SOC 706: CULTURAL ANALYSIS
SPRING 2019 - UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MANOA

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nandita Sharma
OFFICE: Saunders 205
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 11:00AM to 12:00PM or by appointment
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CLASS SCHEDULE: Tuesdays 12:00PM to 2:30PM
Location: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
“Culture” is one of the most elusive concepts for understanding social life. It is often (mis)used to identify something that is said to be external or outside of power. Something that “just is,” akin to the air we breathe. A sociological analysis of culture, however, informs us that “culture” is not a singular, fixed, static, natural or eternal “way of life” but that, instead, culture is effected and reshaped by people’s participation in it. Culture is fluid and always in flux. That is: culture is socially produced and culture is always political. The sociological analysis of culture also understands “culture” to not be a possession of supposedly distinct, separate - and often separated – people. Culture is not something that can be automatically written onto or read off of our bodies or off the land we live on. Instead, all of us are active participants in the shared culture(s) we inhabit; although we do not all have the same power within it or the same power to affect it. Moreover, we are not all identified as “belonging” to the cultures we are an integral part of. Scholarship also points to culture as the location of political criticism and action. Thus, in this class, we will study culture not only as a socially produced way of life but also as a key aspect of political and social control. In short, we will seek to understand how the meaning we give to our everyday social practices – and to our sense of self within these practices - is generated, disseminated and contested from within interconnected social, political and economic relations of power.

This course provides students with an understanding of the key terms, concepts, analytical techniques, and interpretive strategies commonly employed by sociological analysis of culture. We focus our investigation on how cultural processes, knowledge, and artefacts have been historically produced, continuously reinforced, reinscribed and resisted.

This course is an elective for the International Cultural Studies Program’s Graduate Certificate.
REQUIRED READINGS:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Participation (preparation and level of active engagement) 10%
Discussion Questions (each class) 20%
Short Papers on Readings (2 papers = 15% each) 30%
Final Research Paper (22-25 pp) 40%

CLASS ATTENDANCE: Your attendance is expected. Attendance is usually a good indicator of your participation in this course (i.e. interest, commitment and enthusiasm) and it accounts for 10% of your grade. Just as importantly, you are expected to come fully prepared for each class by having completed all of your assigned readings and by having developed questions and comments that will allow you to be actively engaged in class discussions.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS: All assignments must be submitted on the day they are due. A late paper will incur a penalty of 10% off the grade for each day past the due date.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:
Students will develop their critical learning skills by: examining the historical origins of key ideas, concepts and categories shaping human experience today; examining the relations or ruling that organize dominant ideas, concepts and categories and; examining how people have variously contested these ideas, concepts and categories. Students will also develop their reading, writing and oral presentation skills in order to become clear thinkers and articulate communicators of theoretically informed empirical research.

This course is an elective for the International Cultural Studies Program’s Graduate Certificate because it contains significant content that advances a cultural studies approach to understanding the pattern of social relations in our world.