Sociology of Hip Hop  
(IFS3024)

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Course Description
Social science courses should help us gain a deeper understanding of the social world in which we live. The subculture of Hip Hop has received attention from the media and the academic community for both bringing awareness to issues of inequality (Dyson 2010; Rodman 2006) and reinforcing stereotypes (Kitwana 2002; McWhorter 2003). This course requires students to examine messages expressed within Hip Hop Culture through the application of major sociological perspectives and theories including structural functionalism, social conflict theory, symbolic interactionism and feminism. Students are challenged to think in new ways about the structural and cultural aspects of the reproduction of inequality. This course examines the reciprocal relationship between Hip Hop culture and the broader American society. In other words, we will utilize sociological theories and methods to explore themes in Hip Hop Culture and discuss the influence that Hip Hop Culture has had on society. Accordingly, this course begins by defining Hip Hop Culture, and looking at its history in America through a sociological lens. After establishing this foundation, we will then discuss topics such as commodification and authenticity, the dynamics of race, class, gender and sexuality in Hip Hop, social and cultural capital, social stratification, social reproduction, definitions of deviance, and political and social movement messages in Hip Hop culture. This course will require a substantial amount of reading and will require completion of online quizzes, online assignments, group work, an album content analysis project and a research paper.

Course Objectives
1. To develop a sociological imagination and adopt a sociological perspective.
2. To introduce to the history and emergence of Hip Hop Culture in America.
3. To provide a solid foundation in the major theoretical perspectives used for a sociological analysis of culture.
4. To enhance students’ abilities to critically analyze and examine the key theories and explanations for the cultural phenomenon and explore the reciprocal relationships between Hip Hop culture and the broader American society.
5. To strengthen students’ critical awareness and understanding of the complex landscape of structural and cultural influences on social problems and their potential solutions.
6. To improve students’ methodological research skills and provide experience performing empirical investigations.

Student Learning Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, successful students will have:
1. examined and adopted a sociological perspective on the history and emergence of Hip Hop culture in America
2. identified and critically examined major perspectives and key theories from across disciplines used for a sociological analysis of culture
3. analyzed and synthesized the structural and cultural explanations and theories for American/Hip Hop cultural phenomenon
4. explored the reciprocal relationships between Hip Hop culture and the broader American society
5. conducted an empirical investigation and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data.
These steps together will necessarily involve the development of critical thinking and writing skills. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. analyze and synthesize information from within and across disciplines to: examine existing questions and problems from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats.
2. think creatively and flexibly by envisaging new approaches to real-world scenarios or questions.
3. learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of, and the fostering of cooperative solutions to, complex problems.

E-Series

The Liberal Studies for the 21st Century Program at Florida State University builds an educational foundation that will enable FSU graduates to thrive both intellectually and materially and to support themselves, their families, and their communities through a broad and critical engagement with the world in which they live and work. Liberal Studies offers a transformative experience; this course is an E-Series course and thus is designed to help you become an interdisciplinary and flexible thinker; a lifelong learner; and a team builder. This course has been approved as meeting Liberal Studies requirements, specifically, it is designed to meet Liberal Studies E-series competencies, namely, to: 1) analyze and synthesize information from within and across disciplines, to examine existing questions and problems from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats; 2) think creatively and flexibly by envisaging new approaches to real-world scenarios or questions; 3) learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of, and the fostering of cooperative solutions to, complex problems. It also meets the three competencies outlined as central to teaching students to become Critical Appraisers of Theories and the Facts that Support Them. These are to: 1) critically examine, interpret, and explain how personal, political, cultural, economic, and social experiences and/or structures shape the past and/or the present. 2) Gather and analyze data using social science methodologies to evaluate causal arguments and analyze assertions, assumptions, and explanatory evidence. 3) Evaluate and employ appropriate methods and technology in the collection and analysis of data.

Required Reading

This is a seminar/discussion course in which you will read, evaluate and discuss scholarly and popular works on a wide variety of topics. Each week before class, you should read, watch, or listen to the assigned material and be ready to critically discuss the assigned materials during class. Assigned readings are listed on the Course Calendar and can be found in the Course Library unit folder, along with other materials. The required text will be supplemented with links or PDFs, made available on Blackboard. You should purchase the following required textbook:


Class Communication – Email and Course Website

The official method of communication at FSU is your ACNS garnet email account. FSU policy states: “In order to stay informed and aware, you are required to check it 3 times per week. If you choose to have your garnet account forwarded, you still will be responsible for all information distributed.” This applies to our class and you will be responsible for information emailed to the class and posted on the course website. Be connected! Please check for class emails (that will go to your garnet account) and check the Announcements page of our course website frequently.
Course Requirements:
Your final grade is based on the quality of your performance with respect to the course assignments and responsibilities. The allocation of points is as follows:

1) **Quizzes - 15%**. Quizzes based on assigned reading material will be administered online using Blackboard. These multiple-choice quizzes will be posted under the “Quizzes” tab as outlined in the course calendar. The course calendar and unit course library folders identify required readings.

2) **Social Problem Application Paper = 15%**. A formal course paper will be required as the final assignment. Students will choose a social problem, discuss how it is reflected in Hip Hop culture and how Hip Hop culture, in turn, influences the problem. Detailed instructions will be posted in the course library.

3) **Hip Hop Album Content Analysis Methodology = 10%**. This assignment requires students to describe their research design and methodology for the Album Content Analysis Project, including the coding categories, the theoretical basis for selecting them and graphs. Detailed instructions will be posted in the course library.

4) **Hip Hop Album Content Analysis Project = 20%**. This project requires students to perform content analysis of a Hip Hop album, including both quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the album content. Detailed instructions will be posted in the course library.

5) **Discussion Boards (Online Group Projects) – 40%**. At four points in the semester, a discussion topic will be posted on the course website discussion board located on Blackboard. Each student is expected to post a 200-500 word position statement, in *formal essay form*, to the discussion topic and to post two 75-200 word replies to other students’ position statement postings. Positions must include a citation to course material and a word count. Based on the relevance and quality of your posts, you may earn a possible 10 points for your contribution in each group discussion. There will be no credit given for late postings, non-academic discourse or other inappropriate postings. Remember, to receive full credit for each group discussion, you must post three times: a position (not opinion) statement with a 200-word minimum and at least two reactions with a 75-word minimum, by the deadlines posted on the syllabus. Participation in online group discussions together will comprise 40% of your grade.

**Grading Summary**
- Quizzes = 15%
- Social Problem Application Paper = 15%
- Hip Hop Album Content Analysis Methodology = 10%
- Hip Hop Album Content Analysis Project = 20%
- Discussion Boards = 40%

**Grading Scale**
A: 94-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D-: 60-63; F: 0-59

**Excused Absences**
The following and only the following absences are eligible to be excused: Religious holidays, as specified in FSU policy; absences due to representing FSU at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events; verified emergencies and/or medical illness. Medical illness refers to conditions that are serious in nature and require treatment by medical professionals and/or surgical or other treatments. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused for the purposes of makeup work. **Makeup work must be completed within 2 weeks of the original due date.**
Class Attendance Policy
While I will not take roll, class attendance is required. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused for the purposes of makeup work. Makeup work must be completed within 2 weeks of the original due date. Students are responsible for all content missed, including assignments, knowledge, or skills that were covered in the missed class. Please provide a copy of the documentation to your instructor and keep a copy for your own records. There will be no credit given for late postings on the discussion board. The discussion board is a group project that requires timely participation for the benefit of all group members. Should extra credit opportunities arise, only those students who have completed all assigned work (no missing work or zeroes) will be eligible for extra credit.

Classroom Discourse
This is a seminar/discussion course in which you will read, evaluate and discuss scholarly and popular works on a wide variety of topics. Each week before class, you should read, watch, or listen to the assigned material and be ready to critically discuss it during class. Assigned readings are listed on the Course Calendar and can be found in the Course Library unit folder, along with other materials. The required text will be supplemented with links or PDFs, made available on Blackboard. Meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged in this class. This necessitates a degree of mutual respect, willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing points of view. Respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints will be maintained at all times in this class. One’s words and use of language should be temperate and within acceptable bounds of civility and decency, regardless of the subject under discussion.

Classroom Courtesy
Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions.

- Coming in late and leaving early are disruptive and disrespectful to the instructor and to the other students; plan to attend for the entire class time.

- Please, do not talk during lectures unless recognized by the professor or discussion leader. Students are encouraged to share observations and questions with the class.

- No cell phones, iPads, iPods (or other devices on which you are not actively note taking for class). If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about children or other family members, keep it on vibrate. In addition, please remove all headphones or earpieces not used as a hearing aid for class lecture. I will ask you to discontinue using and remove devices if I determine that it is disruptive to me or other students.

- Please, do not use social media during class unless it is intended for class participation. If you tweet please hashtag our class - #SociologyofHipHop. Please also like and follow our Facebook page FSU’s Sociology of Hip Hop Culture.

Incomplete Grades
Missing work or uncompleted assignments are insufficient reasons for a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete grade will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. Note that the College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an “I” must be passing the course.

Academic Honor Policy
Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of these expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Policy: http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm
**Academic Dishonesty**
Students must abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor’s discretion. Any student who plagiarizes, cheats on exams, or otherwise behaves in a dishonest way may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy (http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf).

**Americans with Disabilities Act**
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities visit http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/.

**Religious Holidays**
Students are allowed to miss class due to observance of religious holidays, but they are still responsible for all materials assigned outside of and covered in class on the day(s) missed. You must talk with your instructor in advance of missing a class for religious holiday observance reasons.

**Syllabus Change Policy**
The syllabus and course calendar are guides for the course and are subject to change with notice.