: term papers and other projects for school. But outside of the classroom, what do you produce? You don't grow or raise your own food, you don't make your own clothes, only a few of you make your own music or entertainment. Perhaps you participate in athletics once in a while, but other then sports and dancing there is little left in this society for humans to produce and, therefore, to realize their humanity.

Instead we have become consumers. Advertising has had a large part in this process. We have come to believe that it is natural for humans to prefer consuming to producing. Consumerism has also in recent years begun to penetrate everything from what is to count as news to sponsoring the Olympics to education. So that today we have difficulty telling the difference between news and entertainment. Whereas a short 20 years ago an amateur Olympic athlete would have been not only disqualified but morally condemned for endorsing a product, today the Olympics themselves promote products. And certainly the idea that education is something that students consume rather than something that students produce is a fundamental shift in our understanding of education having enormous implications for the practice of schools. Even our democracy has shifted from being a process in which people participate in the governing of their public lives to one in which we pick people to represent us in exactly the same way we pick our toothpaste. Anyone who recognizes the enormous shift in the American attitude away from production and toward consumption during the television age has to be skeptical of the claim that advertisements have little effect on people's understanding of the world.

People frequently say that popular culture doesn't influence them. Just because they watch television a lot and see violence depicted on television doesn't mean, they claim, that they are going to go out and shoot someone. But once again it is the underlying and unquestioned myths that are the problem, not the obvious messages. Few may go out and shoot someone after watching a video depicting fighting, but by watching so much television centered around violence, people come to accept as natural the state of a violent society. Studies have shown that the more people watch television, the higher they estimate the extent of violence in our society. How do you think a child who is raised on four hours or more a day of television and video games understands the state of our society compared to those who don't?

And again, many people believe that critics of the portrayal of women in popular culture as little more then thin-waisted, big-busted sex objects has little effect on individuals. And of course they are right, if you mean that any particular television show or magazine cover or rock video isn't going to influence how people think of women in our society. But given the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of these images, the unexamined, unreflected involvement in our popular culture can lead to little else. Scholars are just beginning to recognize the way popular culture has recently interacted with other social trends to put young adolescent girls (10-16 years old) in severe jeopardy. Given the age stratification of our society, the relaxing of controls over young adolescents by their parents, and the loss of community oversight, girls have few images of what it means to be a woman other than that of their mother (and since adolescence is partly about creating an independent identity from ones parents, few girls see their mothers as potential role models), teachers (and what is said
about mothers may go double for teachers) and popular culture. Since American popular culture overwhelmingly defines women in terms of their ability to attract men and defines that ability in terms of sexuality, these young girls trying to become women have much more pressure than ever before to adopt an identity as a woman based primarily on their ability to use their body to attract men sexually.

Far from being uninfluential in our lives, the myths that are reinforced in our popular culture may be extremely influential. As the above examples suggest popular culture works best exactly where people think it is least at work. It is in those areas where the connotations of a text become denotatively read, that popular culture most influences our life. It is when a particular cultural production naturalizes the world and mythologizes culture, that cultural politics does its work. When the political message is recognized as such, then it can be deconstructed and set aside, but when the message is naturalized as common sense, we have little ability to address it and it passes into our understanding as truth.

Reading cultural productions (i.e., texts or performances) can be understood as a social activity. As readers we participate in the construction of meaning of a text or performance. Since meanings involve multiple possibilities and attitudes towards signs or utterances and their semantics, syntax, and pragmatics; when we read, we engage in a social act. Readings can be dominant readings or oppositional readings. Dominant readings are those in which the meaning of a text is the most obvious or "natural." It is the "commonsense" reading. Dominant readings are usually preferred by a society's (or group's) powerful and influential people. Oppositional readings are those in which the meaning of a text is challenged by questioning the underlying myths or revealing the rhetorical moves which make the text persuasive. Oppositional readings attempt to demythologize cultural productions, to address the implicit cultural politics, to challenge that which reinforces the status quo especially that which helps maintain the hegemony of the powerful against the interests of ordinary people. One of the ironies of such readings is that while dominant readings appear to be apolitical or at least "objective" and "neutral"; oppositional readings appear only too clearly as political. As a result the unsophisticated reader is likely to discredit the oppositional reading as being "political" while accepting the dominant reading because it appears to be apolitical even though the dominant reading is as political as the oppositional reading. The analysis that I performed of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" is a good example of dominant and oppositional readings. If we were to take the song as sung at the elementary school production and discuss its meaning without reference to the missing stanzas, we would likely present a dominant reading. One that reinforces the status quo. When we insert the two missing stanzas, we make possible an oppositional reading of the song and of the performance at the elementary school. In so doing, the first dominant reading may not look very "political" when compared to the second oppositional reading. Even though both are highly political.

Conclusion

One of the more interesting movements in Cultural Studies is the movement from thinking only in terms of text to thinking in terms of performance. By doing so we remember that meaning-making is located in social action and is, therefore, always located in particular moments of history. As we analyze performances (as well as texts), we need to realize that the same semiotic techniques used to analyze literature can be used to study other cultural production found in the visual arts and music and everyday social life. We can use imagery to help us recognize the distant, refracted
meanings of cultural productions which allows us to move beyond the literal, denotations and start paying attention to the connotations. We are also able to recognize the way in which myth helps to naturalize the meanings of cultural productions by fixing denotative meanings. This is the very thing of hegemony. When those who do not benefit from the present order construct meaning, they do so like everybody else. They utilize the cultural material available (the sign-sets, utterances, tropes, and myths) as *bricoleurs*. And when the material available to them denotes and naturalizes some of these cultural elements while discrediting others, it makes it more likely that the disempowered will be complicit in their own disempowerment. By recognizing the way cultural texts and performances can be given different readings; the way in which any particular meaning of any text or performance can be understood as one connotative meaning, we are able to de-naturalize the meaning of culture and to recognize the political interests that are being served. This is the task of Cultural Studies.

**Exercise #5**

Select an advertisement from a magazine or newspaper. Provide a semiotic analysis for the ad that includes a discussion of the imagery used as well as the underlying myth(s) upon which the advertisement depends. What might be the dominant reading of the text? Provide an oppositional reading to the text.
LECTURE #6: MAKING MEANING OF MEANING-MAKING: ARTICULATING ARTICULATION

We have a tendency to think that the meaning of something comes from that thing itself, but one of the fundamental Saussurian principles is that meaning is largely constructed from the relationship among things. Those relationships include those which are different from as well as similar to the sign we are interested in. Consider what one means by a rose. You know the famous line from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, "a rose by any other name smells as sweet." This phrase means (when taken out of the context of the play, of course) that if you were to put under your nose a freshly opening bud of the flower that we call an "Emperor rose," for example, and called it a marigold, that it would smell just as nicely as it does when we call it a rose. And, of course, it would. But what if marigolds were not called marigolds, but were called "Golden roses." Would we then think that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet? Not if you have ever smelled a marigold. Part of what makes a rose a rose is that it smells sweet, but also part of what makes a rose a rose is that it is not a marigold. Nor is it a tulip, nor a bicycle, nor a golf ball. Our understanding of the sign "rose" comes as much from the differences we make between the sign "rose" and other signs as it does from the similarities among all of those things that we include in that linguistic category. We often zero in on the very specific things that distinguish something from something else in order to understand both of them. So that we might understand the meaning of "freedom" less from an analysis of the term in itself and more from contrasting it with "oppression." This is an important point to remember as we attempt to understand meaning-making because it suggests that we need to be as alert to what is used as contrast, to what is left out of an image, as we are to what it is being connected to.

The process through which we connect any particular signs or utterances to other signs or utterances while refusing to connect it to still other signs or utterances might be thought of as articulation. Articulation has become one of the central ideas in contemporary Cultural Studies—some even suggesting that it is the central concept or theory or method of Cultural Studies. Though the process of articulation means lots of different things to different cultural theorists, the term itself is a very old term in English and its historic root has to do with joining things together to make a unity. We can take that root meaning and use it to understand the basics of articulation in Cultural Studies as a process though which unities are created out of disparate parts. You can also think of it as the process of making links: creating categorical identity through linking diverse characteristics, creating whole constructs by linking together incomplete fragments, creating patterns or structures by linking together isolated parts, or creating meaning through linking cultural productions to deeper and broader social forces. Since meaning does not exist in things themselves, meaning must be constructed through a process of linking (and of failing to link) through similarity or difference cultural productions to other cultural productions.

One of the primary mechanisms through which we articulate meanings in ordinary life is through narrative. Narrative is the process of linking different elements into a storyline often with recognizable plots, forms, and themes. Narrative makes possible the linking of distinct parts through time, so that people often make sense of their own life by "narrating" their own lives. That is, we often understand the meaning of things that happen in the present by placing them within the larger narrative that we tell ourselves makes up the story
of our life. But besides narrating our own lives, we draw on larger social narratives to help bring meaning to that which we experience. For example, many of us make meaning out of education by understanding how education has been played out in our own personal lives, but we also make meaning out of education by placing it within the "democratic narrative" that we often use to make sense out of the United States. That is, while we use our own personal narrative to bring meaning to education, we also use the storyline of how America created and developed a system of public education as a means for ensuring the continued success of a representative democracy. Since the sixties and LBJ's "War on Poverty" education has often been understood in terms of a different narrative one that is a subplot of the larger narrative we might call the "American Dream"—the storyline that anyone in America can "make it" if they have talent, work hard, and maintain good values. As part of the war-on-poverty narrative, public schools have been consciously promoted as the solution to poverty and unemployment. One counter narrative to the "war-on-poverty" narrative is the "federal-government-is-the-problem" narrative of Newt Gingrich and Ronald Reagan that began in the late seventies and continues to this day. What problems did the federal government cause? Well, the desegregation and the deprotestantation of the public schools and the whole "counterculture" that seems to have been ushered in with the postindustrial age as well as the decline of the American economy. A decline that began to be realized in the late seventies when the American economic advantages that followed World War II (where only the United States survived without large economic destruction) began to balance out. Besides the "federal-government-is-the-problem" narrative, another narrative that developed at that time is the narrative that places national survival within a rhetoric of economic survival and economic survival within a rhetoric of economic warfare. In this "economic-warfare" narrative, public schooling has been designated a key role in the production of a well-trained workforce for corporate America. In fact, these latest two narratives ("federal-government-is-the-problem" and "economic-warfare") seem to have completely surpassed the earlier narratives ("building-democracy" and "war-on-poverty") so that public discussion is almost entirely centered around creating educational "excellence"—code for the kind of education that corporate leaders want in their workers—and turning education "back-to-the-states" or "back-to-families" or "community-values" which are codes for things like getting rid of affirmative action, permitting prayer in schools, and public financing of private, religious education through vouchers.

Articulation is the process through which the kinds of connections that we find in the above narratives occurs. Narratives help us contextualize meaning by placing one piece of information alongside several other pieces of information which are held together by a common storyline. But articulation is not only constructed through narrative: Any connections made among cultural productions help create meaning whether those connections are ones that make claims to similarity or claims to difference. Perhaps the single most important purpose of advertising is to articulate connections between a product that has no social meaning in itself and other things that have very specific social meanings such as the attempt to link drinking beer with sociability and fragrances with certain life-styles. But our interest in Cultural Studies and in this course is not in the obvious articulations found in advertisements or any other form of cultural production, but in the less obvious connections that we might call "second-order meanings."

Second-order meanings refer to the meanings that are made at such an intuitive level that they go unnoticed even when reflected upon at a first look. Second-order meanings are those that we unconsciously assume while reading a
text. They are the meanings that the author may not even know s/he is utilizing or, if aware, probably does not want the reader to be aware of them. For example, how many of you are disgusted right now over politics in this country, especially the politics of the federal government? After all of these years of attack and counter-attack and lying and cheating and especially after the recent events surrounding President Clinton, how many of you are ready to "chuck it all in" or "to throw out all the bums"? Many suggest that one of the characteristics of the media-articulated "Gen-Xers" is that generation's walking away from governmental politics as a way to address the moral responsibilities of a nation. But perhaps these very understandable reactions are purposeful articulations that our culture-makers wish us to make. For example, more than twenty years ago Newt Gingrich explained on national television that the only way the Republicans could ever take over Congress was if the American people lost confidence in Congress itself. As long as the American people had confidence in Congress, Gingrich declared, the Congress would remain in Democratic hands. Gingrich added that it was his intention, along with some like-minded Republican back-benchers to destroy the American public's confidence in Congress. Perhaps they succeeded? And given the Reagan narrative mentioned earlier (i.e., "federal-government-is-the-problem"), perhaps those who would have the power of the federal government weakened are working hard to promote those very articulations of the present situation. Whose interests might be served by having a weak federal government? Probably several groups but certainly one would be corporations who wish to see the government adopt a more laize-faire approach to economic oversight. My purpose here is not to suggest that the impeachment of Clinton is all a conspiracy orchestrated out of the corporate boardrooms, but rather that the meanings that we make out of cultural productions can have multiple levels. That the meaning of any particular thing may be, as they say in the media business, "spin." Cultural Studies is less interested in the surface or first-order meanings and more interested in the deeper more obscure second-order meanings that help us explore the underlying meanings of our contemporary culture and to understand more clearly how the material politics are manifested in our cultural politics.

The purpose of articulation as a method in Cultural Studies is re-articulation. A good cultural analysis will attempt to clarify the articulations found in second-order meanings that provide the basis for dominant readings and then re-articulate the cultural productions so as to make possible oppositional meanings. To engage in this task requires the cultural analyst to first clarify the way in which particular cultural productions (their signs, utterances, texts, and performances) have been articulated in such a way as to create myths that reinforce the power structure of society—particularly those power relations that work against distributive democracy. The second task is to re-articulate the cultural productions so as to create illumination or demystification or just plain insight into the complex and undemocratic practices of culture in such a way as to provide possibilities for democratic progress. Through the processes of articulation and re-articulation, the ideological apparatus of a society may be made visible. If we understand ideology to be an articulation of otherwise unconnected parts into mythologized or naturalized common sense, then we can see the process of articulation and re-articulation in the hands of a good cultural analyst may bring out into the open some of the myths that work against equity and help maintain a regime of inequity and domination. If we understand hegemony as the process through which a coalition of powerful groups articulate the interests of ordinary people such that they consent to, and partially participate in, their own subordination, then we can see the process of articulation and re-articulation
as a part of counter-hegemonic action. It is important to keep in mind that articulation is not an end in itself, but when connected to re-articulation, articulation becomes a means to work against hegemony and for democratic life.

Exercise #6

Select a short article from a newspaper or magazine. Clarify the way in which the article articulates the world. What underlying narratives does it depend on for its meaning? Re-articulate the article in such a way as to make clear an important second-order meaning.
LECTURE #7: MAKING MEANING-MAKING: SYMBOLS, RITUALS, & STYLE

We have so far discussed meaning-making by focusing on how we make meaning of culture as represented in particular cultural products such as movies, pictures, magazines, books, advertisements, etc. But meaning making is also a part of everyday human interaction. Culture is not only those material products that fill our lives, but it includes the everyday performances of ordinary people as they live their daily lives. To help us better understand meaning-making during ordinary social interaction, we might use the inter-related concepts of symbol and ritual. These concepts not only help us understand meaning-making in ordinary social interaction, but help us get to second-order meanings because of their ability to inconspicuously connect quite disparate things.

The term "symbol" is one that is often confused with the term "sign." In fact, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that in social theory, some theorists use the terms in almost exactly the opposite manner. In this course we will distinguish between signs and symbols by suggesting that signs are the general case, while symbols are a particular type of sign. Symbols are a kind of sign that represent things indirectly through association. A symbol represents (re-presents) something; a sign names something. Basil Bernstein, a British sociologist of education, wrote that a symbol gives "meaning over and beyond the specific situational meanings." * In other words, the meaning of a symbol can not be found in the immediate context, but must be looked for in some broader, or other, context. The meaning of a hat may or may not be symbolic. In the immediate context the meaning of a hat is instrumental (i.e., its meaning comes directly and exclusively from its mundane use). It is meant to keep the rain or sun off the head or keep a person warm when out in the cold. But when that hat is a baseball style hat worn on the head with the brim turned around while sitting in a classroom, its meaning must be symbolic. Symbolic of what? Of membership in a particular life-style group.

In fact, style can be understood to be a symbolic display of group membership. All groups have a limited range of clothes and grooming styles that members are allowed to display. If one fails to display the proper symbols, then one is suspect as a true member. The suspicion grows if that person not only fails to present themselves with the right style, but if they actually present a symbol from a different rival group. In an earlier lecture I mentioned Signithia Fordham's study of an all black high school in Washington, D. C. Fordham studied several young people who not only failed to participate in the life-style of their peers but choose to participate in life-styles their peers associated with white Americans such as listening to classical music, talking in mainstream dialect, and getting good grades in school. As a result these young people are sometimes accused of "acting white" by their peers. On the other hand, Roger Hewitt has shown how white kids in London who wear Rasta colors and speak in London black patois sometimes find themselves victims of hostile Afro-

Caribbean teens who resent whites co-opting their identity.**

The display of symbols is a kind of performance and as a performance it can be understood to be a form of ritual. We might understand ritual to be a formalized, symbolic performance. A performance is an act that is carried out in front of an audience. It's purpose is to create a reality or myth through action. While often there is a nonparticipating audience to a ritual, the audience is often the participants themselves. So that the performers and audience of a ritual might be one and the same. In fact it is possible to conceive of an individual performing a ritual for him/herself such as the Englishman of nineteenth century literature who insists on having tea at five o'clock even though he is by himself in the middle of a jungle or on a deserted island. Throughout this course I have been referring to "cultural productions" as "texts or performances." When we recognize that written, visual, or aural "texts" might be better understood as "performances" we recognize that their importance may be more ritual than instrumental. By "formalized" I do not mean "formal" as in a "formal dance," but "with form." That is to say that a "formalized" performance is one which has a recognizable form so that if someone in the performance fails to follow the expected pattern others will recognize the violation. As a formalized, symbolic performance, ritual is an act with a recognizable form filled with symbolism and performed for an audience. While sometimes it is easy to distinguish a ritual from a nonritual act, it is probably more useful to think of ritual as an aspect of almost all action. Most social action has within it some formalized, symbolic performance. For example, when a teacher rises at the beginning of class, closes the door, and says, "Open to page 233," the teacher is undoubtedly conducting an instrumental act trying to get things going, but s/he may also be engaged in a ritual to the extent that the act is regularly repeated by this teacher and is expected by the students and that it establishes symbolically the authority of the teacher and the seriousness of the purpose of learning in the classroom. Or the wearing of a hat may be partly instrumental (to keep the head warm) but also partly symbolic display (brim turned backward to display membership in a particular youth subculture).

Much cultural politics can be understood to be no more than a struggle over whose symbols and rituals are to be legitimated and whose are to be dismissed or delegitimated. Why is the grammar that is taught in schools considered "correct" while the grammar that is spoken on the streets is considered "incorrect." There is no logical reason for "proper English." "Proper English" violates all kinds of logic. For example, in English grammar we make a big deal out of the difference between one and two of something. We say there is one book on the table but two books on the chair. And yet we make no grammatical distinction between two books and one hundred books. What is the logic of making a distinction between one and two, but not between two and a hundred. In Japanese every number changes the ending to the noun that it modifies. Isn't this more logical? Or why is it that in English we are not supposed to split an infinitive? You remember what an infinitive is. It is the form of the verb such as "to run" or "to talk" or "to believe." In English we are not supposed to put any words between the "to" and the rest of the verb form. Why? Because when English grammarians were standardizing the grammar, they turned to Latin as the authority for their decisions. Since in Latin the infinitive form is only

one word instead of the two we have in English, these grammarians decided that we should never "split" the two words in English. And yet to regularly split our infinitives is common practice as this sentence attests. So if there is no particular logic to English, why is it that certain forms are seen as more acceptable than others? Because the form of English that we use is a symbolic display of the group with which we identify. If we wish to be associated with the upper middle-class, then we probably use English quite close to what schools require. If we wish to be associated with rural, Southern, working-class whites, we probably put a twang in our voice and violate some particular rules of English that schools require such as the use of "ain't" and the free use of double negatives and try to sound like country music singers who are the ritual representatives of the rural, white South. If we wish to be associated with black Americans, then our language probably borrows some of the rules of Black English Vernacular (BEV) which is itself a variation of some of the rules of West African languages or perhaps we fill our sentences with some of the "jive talk" of black urban youth and music. At least since the twenties and the discovery by whites of jazz, white youth have raided the culture of black urban life for their style from black music (jazz, blues, R & B, soul, rap) to "jive talk" (cool, bad, groovy) to black clothes (white spats, hip hop, gangsta). Each generation of white teenagers has raided black culture for their symbols of rebellion.

Rituals and other symbolic displays provide one mechanism for the construction of identity and solidarity. They provide a site of struggle over whose symbols are to be accepted as dominant or who is to be allowed to present their symbols in rituals of resistance. Youth particularly like to appropriate symbols of the mainstream culture and use it for their own purposes often turning a symbol on its head—the peace sign used in the sixties (two fingers held up in a "V") was used as a war victory sign twenty years earlier. The long hair of the middle-class "hippies" has now become associated with working-class. Of course, many of us like to believe that our own style is simple good taste or cool and most like to think that it is independently arrived at. But if you think that your clothes are not symbolic of who you are then why is it that you wouldn't be caught dead wearing something that someone else wears all of the time. Underneath we understand that when we dress ourselves and style our hair and put on make-up that we are really costuming ourselves for a part in a ritual performance.

Exercise #7:

Photograph yourself (or draw a picture of yourself) and, in writing, analyze your style. Place it within cultural politics. What is the obvious first-order conflict? What is the less obvious second-order struggles represented by your style? Extra-credit if you dress in a recognizable alternative style for a whole day and observe and write-up the reaction of your friends. Do not confuse variations within one style as different styles. For example, a youth subculture style often referred to as "prep" has both casual and formal or business forms. Just because one is dressed for a job interview doesn’t mean one has changed styles.

LECTURE #8: POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND POWER

Cultural Studies emphasizes culture, but it does not ignore society. Since Cultural Studies brings together both the social sciences and the humanities/fine arts, those who work in Cultural Studies tend to understand the relationship between the social and the cultural to be dialectical. A dialectical relationship is one in which each part of a pair works on and against the other. As a result of treating the social-cultural dichotomy as dialectical, many in Cultural Studies believe that culture is not completely structured by the social. They believe that culture can have some effect on the social as well. For that reason alone the work of Cultural Studies is important work, since, theoretically at least, cultural critique might bring the kind of cultural awareness that will result in social change. But while agreeing that cultural critique can actually have effect on the social, many who work in Cultural Studies have a problem with the structuralist assumptions of power described in the Lecture #3. These "poststructuralists" are less confident that we can always tell when we are talking about a clear-cut social entity and when we are talking about a clear-cut cultural entity and, instead, the poststructuralists tend to treat the social-cultural dichotomy as more complex, confusing, and discursive. While not rejecting the idea that there are material and symbolic realms that might be called social and cultural, poststructuralists are more likely to treat the two as so ontologically intertwined with each other that it is often difficult to separate them. While agreeing that a dialectical relationship is a useful way to think of the social-cultural relationship, poststructuralists are even more likely than structuralists to see the relationship between the social and the cultural as mutually constitutive. For poststructuralists, culture is as much an influence on the structural as the structural is on the culture. As a result of the mutually constitutive role of the social and cultural, the sense of power shifts from one that sees power as located solely in the social to something that is located within both the social and the cultural.

While the structuralist sense of power described in the Lecture #3 might metaphorically be conceptualized as mechanistic, the power that will be discussed in this lecture might be metaphorically thought of as electric. That is to say that the structuralists have a tendency to think of power as something that works on people—changing them or moving them directly, even overtly—poststructuralists have a tendency to think of power as something that works in and through people—working almost invisibly so that people change without necessarily even realizing they have been controlled. Rather than power being something that people use to get others to do things in the same way that a bulldozer moves earth or a jackhammer pounds concrete, power is better thought of as something that flows through us as if we were nodes on an electric current line—silent and unnoticeable in its effect until you reach the end point. As teachers we don't so much "work on" our students as "touch" our students, making the connection necessary for the power of the sociocultural world to pass through us and them in its circuitous route through the sociocultural network. In a modern structural understanding, power is located in central locations and available to some who are in the right position and not available to others. To change a society all you have to do is get control of the center. A revolution to grab the mechanisms of national government makes it possible to change the society. In a postmodern, poststructural understanding, power is spread throughout the social network. Changing the center is not irrelevant but hardly
enough nor even necessary. The appropriate place of attack to transform a society is at its multiple nodes of power found in all of the periphery. To change the Ohio school system it is not enough, nor even very effective, to take over Columbus. Instead you have to change at the point that you see real power in existence—the individual classroom. In this way, transformation is both easier and more difficult. It is more difficult because instead of making one big change at the center, you must make hundreds of thousands of changes at the periphery. It is easier because you no longer have to think that as an individual there is nothing you can do to change the system, because as you change your own action in your own situation, you are creating change. In Cultural Studies, you find evidence of both structuralist and poststructuralist discourses. Neither has yet taken the upper-hand in trying to understand the way power works in the sociocultural realms.

Postindustrialism, Post-Fordism, and Late Capitalism

To better understand power in the poststructural sense it might help to understand some of the forms that power is understood to have taken in the contemporary world. The remainder of this lecture will focus on postindustrialism, post-Fordism, and late capitalism. Postindustrialism, postfordism, and late capitalism are all ways to refer to the present organization of the world economy. The terms are often used interchangeably. They are essentially synonyms. But they also point to slightly different understandings of what is important about this new economy. Postindustrialism alludes to the postmodern idea that we are moving out of a time in which large corporate factories are the major players in the economy. In their place are conglomerates who are more likely to make their money and gain their power through the electronic organization of knowledge then in the physical production of products. And to the extent that a physical product is actually produced the production process is likely to be heavily dependent on computers and robots. This latter point is sometimes called "postfordism." Postfordism takes the assembly line production process of Henry Ford as the metaphor for the modern, industrial age. Postfordism suggest that contemporary production is built more on robots and computers in which the ability to rapidly alter the production of products makes it possible to produce for the niche market rather than the mass market. Both postindustrialism and postfordism suggest that large numbers of manual workers on assembly lines are no longer needed. In their stead, corporations need a few well educated and highly trained workers to program, operate, and maintain the computers and robots that actually produce the products. The result is a wide-range of consumer goods, downsizing, decline of unions, increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, and a reduction in size of the middle-class. All of the above along with the internationalization of the economy is captured in the term "late capitalism."

In the world economy of today, corporations have become larger than countries. The availability of rapid and cheap transportation and communication make it possible for an American company to have its products made anywhere in the world and sold in this country. In the past, before the global economy, all the major companies of a product in the U. S. paid their labor the same wages which allowed them to pay American workers high wages to spend on consumer goods and to offer good benefits. But today American workers have to compete with workers in Asia and Latin America where there are few unions and few regulations protecting worker safety and the environment. Under late capitalism, corporations are able to pit state against state and nation against nation. They tell their local community to give them breaks from taxes and from safety and environmental regulations or they will move somewhere that will. They seem to work for short-term profit and
feel little loyalty to their workers, their
customers, or their communities. The noblesse oblige
document of the old
corporate world has ceased in the present
world. One has to appreciate the fact the anti-federal government rhetoric of the
Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties as embodied in Newt Gingrich, Ronald
Reagan, and the present 7 year attack on
President Clinton are fully congruent with
the rise of the multinational corporations
and their desire to escape any
governmental controls. When the
American federal government is so
weakened that it can not control the
boardrooms, who will be able to? This, of
course, is part of the message that many
of the protesters wanted to get across
during the recent “Battle in Seattle”
during the talks of the World Trade
Organization.

Industrial capitalism, beginning in the
last quarter of the eighteenth century,
needed large bureaucracies with a large
middle management. As the twentieth
century progressed, the proportion of the
workforce dedicated to these middle-
management positions continued to
increase. One of the results of this
historical trend was the increase in the
percentage of the population who were
middle-class and the present belief that
the United States was a country of the
middle-class. In fact, the middle-
management positions increased so
rapidly that the sons of the middle-class
were not numerous enough to fill all of
the openings. This made it possible for the
corporations to turn to the sons of
workers and immigrants to fill these
positions leading to the belief that, in
America, children were expected to be
more successful than their parents.
Around the middle Fifties, however, the
proportion of jobs available in middle-
management leveled off. For about 20
years the proportion remained about the
same, then in the late Seventies the size of
the middle-bureaucratic levels began to
decline. Today, under late capitalism,
more and more people are competing for
a lower and lower proportion of middle-
management positions. This change in
the job structure may have something to
do with how it was possible for children
of white immigrants during the Twenties,
Thirties, and Forties to move up into the
middle-class while it has been so difficult
for people of color to compete for middle-
class jobs since the late Sixties. Just
when people of color were allowed into
the middle-management jobs, the
percentage of these positions began to
decline. And this does not even include
the fact that the size of the potential
middle-class children eligible for middle-
class jobs doubled with the entry of
women into areas that had formally been
restricted to men.

As job anxiety increases and as
downsizing requires those with jobs to
work more hours with more responsibility
for little more pay, many people look to
blame others for problems that are located
in the social structure of the society. This
blame is often developed in the popular
culture. Movies, television, magazines,
books, and music all work to advance
certain myths that shift the blame for
social dissatisfaction from the way in
which the society is institutionalized to the
individual or to groups of minorities.
Rather than pointing out that late
capitalism necessarily leads to
unemployment, underemployment, and
stagnant wages, popular culture blames
the government or people of color or
immigrants or the poor. The constant
attack on these less powerful groups has
had its effects so that today it is accepted
as truth by large numbers of Americans
that government programs intended to
help the poor have actually hurt them.
Furthermore, most whites believe that
affirmative action actually discriminates
against whites in a manner that is more
egregious than the present and continuous
discrimination against blacks, Latinos,
American Indians, and Asians. The result
is not only the passage of laws to stop
affirmative action and welfare, but to
increase the wealth of the wealthy by
lowering their taxes disproportionately to
those of the middle-class. As a result of
the displacement of economic and job
anxiety from the late-capitalist,
postfordist, postindustrial society to individuals and groups of less power, the wealthy have not only been able to avoid blame but have been able to change the policies of the state to their own advantage. The wealthy have seen an extremely large jump in their share of the national wealth since Reagan's election. They now control more of the national wealth than any time since before the Great Depression.

Table 1: Percentage of National Wealth of the Top Individuals and Families*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of Total Wealth</th>
<th>% of Wealth of Top Individuals &amp; Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Top .5% Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Top 1% Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Top 1% Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Not only wealthy individuals and families have benefited from the shift of blame from the structural changes accompanying late capitalism, but the corporations have benefited as well. For example, in the early 1960s, 43% of public school funding in the United States came from corporations, today only about 17% of school funding comes from corporations. No wonder the homeowner

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* Individual wealth is defined as the cash surrender value (CSV) of total assets less liabilities and is a measure of the wealth currently available to the individual. The assets include owner-occupied housing, other real estate, all consumer durables, demand deposits and currency, time and savings deposits, bonds and other financial securities, corporate stock, unincorporated business equity, trust fund equity, the CSV of insurance, and the CSV of pensions. Liabilities include mortgage debt, consumer debt, and other debt. Trusts are measured at their actuarial value, which represents between 40 and 60 percent of the total reserves of trusts, depending on the year. Pensions are measured at their CSV, which represents a very small percentage, around 5 percent, of their total reserves. All other tangible and financial assets and liabilities are measured at full value. (From Edward N. Wolff & Marcia Marley, "Long-term Trends in U. S. Wealth Inequality" in Robert E. Lipsey & Helen Stone Tice, ed. The Measurement of Saving, Investment, and Wealth. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1989. p.769 & 786.)

Family wealth is undefined and culled from news reports from various periodicals across several years. These figures appear to be "commonly accepted" and while sometimes attributed to U. S. Government reports, I have been unable to confirm these figures. Edward Wolff's figures are 1 point higher for 1989 then the number reported here.
is balking at paying more school taxes; they are assuming a much large percentage of the cost today then thirty-five years ago. Furthermore, in 1960 corporations paid 23% of federal taxes, while in 1986 corporations paid 6.9% of federal taxes. As you can see the change in the social structure has had its effects on the way we culturally address our world and, in turn, the change in culture affects the social structure. The structural changes of late capitalism has helped form our present culture, but our present culture also influences the distribution of power and wealth at the material, social level.

The "Culture Wars"

At the 1992 Republican national convention, when Pat Buchannon announced that we were in the midst of a culture war, he was only bringing to the public arena something that many scholars had been discussing for several years: The belief that there was a new coalition of interests which seemed to cross established class, religious, and ethnic lines to forge a new axis of political struggle. In his 1991 book, sociologist James Hunter referred to the two sides of this struggle as "orthodoxy" and "progressivism." According to Hunter, Orthodoxy "is the commitment on the part of adherents to an external, definable, and transcendent authority." Progressivism "is the tendency to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life."* While most progressives would probably disagree with Hunter's characterization of progressivism (Hunter seems to favor orthodoxy), they would agree that there does seem to be a new cultural division between those who might be called "orthodox" and those who might be called "progressive" though exactly what that means is less clear.

Many of the most visible and intransigent political struggles today appear around this "orthodoxy-progressivism" axis involving such issues as abortion, prayer in school, flag burning, censorship, homosexuality, and "political correctness," to name just a few. During the recent House Judiciary Committee Impeachment Hearings, one Republican congressman stated that the difference between the Republicans and the Democrats on the impeachment issue was that the Republicans believe that there is one absolute Truth (orthodoxy) while the Democrats believe that truth is relative (progressivism). Unlike earlier social issues, it is not easy to correlate the position individuals will take based on their class, race, gender, ethnicity, or religion because all classes, races, genders, ethnicities, and religions have their orthodox and their progressive members.

Hunter is unclear as to the cause of this new culture war, but he (and others) seem to connect it to our transition from an industrial society to a postindustrial society. As we move into an era in which external, objective truth seems to be discredited by new knowledge from science and from other cultures, more and more people have begun to challenge the authority of tradition. At the same time, many people remain committed to these traditions. While this explanation seems to suggest that the "progressives" hold the upper hand of inevitable historical change in this "war," Hunter seems to believe that, while anything could happen, the orthodox actually are more likely to succeed because they are able to organize around a tightly coherent ideology that is easily communicated in the sound-bite communications of modern media politics. Those of us who are progressive might find that Hunter's professed "objectivity" is really just another example of the ideologically biased scholarship of orthodoxy conveniently finding justification for why their side is right.

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without acknowledging their ideological bias. We might argue that the easy accessibility of everyone to everything can't help but bring people to realize the impossibility of claiming that they have the one and only right view. And even if they remain committed to that orthodox idea, there is no way that these orthodox views can dominate a single nation except through unacceptable political and economic domination.

Cultural Studies as a field of study is under constant attack from the public spokespersons for orthodoxy because those in Cultural Studies are skeptical of an objective, neutral, and external standard for truth. If you read national magazines and major newspapers, you will find Cultural Studies, along with feminism and black studies, as the major recipients of conservative attacks on higher education. The conservatives accuse these fields of study of being "too political." Those who work within these fields do not deny that they are political, only that they are no more political than traditional scholars whose appeal to "objectivity" is seen as a political ideology in itself. Unlike the other ideologies discussed here, the cultural wars are less clearly tied to specific group interests. Perhaps the culture wars are a reflection in our culture of the struggle around the disruptions caused by our movement into postindustrial, postfordist, late capitalism in our social structures.

Conclusion. All culture is riddled with ideology. When you read an article or watch a television program that does not appear to have a political ideology, then very likely that article or program is informed by ideologies that you share. Since ideologies help construct what you take to be natural and moral, then these articles and programs seem to be apolitical and without ideology while actually, they are informed by some very basic ideologies and are very political. Frequently these apparently nonpolitical articles and programs are informed by a progressive or orthodox ideology. As you engage in cultural analysis and critique, you need to become aware of the way in which ideology fills culture and the way in which ideology colors your own meaning-making.

When we understand power as dispersed as poststructuralists do, then we have to ask ourselves where in this situation can we play a part in either continuing the direction of our public world or in attempting to channel it in other directions. If we adopt a purely modern structuralist understanding, then it doesn't seem that there is much that we can do except join large interest groups and work for their goals. If we accept a poststructural understanding of power, then it seems that we might be able to play a more direct, if smaller, role in the reproduction of or transformation of our society. Scholars in Cultural Studies overwhelmingly choose to play the role of transformer rather than of reproducer. As a citizen and as a professional, you will have a role to play. You must choose how to play it.

Exercise #8

Write a cultural analysis and critique of a cultural production that reveals some of the cultural politics that arise as a result of living in a post-industrial, postfordist, or late capitalist society. Please limit your paper to 2 pages.
LECTURE #9: CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND POWER: SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA

If language and discursive practices play a large role in the construction of our self and our identity as well as how we construct the identity of others, then culture becomes an important site of political struggle. Culture is worth struggling over because what becomes defined as culturally acceptable legitimizes the identities of some while delegitimizing the identities of others therefore influencing the way in which the underlying structural power relations are balanced. In this way even innocent nonpolitical aspects of culture such as clothes and music may become symbols in cultural politics. In the world of cultural politics, style and taste may reflect a deeper struggle over political, economic, and moral philosophy. Part of this struggle over culture reflects differing ideologies. We often use the term ideology to refer to a body of ideas that reflects an individual's or a group's political and moral view of the world. In Lecture #6, I defined ideology as an articulation of otherwise unconnected parts into mythologized or naturalized common sense. Even without knowing it, most of us, most of the time operate from particular ideological positions. When we comment on our world, we make certain assumptions about what is natural and moral. For example, today, while perhaps not as pervasive as two decades ago, we still tend to think that a child's mother is "naturally" more inclined to supervise a child's upbringing than the child's father. But the idea of a mother's "natural" inclination and competency to supervise her child's development is an idea promoted in the nineteenth century as a result of the rapidly growing middle-class and the desire to construct the domestic world of the home as the realm of the stay-at-home wife. Before that time, at least in the European nations and America, the father was understood to be the person best suited to oversee his child's upbringing, especially of his sons. In a very different kind of example, when we understand science to be an objective, neutral process of investigation, we accept, as natural, an ideological position developed in the eighteenth century movement known as the Enlightenment; the same movement associated with the rise of liberalism and leading to the American revolution and the founding of the United States.

Recognizing the ideological assumptions of those who are different from ourselves is often quite easy. When we read articles or watch movies that come from a different ideological position from our own, we recognize as "patently false" their assumptions and recognize the article as "politically biased." On the other hand, recognizing the ideological assumptions of those who are like ourselves is often quite difficult. When we read articles or watch movies that come from our own ideological position, they appear "true" and "reasonable." Since their assumptions are the same as ours, we often accept as "natural" and "objective" what is really ideological. One of the first steps in learning to do Cultural Studies is learning to recognize the ideological underpinnings of cultural productions whether the underlying ideology is different or the same as our own. While ideological assumptions are so numerous we could never catalogue them all, I am going to introduce you to a few common ideological positions. Please remember that the list of ideologies found in the following lectures is miniscule compared to the large number of possible orientations that might be assumed in any particular cultural production.

One of the most used terms in social analysis is the term "social class" and yet, there may be no other term as confused. What exactly is "class"? Well, as you might expect, it depends on who is talking and what they might be talking about.
Traditional sociology has understood class to be one form of social stratification. Stratification is a term that refers to the manner in which a society divides its people into different layers with different access to power. There are other forms of stratification other than class strata. For example, there is caste strata. When a society is marked by castes, that society divides its people into hierarchical layers in which a person is very unlikely to be able to move from the strata in which s/he is born to another. Of course, the classic caste society is that of old India in which there were named castes that divided the work of the society among the different castes and rewarded with prestige, power, and wealth these differing tasks differently. But there are aspects of caste societies in places other than India. For example, some scholars suggest that the racial system of the United States is a kind of caste system in which people of color occupy lower castes than whites.

In traditional sociology, a class society is different from a caste society. A class society layers people on two inter-related, yet different, forms of power—economic and status (this concept of class is called Weberian). Often referred to as socioeconomic status (SES), this traditional sociological approach suggests that a person's class position is based on a combination of that person's economic position and her/his social prestige. While most traditional sociologists accept this combination concept of social class, the ordinary American tends to think about social class in terms that only include the economic criterion. Most Americans equate a person's social class with her/his (or her/his family's) wealth and they tend to equate wealth with income. In other words, to Americans, the higher the yearly income the higher the social class.

On the other hand, in England, there is a tendency to think of class more in terms of social status rather than income. The English, probably as a remnant of their feudal past, tend to think of class as a social position that one is born into and educated to. The upper classes are descendants of the aristocracy. They speak and dress in particular ways. They are part of a particular social network. The middle classes are essentially those who work with their mind. They engage in what is sometimes called "symbolic labor" meaning they work with language and numbers. As a result, they too have a distinct manner of speaking and dressing. They too have their own well developed networks. The working classes are those who primarily work with their hands. They engage in manual labor and, as a result, they also have their distinct manner of speaking and dressing and have their own networks of relations. While it is true that typically an upper class individual has wealth, one does not have to be wealthy to be a part of the upper classes. One only has to have the right symbols of membership—the right accent, the right clothes, the right family name, the right education, the right religion, the right values, etc. The same is true of the middle and working classes. Just because one earns a lot of money building houses does not make one middle class. If you labor with your hands, and you speak with a working class accent and drink working class beer and live in a working class neighborhood, then you are working class no matter how much money you may bring in a year.

So while Americans tend to locate people in the class system by income and the English locate people by social status, traditional sociologists suggest that it is really a combination of the two. But social class is more confusing than just the differences among the Americans, the English, and the traditional sociologists. There is also a marxist understanding of social class. Marxists understand class to be based on ones relation to the means of production. Every society has a dominant means of production depending on their moment in history. During feudal England the means of production was land. Those who owned or controlled the most and best agricultural land were the upper classes. That is the basis of the
aristocracy's power. They controlled the land and, therefore, the product produced on it. Those who did not own or control land (i.e., did not control the means of production) were forced to sell their labor to the aristocracy for the right to get the food, clothing, and shelter they needed to survive. The basic class system was based on a dialectic between the aristocracy and the peasant.

In the Sixteenth century, the wealth produced by the marketplace found in towns began to rival the power of the products of land. The townspeople (called the bourgeoisie) began to gain more wealth and, therefore, more power. These "middleclass" merchants, bankers, and artisans (they were neither members of the aristocracy nor of the peasant classes) developed enough wealth to challenge the power of the aristocracy. With the development of colonialism, world trade, and, finally, industrialization, the power of money itself (capital) became stronger than the power of land ownership. The means of production shifted from land to capital. Capital meant the ability to own businesses and, therefore, the ability to accumulate more capital. This resulted in a shift of power from the aristocracy to the new upper classes—the capitalists. In modern societies the capitalists own the means of production, and the workers sell their labor to the capitalists, in a similar manner as the peasants sold their labor to the aristocracy. To marxists, the class system in modern times consists of a dialectic between the capitalists who own and control the means of production and the workers. There is also a middle class of small merchants, professionals, and middle-level bureaucrats in corporations and government who have one foot on each side of the dialectic.

In the United States, our culture tries to make class invisible. The myths and narratives of our culture act as if social class is not important. Whereas in England, the upper classes try to hide their class status using class markers that are only visible to those who are also in the upper classes and remain invisible to those who are not in the know. We have a love-hate relationship with those of wealth. We all want to be wealthy, but we also all want to be thought of as just ordinary middle-class people. And no one wants to admit to being "lower" class or "poor." The result is that nearly every American considers her/himself to be middle class. I wouldn't be surprised if Bill Gates, who is by far the wealthiest man in the world (his worth is now estimated to be around 85 billion dollars nearly 50 billion dollars more than his nearest rival), thinks of himself as basically a middle-class guy. And those who come from anything other than complete poverty think of themselves as middle class. Ones dad may be a day laborer on a construction crew, but his income allows them to own (through mortgage) their own home and so they think of themselves as middle class.

So what does it mean when we talk about social class? When I suggest that there are underlying material conflicts that revolve around class and that there are cultural politics that reflect that underlying struggle, what exactly am I talking about? First of all, most people in Cultural Studies are likely to use a marxist construction of class than the weberian construction. Most people in Cultural Studies are likely to understand class as something about a dialectic between those who own and control the means of production (the capitalists) and those who sell their labor to the capitalists (the workers) with a middle class sharing interests with both sides of the dialectic. Let's start with the upper class or the capitalists. Who are they? Remember in Lecture #8, when I pointed out that 10% of the people in this country own nearly 70% of its wealth. Let's think of that 10% as the upper class—the capitalists. Think about how wealthy this country really is and then think about how much 70% of that wealth really is. What that means is that those people who have an income of
$200,000 dollars a year are probably not part of that top 10%. Good lawyers, high but not top corporate management, good salespeople, hard working physicians, run-of-the-mill football players can earn $200,000 a year. They are all part of the 90% of us who are struggling for a piece of the remaining 30% or the wealth. They are of the upper-middle class perhaps, but still the middle class. They are those who must earn a living and do so through symbolic labor. They are merchants, middle management in corporations, professionals. Their major income is through salary or commission.

So then, who are the working class? The working class are all of those people and their families who work (or would work if not unemployed) in wage jobs or the trades. They are the manual laborers, the service workers. They own their own small trades such as electricians, builders, and plumbers. There is obviously a grey area between the middle and working classes and there is much movement back and forth between them. The reality is, however, that there is little movement between the upper classes and the middle classes. Once a person has successfully reached that top 10% of the wealthy, her/his descendants are very slow to drop out of it. If one looks at the mobility tables one can see that there is not much mobility between the top and the middle even though people with yearly incomes as low as $80,000 are in the same category as Bill Gates's $26,000,000 yearly income.

When we start paying attention to distribution of wealth in our society, we begin to realize that the United States is structured by class. In fact, studies of income mobility show that the chances of a person moving up from lower income to middle income or upper income is just about the same for the United States as it is for most European nations. While we and they tend to think of European nations as more "class bound," the data do not support that idea. Class is just as influential in the determination of success in the United States as it is in European nations. Because we are a class-based society and because our social classes are connected to our underlying economic system much of our culture is constructed of texts and performances that promote myths and narratives that support our capitalist economy. But because the class system itself represents a conflict among classes, we shouldn't be surprised to find that our culture not only promotes myths and narratives that support capitalism but which resist and challenge it as well. The struggles among the classes at the material level are reflected in our culture as well. The rest of this lecture is going to explore some of the ideologies found in our culture which reflect the capitalist class system within which we live.

Liberalism

One of the most fundamental political ideologies in American culture is that of liberalism. Now when I speak of "liberalism" in this course, I will usually not be using the term in the same way that it is used in the popular press today. One way to remember this is to repeat this phrase to yourself: "Ronald Reagan is a liberal." (Yes, that is not a misprint, Ronald Reagan is a liberal and so is George W. Bush and Jim McCain and Newt Gingrich.) Liberalism is the political philosophy that became fully developed in the eighteenth century, but which began much earlier as the modern, bourgeois (i.e., middle-class) societies began to replace the feudal, aristocratic societies of the middle ages. Liberalism advanced the philosophical arguments for a society based on representative democracy and private capitalism. It is the underpinning philosophy of those who wrote our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. While it has many tenets and variations, Kenneth Strike, a contemporary philosopher, has made a good case for three critical tenets that liberalism accepts that distinguishes it from others.
First, and most importantly, it advances the idea that individuals are intellectually and morally autonomous. That is to say that liberalism accepts the idea that human beings have the ability and the moral duty to separate themselves from their fellow citizens and culture and to think for themselves. These two ideas derive directly from the rise of science and the Protestant Reformation (and Catholic Counter-reformation). We have the ability and moral responsibility to think for ourselves. For this reason liberalism has a strong commitment to reason-based decision-making.

A second idea of liberalism is that social hierarchy should be based on merit rather than inheritance. If we accept the idea of intellectual and moral autonomy then we have to believe that one's social position should result from an individual's autonomous actions rather than from being born of the right parents. Liberalism does not reject social hierarchies, only inherited social hierarchies. This principle is often referred to as meritocracy. From the principle of meritocracy, one can derive the commitment to representative democracy—a system of governance in which individuals select who is to serve over them in the political system.

The third major idea of liberalism, according to Strike, is the belief in the categorical distinction between the public and the private. In liberalism, the public is usually equated with the state (i.e., the government); therefore, under a liberal philosophy there is a distinct boundary between the rights of the state and the rights of the individual. In American politics, all major politicians accept these three ideas. Their arguments with each other are about how to interpret these ideas, not about their fundamental truth or rightness. The arguments between the so-called "conservatives" and the so-called "liberals" that we read about in the newspapers might be better depicted as between classic and progressive liberals rather than between conservatives and liberals. Classic liberals (who might roughly relate to what newspapers call "conservatives") tend to believe in autonomy, unbridled meritocracy, and a very small state. Progressive liberals (who might roughly relate to what newspapers call "liberals") tend to believe in autonomy with a safety net, tempered meritocracy, and a little larger role for the state. (I use the term "roughly relate" in the above sentences because there is not a direct correspondence to these positions, since the terms "liberal" and "conservative" as used in today's press each has several differing wings which line up differently along these three tenets of liberalism.) The thing to remember is that underneath so much of our culture is the ideology of liberalism and the acceptance of the ideas of autonomy, meritocracy, and the public/private dichotomy.

If we look at the ideology of liberalism in light of power, we can easily recognize that liberalism is a cultural production that works in the interests of capitalism. If you remember the earlier discussion of the movement from feudal times to modern times, you remember that that move was based on a shift from land to capital as the basis for economic power. As a result of that shift, power shifted from the aristocracy to the capitalists. In justifying their new found power and the form of government that it supported, the liberal ideology arose. Today the emphasis on liberal values such as autonomy, meritocracy, and the benefits of a large private sphere work in the interests of those who control the means of production. Liberalism can be seen, then, as a cultural strategy to justify the reproduction of the present capitalist state.

Capitalism & Consumerism

Perhaps the most pervasive ideology in American discourse is that which is produced directly by capitalism itself. Capitalism is, of course, an economic system based on private enterprise and the free circulation of capital, but many
people do not recognize that it influences the way Americans see their world in a direct way just as much as, if not more than, it does through liberalism indirectly. As mentioned before, capital is responsible for the rise of the middle class itself. The United States was built on the ideology of the new merchant middle-class as power shifted from the aristocracy to the capitalist. While certainly much of the colonization of America was based on the desire for land and its resources, recent scholarship has realized that the potential of America as a commercial outlet was at least as important and, perhaps, the most important reason for colonizing the Americas. Those who came to the colonies were more likely to be interested in commerce than in farming. This commercial orientation of the original European colonists created a culture often seen as embodied in the "Yankee trader" and continues to exercise its influence on our culture today.

For example, in a fully developed capitalist society one is not judged so much by what one produces as by what one consumes. That is, we do not give high status to those who contribute to the society by actually producing something, but to those who are able to display their wealth through their consumption. We are much more impressed by someone who is worth a lot of money and can buy high prestige clothes then we are by someone who is able to make her/his own clothes. In a similar vein, we judge the worth of a product not by its usefulness to society, but by its ability to earn a profit. A product is important as a commodity rather than as a contribution to the betterment of society. Nor do we judge a company's worth by the value and quality of the product it produces but by the profit it makes. In other words, we value a company that makes useless and low quality products more than one that makes useful and high quality products, if the former makes more of a profit. The idea that a company has the "right" to earn a profit is so deeply ingrained in the American ethos that Americans now seem willing to give away all right to regulate publicly owned resources such as minerals and the airwaves. Perhaps even more severe is the creation of the "corporation," a concept developed during the European colonization of the world to reduce the risk of explorations and colonial enterprises by relieving the owners of personal responsibility for the company's debts. The corporate right to be treated as having the rights of an individual without any particular corporate persons holding moral or legal responsibilities has led to the contemporary situation in which many corporations act with an eye only on profit as if they have few responsibilities to their workers or the communities within which they are situated. The result of this is that they can pit worker against worker and "bust the unions" or they can pit one community against another by threatening to leave unless that community reduces it taxes and eases its demand to maintain a clean environment. Given the ideology of capitalism that underlies American discursive practices, to even suggest something might be wrong with the above practices is seen by many to be "unAmerican."

**Conclusion.** We can understand the sociocultural realm as involving a dialectical relationship between the structures of society and the texts and performances of our culture. At the structural level we recognize that we live in a class-based society that results from our capitalist, consumerist economy. The class conflict that exists at that material level is reflected in the movies, songs, books, television and other texts and productions found in our culture. As people construct their own identity and that of others and as they construct culture and its meaning, they do so as *bricoleurs* utilizing those cultural elements that are available to them. While not autonomous, they do have agency, and as agents they have the ability to participate in cultural politics. But to do so, they must be able to recognize the way in which the hegemonic process of the major institutions work in the interest of
Exercise #9

Find a short article from a magazine that may appear to many American readers to be neutral or apolitical but that reveals an underlying ideology of liberalism or capitalism. Write a short (one page) analysis elaborating the underlying ideology and its political and social implications.

LECTURE #10: CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND POWER: RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

While social class in one of the most important structural elements, it is not the only one. While there are real material conflicts around social class, there are also real material conflicts that get constructed as race, gender, or sexuality in our cultural productions. Ever since Europeans set foot on this continent with the belief that it was their God-given right to exploit the land and the people, race has played an important part in the distribution of power and wealth in our nation. While the meaning of race has changed through our history, some people have been given chaste-like identities based on a cultural construct called "race." The distribution of power and wealth have also been effected by gender. After all, when my father was born, his mother was not allowed to vote because of her sex. And today, while many women have been able to achieve positions of wealth and power, women are still more likely to live in poverty than men. The distribution of power and wealth is also related to sexual orientation. For example, today one of the most important financial impacts on a person's life is the health benefits that go along with full-time employment. And yet those benefits only go to those who work for certain large companies and to their spouses and children. Only a few of those companies offer the full benefits to the lifetime partners of gays and lesbians. The regular exclusion of gays and lesbians from jobs is another real material conflict. Even today, many gay and lesbian teachers fear that they will be fired if their homosexuality becomes known. And, finally, there is no more basic material conflict than the bodily violence that people of color, women, and gay/lesbians suffer for no other reason than their race, sex, or sexuality. These material inequities both influence and are influenced by our cultural construction of race, gender, and sexuality.

Racialization

It may come as a surprise to you to have learned in Lecture #3 that there is no biological category called "race." To most people in the world, and especially to Americans, the idea that race is not a natural category seems absurd. We are so used to thinking of people in terms of race; it just seems natural. And yet as I explained in Lecture #3, the smallest biological category available for classification is the species. When we get to a subspecies level, we go beyond anything that can claim to be "natural." Now to claim that race is not a biological category is not to suggest that people do not inherit their physiology from their parents. Of course they do. It is only a claim that the specific categories that we call "races" are socially and culturally constructed rather than biologically determined.

Through the years there have been many classifications of race. As late as 1950 a serious scholarly article was published in a scholarly journal by a
respected scientist claiming 6 different human races and another claiming 30 races. As I mentioned in Lecture #3, when I was in elementary school my geography textbook specifically taught that there were three human races: "Caucasion," "Mongoloid," and "Negroid." Today, however, scientists overwhelmingly agree that these categories do not exist in the natural world. How do we decide whether or not a person belongs in one race or another? In the early part of this century a U.S. court ruled that Middle-Easterners (i.e., people from Egypt, Lebanon, Persia, etc.) were no longer to be considered "Negroid" but were to be considered "Caucasion." Until that court case, people from the Middle-East were put in the same category as those descended from sub-Saharan peoples. Today they are considered descended from those whose ancestry is supposedly located in the Caucuses.

If race is not a biological category, what is it? Simply put, it is a discursive category. It exists in our language and culture rather than in the natural world. Today, in the United States, we no longer talk of "Negroid" and "Mongoloid" preferring instead to use the terms "Black" and "Asian." We still do use the term "Caucasian," but because of its ideologically based "scientific-like" language, most scholars and socially concerned activists recommend that we abandon this term as well and refer to those who appear to be descended from Europeans as "whites" instead. Asians tend to prefer to be called "Asian" rather than "Oriental," saving the latter term for cultural objects such as rugs, food, languages, and religions. Since the Sixties, race as a linguistic category has become very complex and confusing. Racial linguistic categories have come to have at least two different conceptual claims. Sometimes when people use a racial category they are referring to cultural heritage (i.e., ethnicity) and sometimes to biological classification (i.e., subspecies). This distinction first became noticeable in the Seventies when the term "Afro-American" began to be used. That term has been replaced by the term "African-American" which was a conscious effort by civil rights leaders to place an emphasis on ethnicity rather than biology.

While typically we understand race in this country around the divisions of white, black, yellow, and (sometimes) brown: the racialization of peoples is found all over the world and takes many different forms. Any time a people justify their action toward others on biological inheritance then they are "racializing" the situation. Certainly the Germans in the Thirties racialized Jews and Gypsies. In the recent Bosnian war, Serbs were quoted as having purposely raped Croatian women in the hopes of impregnating them and, therefore, "diluting" the Croatian bloodline. That is racism. It is racism even though the only difference between the Serbs and the Croats is that one is Eastern Orthodox and the other Roman Catholic and one uses the Cyrillic alphabet and the other the Roman. They speak the same language, use the same dialect, look the same, and have shared the same land for centuries. It seems that racial differences justifies inhumane treatment of others more easily than cultural differences.

Today, whenever we racialize our world, we draw upon mixed referents. Sometimes people use racialization in the biological sense that was used to justify colonization, suppression, and exploitation. At other times, however, racialization is no more than just "ethnicity" and appeals to a sense of peoplehood, a building of solidarity. This
confusion underlies much of the rhetorical battle addressing affirmative action. While certainly not the only confusing issue at play in this political issue, the confusion over whether or not we are talking about ethnicity/culture or whether we are talking about biological heritability makes a difficult issue even more difficult. For us in this course, what is important is to realize that when an event or issue is racialized, it is a clear indicator of ideology (of politics) at work.

Patriarchy

Whereas race can make no claim to being a natural category, the claims that sex has a place in biology is generally accepted. However, while sex (i.e., male and female) is generally accepted as a natural category, gender is not.* The most widely accepted convention today is to treat "sex" as a referent to a biological category and to treat "gender" as a referent to particular social roles or to cultural expectations associated with sex categories. So the fact that one can be classified as "female" or "male" is a biological claim, but how one expresses ones "femininity" or "masculinity" is sociocultural. In fact, a female can be quite "masculine" while a male can be quite "feminine." Today it is common for males and females to speak of their "masculine" and "feminine" sides. While scholars accept the distinction between sex and gender, many ordinary people treat gender as biological rather than sociocultural. The "naturalization" of gender (i.e., treating gender as a biological category) is clearly an act of ideology. What is to count as "feminine" and what is to count as "masculine" is largely, if not completely, socially constructed and has political implications.

Since the Sixties there has been a massive amount of research to try and clarify the behavioral differences between males and females. After 30 years of prodigious research, there are only four psychological differences that can be supported by research. Three of those differences do not appear until adolescence and, therefore, can not be conclusively shown to be biologically caused. The only difference that appears from birth and can, therefore, stake any claim to being a biological difference is in an area of behavior variously referred to as exploratory behavior, instrumentality, and aggressiveness. There is no satisfactory English term to label this behavior but it appears that from birth, on the average, males engage in more exploratory, instrumental, or aggressive behavior than females. But we must be careful to realize that these statements only refer to statistical averages and that there are millions of females who are more exploratory, instrumental, or aggressive than millions of males.

That gender has been naturalized is itself an ideological act, but when the self and the world is gendered, we are also talking about ideology. When certain bodies are seen not as "female" but as "feminine," or not as "male" but as "masculine," then we are inscribing culture onto (and into) the body. By providing status and real reward and power to those who have certain kinds of gendered bodies, we inject politics into the body. And then when power is distributed by privileging one gendered form of behavior over another, politics becomes even more insinuated. It is one thing to raise boys and girls to be masculine and feminine, it is another to structure a society so that those who exhibit masculine behaviors are better rewarded than those who exhibit feminine behaviors. The ideological process of forming the life of a society around masculine traits or through customs and
laws that privilege males might be called **patriarchy**. As an ideology, patriarchy "naturalizes" and therefore, makes invisible, sociocultural constructions. A patriarchal society is said to be built on such masculine values as competition instead of cooperation, instrumentality instead of relationality, hierarchy instead of heterarchy, and power instead of strength. When we approach our world as if it is "naturally" competitive, instrumental, and hierarchical, we have allowed the ideology of patriarchy to make invisible its political agenda. Today we find these naturalized gendered categories under challenge in many areas. Certainly pop culture has had its androgynous characters from The-Artist-Formerly-Known-as-Prince to Rue Paul to Pat on Saturday Night Live. But while these categories are being challenged in some places, they are still the dominant ideological orientation.

**Heteronormativity**

Just as racialization and patriarchy make sociocultural constructions appear natural so heteronormativity naturalizes sexual orientation. While no one denies that people have real physical differences, the creation of natural categories within which to place different physiques is a social creation. While no one denies that people have real sex differences, the creation of natural sex categories within which to place certain behavioral displays is a social construction. In the same way, while it may be true that different individuals have a wide range of different objects of sexual desire, the division of this continuum into two completely separate and pure categories is social. Rather than two totally separate categories, a more accurate reflection of people's sexual orientation would place them on a continuum.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS A CONTINUUM**

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**SEXUAL ORIENTATION AS A BOUNDED CATEGORY**

- homosexuality
- bisexuality
- heterosexuality
Recent scholarship suggests that the categorization of individuals as "homosexual" or "heterosexual" is relatively recent in origin. As bounded categories they did not exist until perhaps the Nineteenth century. Before this time, people were allowed more flexibility in their sexual orientation. Just because one might have found a particular member of the same sex arousing would not have brought into doubt one's "heterosexuality" or make one a "homosexual" or a "bisexual." People were allowed a variety of attachments without having to declare themselves within a particular category. This is not to argue that in the past people were accepting of homosexual activity; it is just that we had not yet established strong social categories of sexual orientation so that one felt the need to establish as part of one's identity whether one was a "hetero" or "gay/lesbian" or "bi."

With the construction of bounded identities of sexual orientation, people have to establish their identities both to themselves and to others. This is done through symbolic displays so that small things or events may be used to establish identity. The focus on sexual identity has become stronger in recent years. Fifty years ago it was generally accepted that young adolescents would engage in sexual play with members of the same sex (actual physical contact though not usually to completion). Today thirteen-year-olds are more likely to engage in sexual play with members of the other sex. The "heterosexual" play of today may be just as awkward and exploratory and not to be taken seriously as the "homosexual" play of the Fifties (except, of course, that sexual play between members of different sexes can result in pregnancy), but one can't help but wonder if the strengthening of boundaries between "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" and the growing importance of sexual identity as a primary social category hasn't had a part in the shift in form of this early adolescent sex play leading to the inappropriately early experimentation with fully developed sexual activity that now marks many ten, eleven, and twelve year olds.

The process of forming the life of a society around heterosexuality or through customs and laws that privilege heterosexuality is called heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is the naturalizing of the bounded categories of sexual orientation. It is the way in which these naturalized categories permeate the cultural forms of society—in our literature, our movies, our music, our clothes, our magazines, and our values. The way in which the society is organized as if everyone (at least every legitimate person) fits into the "heterosexual" category. It uses these naturalized categories as justifications for political action such as the Colorado initiative to deny local districts to have civil rights laws addressing sexuality. It exists in the regular practice of firing gay teachers. It is the way in which individuals feel the need to identify themselves as "hetero," "gay/lesbian," or "bi." Until very recently all advertising presented its characters as "hetero." Today, like gender, naturalized heterosexuality is being challenged in several spheres. As pop stars such as Madonna and advertisers such as Calvin Kline have appropriated the symbols of the gay communities, we find a destabilization of the bounded categories of sexual orientation, even if only symbolically and in limited fashion. This destabilization may be tied to the increasing naturalization of sexuality as bounded categories that I mentioned at the beginning of this section. While we may find some examples that challenge the bounded categories of "heterosexuality" and "homosexuality," most still accept them as natural categories and, as ideology, heteronormativity organizes and forms much of our culture.

Conclusion. Whether we see the relationship between the social and the cultural as structuralists (as a dialectic between two different categories of sociocultural phenomena) or as poststructuralists (as separate but
The intertwined linguistic categories), the material politics of our society is also played out in our cultural politics. By trying to find, mark, analyze, and critique the cultural politics that exists in our cultural productions; we are better able to understand the key material struggles that exist even when hidden from view. When we understand that the cultural representations are not mirror reflections of those material conflicts, but are themselves moves in the political “spin” game; then we are able to realize why some people become so upset and angry over seemingly innocuous things. Why do many young blacks resist the teaching of the schools? And why does William Bennett insist that all Americans must learn the same cultural facts? Why do so many women resist the media portrayal of gender? And why does Hollywood continue to insist that real men look and act like Sylvester Stalone? Why do so many gays and lesbians resist the claim that homosexuality is immoral or a psychological disorder? And why does Jerry Fallwell claim that Tellytubies Po is subversive, gay role model. The cultural politics that these examples reflect help us understand the real material politics that go along with race, gender, and sexuality. If we are not aware of the way that culture works in the bricolaged construction of identity and culture, then we may not be aware of the way in which certain political interests, particularly the interests of the dominant elites, work to their advantage. Whether we are white, black, Asian, Latino, or American Indian, we may not fully understand the privileges that go along with being white in a white-dominated racist society. Whether we are male or female, we may not fully understand the privileges that go along with being male in a patriarchal society. Whether we are straight or gay or lesbian or bi, we may not fully understand the privileges that go along with being straight. Through the analysis and critique of cultural productions, we may be able to better understand these politics and act in ways consistent with our nation’s commitment to democracy and equity. We may more fully understand that as citizens our responsibility to public life goes far beyond voting, it includes participating in the construction of our cultural myths and narratives in such a way as to resist anti-democratic ideologies and advance democratic ones.

Exercise #10:

Find three different cultural productions representing three different cultural formations (i.e., television, movies, magazines, advertisements, photography, art, style, music, etc.). Analyze the cultural productions to reveal how the politics of race, gender, or sexuality is contested. Discuss whether or not the ideology is uncritically presented or is being challenged, resisted, or struggled over. Discuss some of the possible social and political implications of this ideological orientation. (Maximum length = 3 pages.)
GLOSSARY

Agency: The capacity to make choices from a limited range of alternatives presented to us by our sociocultural surroundings.

Agent: One who has agency.

articulation: The process through which we connect any particular signs or utterances to other signs or utterances while refusing to connect it to still other signs or utterances.

Autonomous individual: An individual person who has the capacity and the moral duty to think things through for themselves—independent of one’s culture and one’s friends and associates.

Autonomy is the belief that individuals have the capacity and the moral duty to think things through for themselves—independent of one’s culture and one’s friends and associates.

Bricolage: a French term for "bricklaying" originally used by the French Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Straus as a metaphor for how culture is built up from the stuff at hand. It was taken up by the Cultural Studies scholars at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies to suggest that in the construction of identity, we operate like a bricklayer (bricoleur). Since it is a foreign term, it is usually written in italics.

Canon (canonical texts): The canon is that set of texts, selected by those scholars with the power, as the best and most important set of texts in a field.

Canonical texts: texts which are recognized by the leading figures of that conversation as the most important and are, therefore, frequently referenced (the Canon).

Connotation: the full set of possible signifieds associated with a particular signifier.

Cultural productions: The texts and performances found in culture.

Cultural formations: Different forms in which culture can be expressed such as television, movies, magazines, advertisements, photography, art, style, music, etc.)

Culture: a site of multiple political struggles. In modernist social theory, culture refers to those arbitrary patterns of behavior which one learns from one’s fellow members of the group. In postmodernist social theory, culture should be understood as a production and a performance.

Culture (Folk): Indigenous lived culture.

Culture (High): Culture as traditionally understood in the humanities and fine arts. Those great works by people creating at the highest level of excellence as determined by the social elite and their representatives.

Culture (Lived): Culture as generally understood by anthropologists. When what we mean by culture is the way in which ordinary people live their lives.
Culture (Mass): Those cultural productions produced by corporations and distributed in vast amounts. Mass culture is sometimes equated with popular culture and sometimes it is understood to be something distinct from popular culture.

Culture (Popular): Those cultural productions taken up and created by ordinary people. Sometimes popular culture is equated with mass culture and sometimes it is treated as distinct.

Denotation: the dominant usage or connection of a signified to a signifier.

Dialectic: One of the oldest forms of argument or logic. Found as early as Socrates dialogues. Became associated with Hegelian philosophy and then in Marxist social theory. A Dialectical relationship is one in which each part of a pair works on and against the other. In their oppositional relationship each forms the other and together they come to form something larger or other than the two.

Discourse: the language, themes, myths, grammars, cultural productions, etc. of any particular long term "conversation." In Michel Foucault's social theory discourse should always be considered with practices as discursive practices.

Discursive Practices: A term associated with Michel Foucault which implies that the discourse and institutions of a society are intertwined to such an extent that for any practical purpose they ought to be thought of as inseparable.

Dominant readings: those readings in which the meaning of a text is the most obvious or "natural." It is the "commonsense" reading. They work in the interest of the ruling elites.

Enculturation: The internalization of the cultural patterns, values, and knowledges of a group. Enculturalization might be thought of as the bringing inside our body the languages of our culture.

Figures of speech: alters a sign from its common meaning to some other meaning by making uncommon connections and associations with other signs (also called imagery, tropes).

Grammar: the syntax of a short unit such as a sentence or paragraph.

Hegemony is the process through which the ruling groups convince those without power and without wealth that they do not deserve power and wealth and that those who have power and wealth deserve to have it. They are able to accomplish this by controlling the social and cultural institutions which, in turn, provide the appearance that the ruling elites maintain their power and wealth in legitimate ways. It might be understood as the process through which the powerful create and maintain a consensus in society.

Heteronormativity: the process of forming the life of a society around heterosexuality or through customs and laws that privilege heterosexuality.

Hyperbole: a figure of speech which uses exaggeration or overstatement.

Identity might be thought of as the way we present our "Self" to others and to ourself through socially defined categories. In other words, identity might be thought of as the way we make meaning of our Self.
Ideology: a body of ideas that reflects an individual's or a group's political and moral view of the world. Ideology is not always recognized and yet it influences all meaning. It might be helpful to think of ideology as an articulation of otherwise unconnected parts into mythologized or naturalized common sense.

Imagery alters a sign from its common meaning to some other meaning by making uncommon connections and associations with other signs (also called figures of speech, tropes).

instrumental: related directly and exclusively to mundane use

Langue: a French term best translated as "language" or the "rules of language." Langue is usually associated with modernist linguists attempts to develop a science of language. Since it is a foreign term it is usually written in italics.

Late Capitalism: The economic system as found in the industrialized nations near the end of the twentieth century.

Liberalism: a political philosophy associated with the Enlightenment and, in turn, with modernism. According to Kenneth Strike three major themes of liberalism are belief in the autonomous individual, meritocracy, and the public/private dichotomy.

Meritocracy: The liberal idea that social hierarchy is desirable when one's place in that hierarchy is derived from individual merit rather than from one's inherited status.

Metonymy: a figure of speech in which one thing is used to represent another that is closely associated with it.

Modernism: The historical era following feudalism marked by belief in reason, science, progress, and humanism.

Myth might be understood to be the denotative reading of a text. Myths are the unquestioned ideas upon which narratives build.

Naturalize: The process by which we come to assume that socially constructed reality is constructed by nature—that something is "only natural."

Oppositional readings: those readings in which the meaning of a text is challenged by questioning the underlying myths or revealing the rhetorical moves which make the text persuasive. They work in the interest of the non-elites.

Orthodoxy: according to James Hunter orthodoxy "is the commitment on the part of adherents to an external, definable, and transcendent authority."*

Parole: a French word best translated as "speech" or a "speech act." Parole is usually associated with rejection of the possibility of a science of language since speech is particular to a specific situation and not able to be abstracted to the general case. Since it is a foreign term it is usually written in italics.

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Patriarchy: At the structural level, patriarchy refers to the system of sex/gender relations which places the bulk of the power in hands of males at all levels of society and, particularly, in all aspects of public life. At the cultural level patriarchy might be understood to refer to the process of forming the life of a society around masculine traits or through customs and laws that privilege males.

Poetics: the syntax of a large text such as a novel.

Position: the place in a hierarchical relationship that result from discourse.

Postfordism: A term used to describe the manufacturing process that has accompanied postindustrialism. It suggests a move away from large assembly line production toward information age products.

Postindustrialism: the period in social-economic history in which large bureaucratic corporations of heavy industry has given way to flatter organizations designed to take advantage of the communications revolution. (Also referred to as the information age.)

Postmodernism: An intellectual movement of the Twentieth Century which some claim as no less then a wholly new historical era following modernism. It is marked by a skepticism of claims to rationality, objectivity, and progress. It is often seen as the broadest term of the many used to describe these claimed historic shift and would include all of those other intellectual movements such as post-industrialism, post-Marxism, post-feminism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism.

Poststructuralism (poststructuralists): the postmodern social theory associated with the French linguists and sociologists who believe that the meaning of a text (including a social text) has no fixed meaning and, therefore, there is no objective foundation and no possibility for a science of language or society.

Practices: In Michel Foucault's social theory, practices refer to the institutionalized human relationships and technologies that exist at any particular time for any particular people. For Foucault practices are so intertwined with discourse that they should always be considered together as a single concept he called discursive practices.

Pragmatics is the relationship between an utterance and the people making (presenting and reading) the utterance.

Progressivism: according to James Hunter progressivism "is the tendency to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life."

Racialization: The process in which people impose a racial element into a social situation.

Reproduction: The process through which societies replicate their social organization from generation to generation.

Ritual: a formalized, symbolic performance. That aspect of an act which is a formalized, symbolic performance.

Second-order meanings: the meanings that are made at such an intuitive level that they go unnoticed even when reflected upon at a first look.

Self: The Self should be thought of as a "social self" that combines that part of the individual that serves as its agent and that part of the individual which has internalized the culture. The Self should never be confused with an autonomous agent.

Semantics: The relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Semiotics is the formal study of signs and sign systems.

Sign: most broadly stated a gesture which is able to point to things which are not present. In Saussurian linguistics, the sign is the smallest unit of language is made up of a signifier and a signified.

Signified: One of two parts of a sign in Saussurian linguistics. A signified is the concept that a person holds in their mind which becomes associated with a signifier.

Signifier: One of two parts of a sign in Saussurian linguistics. A signifier is the concrete, material part of the sign. For example, it is the actual ink marks of a word written on paper or the actual sound waves of a word spoken out loud.

Sign-set: a set of signs associated with each other.

Social Identity: the way we make meaning of others by placing them in our cultural categories.

Socialization: the internalization of the rules and orderings of our social groups. Socialization might be thought of as the bringing inside our body the languages of our culture.

Society: In modernist social theory, society refers to that aspect of human association which is governed by certain structural constraints or social laws. In postmodern social theory, society refers to the arena of struggle within which cultural politics occurs.

Stratification: refers to the manner in which a society divides its people into different layers with different access to power.

Style: a symbolic display of group membership.

Symbols are a kind of sign which represent things indirectly through association.

Synecdoche: a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole thing.

Syntax: the relationship among signs or the way the signs are ordered by rules or codes.

Tropes: alters a sign from its common meaning to some other meaning by making uncommon connections and associations with other signs (also called imagery, figures of speech).

Utterance is the smallest unit of analysis in parole—a single gesture in a conversation. Utterance is associated with Bakhtinian linguistic theory as the smallest unit of analysis.
Weberian: Weberian social theory is the social theory that developed from the work of Max Weber. Weberian stratification theory is the most widely used in traditional sociology. It argues that strata develop in society based on the distribution of power along political, economic, and social lines.