Money and the Muse:
An Introduction to Cultural History

About the course:

Culture is one of the most complicated concepts, and yet we use the word all the time. This course is about how to think about culture, introducing you to the field of cultural history. Through this exploration into cultural history you will learn how to analyze and articulate how people ascribe meaning to various ideas, objects, and practices. We focus on two meanings of culture: first, the worldview definition: how do you analyze how people construct meaning? Second, we focus on the arts. The argument of this course is that cultural objects tell us about how people make sense of the world around them, especially in places like Eastern Europe where art took on political and social significance it did not elsewhere. Culture helps us analyze...culture.

This course consists of ten lectures. Each lecture will give you one “tool”—a concept that you can add to your “toolbox” that will help you analyze meaning in your life, the lives of those around you, and perhaps even your community or country. You’ll acquire analytic tools of power, taste, the state, networks, entertainment, the audience, difference, gender, and postcolonialism---not to mention the public sphere, the place of the stage, readers as poachers, cultural capital, the field of cultural production, the panopticon, and others. You will learn, in short, how the money interacts with the muse.

Each lecture has one or two “required” readings which you can access by registering for the course. Additional suggested readings are listed here. Primary sources, as well, from the oral histories in the Urban Media Archive of the Center for Urban History will be discussed in the lectures—and offer an excellent opportunity for further exploration. Suggested activities are given for each lecture as well.

Our learning outcomes:
1. **Encounter** classic texts of cultural history. **Engage** with these texts through reading, thinking, discussion, and writing. Identify their arguments and why they are so important.
2. **Debate**, **deconstruct** and **analyze** how people(s) think about meaning(s) and why they hold the beliefs and values that they do.
3. **Identify** the matrix between society, the state and the arts, and use that matrix to **construct** a new understanding of culture.

**Ultimately, we want you to understand more clearly how you understand the world around you, and why you understand it the way you do!**

List of Lectures:

I reserve the right to change the syllabus when needed.
Lecture 1: Culture

In this lecture we discuss the definition of "culture" (and "cultures") and come up with ways to use this word effectively. We discuss the history of cultural history, and we become familiar with Sewell’s model of analyzing culture. Finally, we sketch out the relationship between the money and the muse.

Required:

Suggested:

For theater studies students, suggested texts:


Lecture 2: Power

In this lecture we discuss power, how we define it, how we understand it, and how it operates. We discuss the challenge of how to discuss power in a complex way. We add Foucault’s concepts of power/knowledge and the panopticon to our toolbox, and discuss how to work with primary sources.

Required:
Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, ed. Colin Gordon (NYC: Pantheon, 1980), 78-108.

Lecture 3: The State

In this lecture we break down the category of “the state,” by examining its boundaries, its limits, its capacities. We add Habermas’ concept of the “public sphere” to our toolbox and discuss the place of the arts in relationship to the state,

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using historical examples from the Russian and Habsburg Empires and the Soviet Union. We also practicing using our tools to analyze primary sources.

Required:

Suggested:

For more on serfdom and the arts:

For more on the “public sphere” and theater:

**Lecture 4: Taste**

In this lecture we examine the concept of “taste,” and how our ideas about what art is good (and what is bad) are constructed. We look at the work of Pierre Bourdieu, especially his concepts of the “field of cultural production” and “cultural capital,” and learn how our tastes classify us. We use these concepts to discuss primary sources from postwar Lviv theater.

Required:

**Lecture 5: Networks**

In this lecture we discuss the seemingly simple concept of networks and learn how this concept will immediately complicate our analysis of any cultural object. We study Robert Darnton’s work on how ideas caused revolution, and see if we can use this model elsewhere. We look at the case of the avant-garde in Ukraine in my book, and postwar Lviv in our primary source.

Required:

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Lecture 6: Entertainment

In this lecture we unpack the complex and value-laden concept of entertainment. We explore what we classify as entertaining, and how that classification highlights hierarchies and values in ourselves and our society. We discuss the first-ever Ukrainian musical review, *Hello from Radio 477!*

Required:

Suggested:

Lecture 7: Audience

In this lecture we bring the audience into our understanding of cultural production and reception. We add De Certeau’s concept of “readers as poachers” to our toolbox, and practice analyzing the audience through the case of the reception of Mykola Kulish’s *Maklena Grasa* and primary sources from the Center for Urban History collections about postwar theater.

Required:
Lecture 8: Difference

In this lecture we explore the large concept of difference. We examine different kinds of difference and analyze how the categorization of difference reveals the structures of society. Our reading examines race and how the “ideology of race” operated in the Soviet Union. We use these ideas to analyze Soviet nationality policy.

Required:

Suggested:
On colonialism:
Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)

On cultural bridges and walls:

On Soviet nationality policy:


On Jewish culture:

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On Central Asian Culture:


On Georgia:

On Roma:

On Race and Ukraine:

**Lecture 9: Gender**

In this lecture we add the concept of “gender as a category” to our toolbox, working with the paradigmatic article by Joan Scott. We analyze two primary sources through the lens of gender, and explore how this lens can reframe our questions and our answers about historical events.

Required:

Suggested:


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Lecture 10: Postcolonialism
In this lecture we tackle the concept of postcolonialism, using Chakrabarty’s concept of “provincializing Europe.” We examine how centers and peripheries are constructed, and how we can think about changing this geography. We think about the structures we assume are fixed in our world, and seek to explore how we might put ourselves at the center of our own stories.

Required:

Suggested:

On post-colonialism in Ukraine:


On new centers and peripheries:
