# Sociology of cultural production

## Prof. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice

[Teaching syllabus borrowed from the Master Degree in Philosophy, including the course name Sociology of culture and communication]

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Attention to cultural production in culture sociology emerged in the Seventies as an alternative to the theories of ‘reflection’ which supposed a close homology between culture and social structure.

Scholars of this tradition shift their attention to the symbolic elements of culture and to the legal, technological, employment, organisational, industrial and market areas in which they are created and distributed. In other words, they focus on how culture is made and share a general hypothesis that the products of the creative or cultural industries can be studied in much the same way as the products of other industries.

In this context the course aims to: introduce students to the sociology of cultural production by presenting the main theoretical contributions of this tradition; provide examples of symbolic goods and the functioning of the cultural industries responsible for their production; provide the tools to recognise, analyse and critically interpret cultural processes and products and to apply knowledge acquired to their communication.

In particular, at the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the main theories in the field of sociology of cultural production; understand the texts by the authors examined on the course; recognise a cultural product and identify its symbolic meaning.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course is organised around some fundamental questions crossing contemporary cultural production:

1. Definitions of culture.
2. Genesis and evolution of the concepts of cultural industry and cultural product;
3. The economy of symbolic goods
4. The production of meanings and the communicative function of cultural products.
5. Convergence between consumption practices and practices of cultural production.

The course will approach each topic through relevant theoretical and interpretative contributions, as well as through practical examples, ranging from traditional cultural industries (publishing, music, cinema) to more recent ones. The course will focus particularly on the production of material culture (i.e. on objects and processes in which the immaterial aspects of culture are incorporated and take on a visible and enduring form, as in the field of fashion, food, design).

***READING LIST***

Specific information on the reading list for exam preparation will be provided during the course and will be edited by the lecturer into a course pack available at the University Printing Centre and on the course Blackboard page.

Lecture slides and further supplemental material will be available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course combines theory-based lectures with in-depth studies addressing the most pivotal issues discussed in the field of sociology of cultural production and it alternates lectures, testimonies, meetings with experts in the field and practical guided work.

Topics will be presented through a wide range of illustrative material, images and audio-visual material. All material will be uploaded on Blackboard.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed through an oral exam. The questions aim to assess students’ ability to express themselves dialectically with correct and appropriate language as well as to demonstrate their knowledge of main theories in the field of sociology of cultural production.

Assessment will take into consideration relevance of answers, appropriate use of specific terminology, argumentative and coherent structure of students’ presentations and their ability to link concepts and identify open issues.

The exam takes place before an exam commission chaired by the lecturer in charge of the course. The mark is out of thirty: students will pass the exam by obtaining a mark equal to or higher than 18/30. The maximum mark is 30/30: to this mark the Exam Commission may add a distinction (*lode)*.

At the end of the entire cycle of lessons, the lecturer has the authority to assign a written exam with open questions aiming to assess students’ basic knowledge of the development of theories and research methods on cultural production with reference to both the debate within the discipline and the socio-cultural context in which the various theories and methodologies have arisen, developed and have been compared.

The five open questions of the written exam will have equal weight and will be evaluated with a score from 0 (in case of no answer) to 6 (in case of excellent answer). The mark will be out of thirty and will take into account number of answers, their relevance and completeness, appropriate use of specific terminology, clarity of presentation, reasoned and coherent structuring of argumentation, ability to identify conceptual links and open questions.

Further information or clarifications on this matter will be provided by the lecturer during the course; answers to most frequently asked questions will be available in the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section on the lecturer’s web page.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No prior knowledge is required; however, students are expected to show interest and curiosity towards the study of society, social relations and cultural dynamics as well as a basic knowledge of sociological terminology. To this end, a dictionary of sociology is recommended.

Students are invited to regularly check Blackboard platform for notices and updates.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.