

# SO241: Sociology of Creativity

Fall 2021

Class Meetings: Monday and Wednesday, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

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## Course Description

Creativity occurs everywhere, all the time: aspiring rappers learn to freestyle, elite chefs design new dishes, and artists create pieces for an exhibit. By examining the social dynamics of creative work, we will explore why creativity is inherently collective, how creativity is judged and experienced, and how “cool” creative jobs can also generate inequality. We will compare research on creativity in various domains – artistic practices, creative industries, ordinary life, and organizations – in sociology and neighboring disciplines (e.g., anthropology) to identify common phenomena and better understand how creativity shapes all our lives.

## Course Schedule

R = required readings

O = optional but highly recommended

UNIT 1: CREATIVE PRODUCTION & CAREERS	
WEEK 1	<b>Introduction and Discussion</b> <i>What is creativity and where to find it?</i>
September 8	No Readings
WEEK 2	<b>How to study creative production?</b>
September 13	R Becker, Howard S. 2017. “Creativity Is Not a Scarce Commodity.” <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> 61(12): 1579-1588.
	R Becker, Howard S. 2008. “Art Worlds and Collective Activity” (pp. 1-6, 25-39) in <i>Art Worlds</i> . University of California Press.
	O Martin, Peter J. 2011. “Musicians’ Worlds: Music-Making as a Collaborative Activity.” <i>Symbolic Interaction</i> 29(1): 95-107. [Skim “Three Studies,” pp. 100-105]

September 15	R	Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. "Haute Couture and Haute Culture" (pp. 132-138) in <i>Sociology in Question</i> . London: Sage.
		Menger, Pierre-Michel. 2001. "Artists as Workers: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges." <i>Poetics</i> 28(4): 241-254.
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>Who are artists?</b>	
September 20	R	Becker, Howard S. 2008. "Integrated Professionals, Mavericks, Folk Artists, and Naive Artists" (pp. 226-271) in <i>Art Worlds</i> . University of California Press.
	O	Gerber, Alison. 2017. "The Work of Art" (pp.11-29) in <i>The Work of Art</i> . Stanford University Press.
		Deresiewicz, William. 2015. "The Death of the Artist—and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." <i>The Atlantic</i> (January/February Issue). <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/">https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/</a>
September 22	R	Wohl, Hannah. 2021. Chapter 2 "The Eccentric Artist" and Chapter 6 "Producing Creative Visions" <i>Bound by Creativity: How Contemporary Art Is Created and Judged</i> . University of Chicago Press.
		GUEST SPEAKER: Prof. Wohl will join us for discussion via Zoom
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>How to enter creative industries?</b>	
September 27	R	Fine, Gary Alan. 2017. "A Matter of Degree: Negotiating Art and Commerce in MFA Education." <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> 61(12): 1463-1486.
		Frenette, Alex. 2013. "Making the Intern Economy: Role and Career Challenges of the Music Industry Intern." <i>Work and Occupations</i> 40(4): 364-397.

September 29	R	Mears, Ashley. 2011. Chapter 3 “Becoming a Look” or Chapter 4 “The Tastemakers” in <i>Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model</i> . University of California Press.
<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>What is it like to be a creative worker?</b>	
October 4	R	Hesmondhalgh, David, and Sarah Baker. 2009. “A Very Complicated Version of Freedom”: Conditions and Experiences of Creative Labour in Three Cultural Industries. <i>Poetics</i> 38(1): 4-20.
		Gerber, Alison. 2017. “The Audit of Venus” in <i>The Work of Art</i> . Stanford University Press.
October 6	R	Wong, Winnie. 2013. Chapter 1 “Imagining the Great Painting Factory” in <i>Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade</i> . University of Chicago Press.
		Sascha Pohle, <i>Reframing the Artist</i> , 2010, video and installation, 35 min, HD DV, color, Mandarin with English Subtitles. <a href="http://www.saschapohle.net/reframing-the-artist.html">http://www.saschapohle.net/reframing-the-artist.html</a>
<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>Who gets to be creative?</b>	
October 11	R	Greenland, Fiona, and Patricia Banks. 2021. “Race and Sociology of Art.” <i>ASA Culture Section Newsletter</i> .
		Denmead, Tyler. 2019. Chapter 4 “Why the Creative Underclass Doesn’t Get Creative-Class Jobs” (and a few pages from Introduction) in <i>The Creative Underclass: Youth, Race, and the Gentrifying City</i> . Duke University Press.
October 13	R	Duffy, Brook Erin. 2017. Chapters 4 “Branding the Authentic Self: The Commercial Appeal of ‘Being Real’” in <i>(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work</i> . Yale University Press.
	O	Brook, Orian, Dave O’Brien, and Mark Taylor. 2020. Chapter 6 “Is it still good work if you don’t get paid?” (pp.136-164) in <i>Culture Is Bad for You</i> . Manchester University Press.

**MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS (10/13)**

Choose one of the following documentaries and write a paper, about 8 pages:

*The Wrecking Crew* (2008); *The September Issue* (2009); *Twenty Feet from Stardom* (2013); *Dior and I* (2014); *Ballet 422* (2014); *The First Monday in May* (2016); *China's Van Goghs* (2016).

UNIT 2: INSIDE CREATIVITY		
<b>WEEK 7</b>	<b>How does creativity occur? How is it constrained? (1)</b>	
October 18	NO CLASS. FALL RECESS (10/18 – 10/19).	
October 20	R	Wilf, Eitan. 2014. "Rituals of Creativity" in <i>School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity</i> . Chicago University Press.
		Becker, Howard. 1995. "The Power of Inertia." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 18 (3): 301-309.
	O	Stahl, Matt. 2012. "Introduction: Popular Music and (Creative) Labor" in <i>Unfree Masters Popular Music and the Politics of Work</i> . Duke University Press.
<b>WEEK 8</b>	<b>How does creativity occur? How is it constrained? (2)</b>	
October 25	R	O'Connor, Erin. 2005. "Embodied Knowledge: The Experience of Meaning and the Struggle towards Proficiency in Glassblowing." <i>Ethnography</i> 6: 183–204.
		Leschziner, Vanina. 2015. Chapter 4 "Managing a Culinary Style" in <i>At the Chef's Table: Culinary Creativity in Elite Restaurants</i> . Stanford University Press.
October 27	R	Childress, Clayton. 2017. Chapters 2 and 4 (and skim Chapter 3) in <i>Under the Cover: The Creation, Production and Reception of a Novel</i> . Princeton University Press.
		<b>GUEST SPEAKER:</b> Prof. Childress will join us for discussion via Zoom

<b>WEEK 9</b>	<b>How do group cultures shape creativity?</b>	
November 1	R	Farrell, Michael, P. 2001. Chapter 2 “The Life Course of a Collaborative Circle: The French Impressionists” (pp. 27-67) in <i>Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work</i> . University of Chicago Press.
November 3	R	Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. “Open Mic: Professionalizing the Rap Career.” <i>Ethnography</i> 10(4): 475–495.
<b>WEEK 10</b>	<b>How is creativity evaluated and judged?</b>	
November 8	R	Koppman, Sharon. 2014. “Making Art Work: Creative Assessment as Boundary Work.” <i>Poetics</i> 46: 1–21.
		McCormick, Lisa. 2015. Chapter 5 “Producing sound judgments” (pp. 166-203) in <i>Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music</i> . Cambridge University Press.
	O	Nylander, Erik. 2014. “Mastering the Jazz Standard: Sayings and Doings of Artistic Valuation.” <i>American Journal of Cultural Sociology</i> 2: 66–96.
November 10	R	Chong, Phillipa K. 2020. Chapter 2 “How Reviewing Works” and Chapter 3 “Accounting for Taste” (pp. 19-56) in <i>Inside the Critics’ Circle: Book Reviewing in Uncertain Times</i> . Princeton University Press.
<b>WEEK 11</b>	<b>How is art preserved, curated, and sponsored?</b>	
November 15	R	Levitt, Peggy. 2015. Chapter 3 “Arabia and the East: How Singapore and Doha Display the Nation and the World” in <i>Artifacts and Allegiances How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display</i> . University of California Press.
		Banks, Patricia A. 2017. “Ethnicity, Class, and Trusteeship at African American and Mainstream Museums.” <i>Cultural Sociology</i> 11 (1): 97-112.

November 17	R	Domínguez Rubio, Fernando. 2021. Chapter 2.1 “Containing Eternity” and Chapter 4.1 “The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Fragility” in <i>Still Life: Ecologies of the Modern Imagination at the Art Museum</i> . University of Chicago Press.
		CLASS FIELDTRIP: Colby College Museum of Art exhibition tour; meeting with a curator and the manager of collections
	O	Benzecry, Claudio. 2021. “You Are Never Alone at the Museum.” <i>Public Books</i> (September 9; an excellent review of the book <i>Still Life</i> ). <a href="https://www.publicbooks.org/you-are-never-alone-at-the-museum/">https://www.publicbooks.org/you-are-never-alone-at-the-museum/</a>

UNIT 3: RECEPTION & CONSUMPTION		
WEEK 12	<b>How are artists remembered?</b> <i>Reputation</i>	
November 22	R	Becker, Howard S. 2008. Chapter 11 “Reputation” in <i>Art Worlds</i> . University of California Press.
		Shorto, Russell. 2021. “The Woman Who Made Vincent van Gogh.” <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> (April 14). <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/14/magazine/jo-van-gogh-bonger.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/14/magazine/jo-van-gogh-bonger.html</a>
November 24	NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING RECESS (10/24 – 10/28)	
WEEK 13	<b>Why does authenticity matter? How is art classified or consecrated?</b>	
November 29	R	Fine, Gary Alan. 2003. “Crafting Authenticity: The Validation of Identity in Self-Taught Art.” <i>Theory and Society</i> 32(2): 153-180.
		Grazian, David. 2003. Chapter 4 “Keeping It Real: Chicago Blues Musicians and the Search for Authenticity” in <i>Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs</i> . University of Chicago Press.
December 1	R	Lena, Jennifer C., and Richard A. Peterson. 2014. “Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres” (pp. 239-261) in <i>Cultural Sociology: An Introductory Reader</i> , edited by Matt Wray. W.W. Norton.

		Santana-Acuña, Alvaro. 2017. "How One Hundred Years of Solitude Became a Classic." <i>The Atlantic</i> (May 22). <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/05/one-hundred-years-of-solitude-50-years-later/527118/">https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/05/one-hundred-years-of-solitude-50-years-later/527118/</a>
	O	Michelson, Anna. 2021. "The Politics of Happily-Ever-After: Romance Genre Fiction as Aesthetic Public Sphere." <i>American Journal of Cultural Sociology</i> 9: 177–210.
<b>WEEK 14</b>	<b>How do people experience and consume creative work?</b> <i>Taste and the New Cultural Economy</i>	
December 6	R	Benzecry, Claudio. 2011. Chapter 4 "Moral Listening" (pp. 83-110) in <i>The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession</i> . University of Chicago Press.
		Khan, Shamus. 2012. "The New Elitists." <i>The New York Times</i> (July 7). <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/opinion/sunday/the-new-elitists.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/opinion/sunday/the-new-elitists.html</a>
	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. Selections from <i>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</i>. Harvard University Press.</li> <li>• Hennion, Antoine. 2001. "Music Lovers: Taste as Performance." <i>Theory, Culture &amp; Society</i> 18(5): 1-22.</li> <li>• Banks, Patricia A. 2019. "Black Artists and Elite Taste Culture." <i>Contexts</i> 18(2): 62–65.</li> </ul>
December 8	R	Wynn, Jonathan R. 2015. Chapter 1 "The Unlikely Rise in Importance of American Music Festivals" (and skim Introduction "City and Stage") in <i>Music/City: American Festivals and Placemaking in Austin, Nashville, and Newport</i> . University of Chicago Press.
		Ocejo, Richard. 2017. Chapter 4 "Show the Animal" in <i>Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy</i> . Princeton University Press.
	O	Velthuis, Olav. 2005. "The Architecture of Markets" (pp. 21-52) in <i>Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art</i> . Princeton University Press.

FINAL PAPER DUE: DATE TBA (December 15-20)