

HC 10: Social Classification and Categorization

Winter 2001

Instructor: Rogers Brubaker, Department of Sociology

Office hours: Thursday, 2:30-4pm or by appointment in Hershey Hall 2631, tel. 5-1129

Class meeting: Wednesday 12-2:50 PM, Honors Commons (Kinsey 364)

What this course is about

Classification and categorization are elementary and ubiquitous social practices. Categories are basic to everyday interaction, and they are key building blocks of larger scale social structures as well. They are central to such phenomena as kinship, gender, sexuality, language, deviance, disease, law, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Schemes of classification in these and other domains are central to the way the social world is organized and experienced. Moreover, categories do not simply organize the world; in important ways, they *constitute* the world. Certain phenomena exist only by virtue of practices of social classification or categorization. Systems of classification can create new kinds of people, define deviance and disease, determine eligibility for benefits, and specify (for official purposes) who is who and what is what.

Yet while anthropologists have long studied systems of classification and categorization of "primitive" peoples, it is only recently that sustained attention has been given to classification and categorization in contemporary societies. Drawing on recent work in anthropology, history, political science, sociology, and cognitive psychology, this course will offer an interdisciplinary introduction to the subject, beginning with theoretical issues and moving on to examine the central importance of classification and categorization in social domains such as deviance, disease, organizations, gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity.

Questions we will consider include the following. How do categories impose rigid boundaries and sharp discontinuities on phenomena that exhibit continuous variation in nature? How does the invention and entrenchment of new categories help create new diseases, new kinds of deviance, new ways of being, new kinds of people? In what ways do distinctions of social class rest on practices of classification and categorization? What is at stake in what might be called the "politics of classification," in debates and struggles over appropriate categories and classification schemes (such as the debate over the inclusion of a mixed-race category in the US census)? How do classification practices shape the social organization and psychological experience of cultural diversity? How, for example, are "race" and ethnicity organized and experienced differently in different societies (for example the US, Brazil, South Africa, and the former Soviet Union) as a result of different systems of official and unofficial categorization and classification?

Teaching style

This is not a lecture course. It is a discussion seminar. The structure of the course will be very different than that of the typical large lecture course at UCLA. For those who have grown accustomed to large lecture courses, this has its disadvantages: you cannot hide in comfortable anonymity; you cannot rely on lectures to tell you what you need to know for the exam; you cannot do all the reading at the last minute. On the other hand, many students find a small and intensive course to be a refreshing and rewarding experience. But the rules of the game differ. You must come to class having read all the assigned material -- and having read it carefully. This takes time: there is a considerable amount of reading, written from many different perspectives, and covering a wide variety of different topics. And some of the reading may require more than one pass before it begins to make sense. But all of the reading, I think, is interesting, and will repay close attention. In addition to having read the material carefully, you must come to class prepared to discuss it. You will not be spoon-fed what you need to know in this class. Indeed there is no itemized list of facts that you need to know. Instead, there is a rich and challenging body of literature that you need to master. Mastering this material can only be an active, not a passive process. Our class discussions will be meaningless unless you come prepared to participate in them. Not only will your experience, and that of your peers, be enriched by serious preparation, but class participation -- evaluated not simply in terms of quantity but in terms of quality -- will also be a significant part of your grade.

Assignments and grading:

The course will involve three types of written work.

1. Dossiers. One aim of the course is to develop analytical tools that will enable you to see the social world in which you live in new ways and to think clearly and critically about the many ways in which processes of social classification and categorization structure that world. In order to do this, I will ask you to collect newspaper or magazine articles or materials from Web sites that illustrate themes we have been discussing and, drawing on analytical perspectives developed in our readings, to analyze briefly the phenomena described in the materials you have collected. Three dossiers will be submitted: they will be due in the fourth week, seventh week, and finals week.

To help get started on the dossier projects, and to get to know you better, I'm asking every student to meet with me individually during the second or third week of the quarter. I will be holding supplementary office hours these weeks to make this possible. Please sign up for an appointment on the sheet that will be circulated at the first meeting of class, or, if you are unable to meet at any of these times, e-mail me during the first week of term to arrange an alternative time to meet. Please bring with you to the meeting at least three items drawn from newspapers, magazines, or Web sites that illustrate themes discussed in class or in the readings for the first two or three weeks. And please come prepared to discuss the items you have selected in terms of the themes raised in the readings or in class meetings. But note that these are informal meetings. They are not

intended to test your grasp of the material, but rather to help get you started thinking about material you collect and encounter in terms relevant to the course.

2. Book review. One book review will be assigned. You may select the book to be reviewed from a list of books that will be distributed at the second meeting. All books will be on 2-hour reserve at College Library. (They have not been ordered for purchase at UCLA bookstore, but many are available in paperback editions if you wish to purchase them.)

Although the final book review will not be due until finals week, this is a project you will need to get started on early. In the first place, you will have to decide which book to review. And you may want to read parts of several of them before choosing one. Next, you will have to read the book carefully and write a brief (600-750 words) analytical summary of its main argument. This will be due the sixth week; it will serve as an initial draft of the key part of the review. In the final stage, you will have to assess the book, and show how it relates to other materials we have been reading.

3. Take-home final. There will be a take-home final exam, distributed at the final class meeting and due one week later.

Grades will be based on the three dossiers (worth 10, 15, and 15 points respectively), the book review (20 points, including five points for the analytical summary), the take-home final (25 points), and class participation (15 points).

Schedule of classes, readings and assignments

Please note: with the exception of the readings listed under January 10, all readings are to be completed before the date under which they are listed.

Readings have been collected in a course reader, which can be purchased at Course Reader Material, 1141 Westwood Blvd, tel 443-3303. The reader should be available for purchase on Thursday, Jan. 11 or Friday, Jan. 12 at the latest; but call first to make sure it is available (and to make sure that a copy is available; sometimes they run out of stock and have to run off extra copies). Course Reader Material is open Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, and Sat 10am-4pm.

1. January 10. Introduction: What are categories and how do they work?

Genesis 1-2
Kunda, *Social Cognition*, pp. 15-45

2. January 17. Everyday classification

Zerubavel, *The Fine Line*, pages 1-6, 61-80
Simpson, "Neither clear nor present: the social construction of safety and danger"
Nippert-Eng, *Home and work*, 7-28, 34-43, 63-67, 98-104

3. January 24. Social, political, and symbolic classification

Starr, "Social categories in the liberal state"

Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 80-89

Hertz, "The preeminence of the right hand"

Durkheim, *Elementary forms of the religious life*, pp. 51-57, 243-5, 337-347

4. January 31. Deviance, social problems, and social control

First dossier due

Gould, "Taxonomy as politics," pp. 73-75

Kituse and Cicourel, "A note on the uses of official statistics"

Donnelly, "What is the object of social control?"

Schneider, "Social problems theory: the constructionist view"

Cohen, *Visions of social control*, chapter 5

5. February 7. Illness and disease

Freidson, *Profession of medicine*, pp. 205-212, 223-243

Conrad, "Medicalization and social control"

Brown, "Naming and framing: the social construction of diagnosis and illness"

Kutchins, *Making us crazy*, pp. 10-16, 21-28, 34-49, 126-139

6. February 14. Organizations: categories at work

Analytical summary of argument of book chosen for book review due

Stone, "Physicians as gatekeepers"

Prottas, *People-processing*, pp. 1-11, 71-83, 123-146

Gilboy, "Deciding who gets in: decisionmaking by immigration inspectors"

Jeffrey, "Normal rubbish: deviant patients in casualty departments"

Recommended: Sudnow, "Normal crimes"

7. February 21. Gender and sexuality

Second dossier due

Macoby, "Gender as a social category"

West and Zimmerman, "Doing gender"

Plummer, "Homosexual categories"

8. February 28. Race and ethnicity, I : Groups and categories

Barth, "Introduction" to *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, pp. 9-18

Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, chapter 5: "Categorization and power"
Goldberg, "The color of suspicion"
Petersen, "Politics and the measurement of ethnicity," pp. 187-191, 206-233

9. March 7. Race and ethnicity, II: The politics of counting and categorizing

Fuchs, "What should we count and why?"
Wright, "One drop of blood"
Rodriguez, *Changing Race*, pp. 3-20, 129-39, 153-63, 173-6
Beinart, "Lost tribes"
Office of Management and Budget, "Standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity"
Ford, "Administering identity: the determination of 'race' in race-conscious law"

10. March 14: Ethnicity, nationhood, citizenship: international perspectives

Take-home final distributed

Brubaker, "Citizenship as social closure"
Wagley, "On the concept of social race in the Americas"
Brubaker, "Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia"
Lustick, "Israel as a non-Arab state"
Bowker and Star, *Sorting things out*, chapter 6: "The case of race classification and reclassification under apartheid"
Burleigh and Wippermann, *The racial state: Germany 1933-1945*, pp. 44-51, 77-112
Horowitz, *The deadly ethnic riot*, selection to be distributed

March 21: The final set of work is due at the Sociology Department main office, 2201 Hershey Hall, **no later than 3pm**. The work due includes: (1) the third dossier; (2) the book review; and (3) the take-home final exam. This work should be clipped together and enclosed in a manila envelope with my name and the sociology department address on it. Please include a stamped, self-addressed manila envelope if you would like this work to be returned to you with comments. Please make sure to keep for yourself a copy of any work submitted.