

Sociology of Reputation

Fall 2024
Block Pick-Laudati Auditorium
M / W 9:30am-10:50am

Instructor

David Schieber (he/him)

Email

david.schieber@northwestern.edu

Office Hours

I will be in my office (1810 Chicago Ave. Rm. 321, top of the turret) on Tuesdays from 10:00am-12:00pm to meet in person. Feel free to reach out to set up meetings outside this time as well. I am also happy to meet virtually over Zoom, and I am happy to meet somewhere more accessible in-person if stairs to a turret in an old house do not work for you.

Teaching Assistants

Cat Dang Ton <catdang.ton@u.northwestern.edu>

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00pm-2:00pm, 1812 Chicago Ave. Rm. 202

Megan Jean Whitaker <MeganWhitaker2028@u.northwestern.edu>

Office Hours: , Wednesdays, 11:00am-1:00pm, 1812 Chicago Ave. Rm. 202

Please email TAs ahead of time to make sure they will be there to meet in person. In addition, all TAs are are happy to meet over Zoom if you reach out to schedule a time to meet.

Course Description

Reputation is the general perception we have of others. This course treats this general perception we have of others as our main topic of discussion. Throughout the quarter, we will ask questions like: Where do our ideas about others come from? What makes something funny? Why do people gossip and what do rumors do? How do people become ostracized from groups? Where does fame come from?

This class is an opportunity to take a step back and seriously consider how our perception of others is not set in stone, but shaped by the context we exist in.

We will talk about micro-level social-psychological processes like gaslighting, where someone tries to interpersonally shape the meaning of a social interaction to their benefit. We will talk about meso-level social processes like humanity's long history of satanic panics, where community rumors about a smaller group (like dungeons and dragons players) lead to that group's stigmatization or expulsion from the larger group. We will talk about macro-level social processes like the politics of collective memory, and how nations and people seek to shape the memory of wars and genocide.

Throughout the course, we will read a variety of texts in fields like sociology, social psychology, folklore studies, symbolic interactionism, organizational behavior, economic sociology and others. There are many readings assigned in this course, and that is because there are many exciting readings to read in this area of study. I hope you spend time this quarter with some of these interesting texts. I'm really excited to assign them and talk about them with you in lecture.

I encourage you to look at the readings in the weeks ahead (don't get intimidated) and read the titles to see if any readings look particularly interesting. I designed the syllabus so that each day's reading build off each other and fit into the theme for the week. You can then base when you turn in assignments around the readings you are particularly interested in reading.

Course Objectives

1. Students will use as variety of assigned texts and essays to evaluate their perception of events and people as contextual, often embedded in different meaning systems. Students will draw from lectures and readings to answer short answer questions by applying current examples of the social processes discussed in readings and lecture (i.e. idiocultures, reputational entrepreneurs, cultural consecration.)
2. Students will learn to interpret texts and cultural objects as creations of a specific place and time, and students will incorporate these texts and ideas into their own examples and independent arguments through writing. Understanding "things" as creations of a specific place and time is fundamental to building critical thinking skills, and students will work to develop their critical thinking skills in this class through their participation in class and through written work.

3. Students will recognize the ongoing and interdisciplinary tradition of symbolic interactionism in the field of sociology. Students will read classic texts in the fields of social psychology, anthropology, and folklore studies by a variety of academics. This includes essays by faculty and graduates of Northwestern Sociology, where many of these formative ideas emerged.

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks for this course. Readings for this class will be available on Canvas through the course reserves or as PDF links. If you run into an issue with a PDF or reading link on Canvas, please feel free to email me.

Class Procedures

I will lecture in person in our assigned classroom. I expect students to attend lecture. Our lecture hall this quarter is not panopto enabled, so we are back to the pre-covid age of live entertainment. I do not take attendance, but there will be material in the posted short answer questions that pull from lecture material (i.e. I will write the short answer questions assuming you have attended lecture.) The quickest / easiest way to get this information will be to attend lecture regularly. However, if you are unable to attend lecture, you will need to get this information the old fashioned way (office hours, notes from friends, piece it together from the readings / lecture slides.) I will post my lecture slides to Canvas after lecture.

In the new world of Chat GPT tools existing, my standard for grading is work with nonsensical content (I.e. content that the person grading the work does not understand where it came from, it just seems random) receives a zero, and the student can email me (Professor Schieber, this isn't meant to be anxiety inducing) if they want to talk about where the content in their work came from. There are also often opportunities in class to turn in extra work to make up for low grades, and student's can turn in extra work to make up for lower grades (within the deadline policy outlined below in the "Grading" section.)

Also, this standard is not meant to stifle creativity or your ability to get information down on the page. Pull from other classes! Critique the readings! Use personal anecdotes that resonate with lecture topics! I would just rather the writing on the work we grade reads like it was written by Northwestern Undergrads taking my hodge hodge of a class than by robots.

The TAs and I are always happy to meet during office hours to discuss written work before or after you turn it in. If you receive a grade you are not happy with, you should first ask the TA (through canvas comments, email, etc.) about how to improve future assignments (and then incorporate their feedback into your

future assignments.) I expect TAs to be communicative about the comments they give on students' work.

If you do not understand the grades you are receiving after reaching out to you TA or if you are having trouble getting a hold of your TA, please reach out to me. I am always happy to talk about comments on your work and how grading in the course is structured.

Grading

- *Reading Response Papers: 20% (5 x 4%)*

Throughout this course, you are required to complete five 2-3 page reading response papers. These response papers should be divided into two parts: 1.) A brief summary of the main takeaways from that days readings showing me that you attempted the readings, and 2.) A brief response to the reading. See Canvas for a more detailed explanation of what the summary and response should look like.

You may choose which five days readings' you respond to, and **your paper must be submitted to Canvas before the start of class that day**. Each paper is worth 5% of the total writing assignment category. The paper will be graded on a Check Plus / Check / Check Minus system (Check Plus = 5%; Check = 2.5%; Check Minus = 0%).

All writing assignments should be double-spaced, with 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. See the "Reading Response Rubric" posted on Canvas for more details.

- *Short Answer Questions / Lecture Poll Responses: 80% (16 x 5%):*

After every lecture, I will post 1 short answer question to canvas. **By Sunday, December 8th at 11:59pm** you must have answered and submitted 16 answers to these questions. If you would like to save these until the last week and complete them like a typical exam you are welcome to do so. If you want to complete the questions as quickly as possible in the first few weeks of class, you are welcome to do that as well.

These will be the same type of questions I typically ask on my exams, but de-bundled from the traditional exam format. Each answer should be 200-250 words, but more importantly, should answer each part of the question. Please see the rubric on canvas for more information.

If you or a group of students attend office hours (either mine or a TAs) to discuss / answer a short answer question(s), it will count as full credit for one of your 16 short answer questions. You may do this multiple times per quarter for multiple responses. I see this as a way to encourage the use of mine and the TA's office hours to have

conversation about the course content, which is an important resource to learn how to use.

I conduct class polls using the polling platform Poll Everywhere during lecture, and **each time you answer one of these polls in-person, you will receive one point added to the Short Answer Question portion of your final grade.**

Letter Grading Scale

93%+	A	90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+	83-86%	B
80-82%	B-	77-79%	C+
73-76%	C	70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+	60-66%	D
0-59%	F		

Emails

Email is the best way to get a hold of me, and I try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you have questions about course materials or readings, don't hesitate to email. **Please include SOC 276 / Reputation in the subject line of any email sent to me.**

Students With Disabilities

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Additional Notes

It is the responsibility of every student enrolled at Northwestern University to support the principles of academic integrity and refrain from all forms of academic dishonesty: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>. Always do your own work, and reference any words that did not originally come from you. I will report any suspected academic dishonesty cases to the dean.

Calendar of Lectures and Readings

Week 1:

...Ready for It? Towards a Sociology of Reputation

Wednesday, September 25th

- Introduction and Overview, No Readings

Week 2:

Call It What You Want- The Social Construction of Reality, Categories, and Meaning

Monday, September 30th

- Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. "Chapter 1: The Reality of Everyday Life" from *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*: 33-42.
- Eviatar Zerubavel. 1996. "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification." *Sociological Forum* 11(3): 421-433.
- Steven Epstein. 1995. "The Construction of Lay Expertise: AIDS Activism and the Forging of Credibility in the Reform of Clinical Trials." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 20(4): 408-437.

Wednesday, October 2nd

- Jane E. Stets. 2006. "Chapter 9: Identity Theory and Emotions" from *The Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*.
- Patricia A. Adler, Steven J. Kless, and Peter Adler. 1992. "Socialization to Gender Roles: Popularity among Elementary School Boys and Girls." *Sociology of Education* 65(3): 169-187.
- Paige L. Sweet. 2019. "The Sociology of Gaslighting." *American Sociological Review* 84(5): 851-875.

Week 3:

Look What You Made Me Do- Symbolic Interactionism, Idiocultures, and the Presentation of Self

Monday, October 7th

- Herbert Blumer. 1969. "Chapter 1: The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism" from *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*.

- Gary Alan Fine. 1979. "Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioclature of Little League Baseball Teams." *American Sociological Review* 44(5): 733-745.
- Tim Hallett and Matthew Dougherty. 2024. "Learning to Think Like an Economist without Becoming One: Ambivalent Reproduction and Policy Couplings in a Masters of Public Affairs Program." *American Sociological Review* 89(2): 227-255.

Wednesday, October 9th

- Erving Goffman. 1955. "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction." *Psychiatry* 18(3): 213-231.
- Katherine Walker. 2000. "'It's Difficult to Hide It': The Presentation of Self on Internet Homepages." *Qualitative Sociology* 23(1): 99-120.
- Allison Stanich. 2024. "All the World's a (Neurotypical) Stage: Neurodivergent Folklore, Autistic Masking, and Virtual Space for Discussing Autistic Identity." *Journal of American Folklore* 137(535): 293-307.

Week 4:

Delicate- Deviance, Humor, and Becoming (or not becoming) Part of the Group

Monday, October 14th

- Howard Becker. 1963. "Chapter 1: Outsiders" from *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. The Free Press.
- Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Laura T. Hamilton, Elizabeth M. Armstrong, and J. Lotus Seeley. 2014. "'Good Girls': Gender, Social Class, and Slut Discourse on Campus." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77(2): 100-122.
- Abigail C. Saguy and Anna Ward. 2011. "Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74(1): 53-75.

Wednesday, October 16th

- Gary Alan Fine and Michaela De Soucey. 2005. "Joking Cultures: Humor Themes as Social Regulation in Group Life." *Humor* 18(1): 1-22.
- Raül Pérez. 2022. "Chapter 2: Amused Racial Contempt, Or A Theory of White Racist Humor" from *The Souls of White Jokes: How Racist Humor Fuels White Supremacy*. Stanford University Press.
- Patricia A. Turner. 2022. "Chapter 1: Flagged Down" from *Trash Talk: Anti-Obama Lore in the Twenty-First Century*. University of California Press.

Week 5:

Don't Blame Me- Rumors, Legends, and the Boundaries of Agreement

Monday, October 21st

- Gary Alan Fine. 2007. "Rumor, Trust, and Civil Society: Collective Memory and Cultures of Judgement." *Diogenes* 54(1): 5-18.
- Jeffrey S. Victor. 1994. "Fundamentalist Religion and The Moral Crusade Against Satanism: The Social Construction of Deviant Behavior." *Deviant Behavior* 15: 305-334.
- Janay Kingsberry. 2023. "Trans Designer Dumped by Target Explains How He Got Smeared as a Satanist." *The Washington Post*.

Wednesday, October 23rd

- Vèronique Champion-Vincent. 2005. "Chapter 6: From Evil Others to Evil Elites: A Dominant Pattern in Conspiracy Theories Today" from *Rumor Mills: The Social Impact of Rumor and Legend* edited by Gary Alan Fine, Vèronique Champion-Vincent, and Chip Heath. Routledge.
- Francesca Polletta and Jessica Callahan. 2017. "Deep Stories, Nostalgia Narratives, and Fake News: Storytelling in the Trump Era." *The American Journal of Cultural Sociology*: 55-73.
- Vanessa Northington Gamble. 1997. "Under the Shadow of Tuskegee: African Americans and Health Care." *American Journal of Public Health* 87(11): 1773-1778.

Week 6:

I Did Something Bad- Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Politics of Memory

Monday, October 28th

- Gary Alan Fine. 1996. "Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors, and Images of President Harding." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(5): 1159-1193.
- Michel Anteby and Viràg Molnàr. 2012. "Collective Memory Meets Organizational Identity: Remembering to Forget in a Firm's Rhetorical History." *The Academy of Management Journal* 55(3): 515-540.
- Mary-Hunter McDonnell and Brayden King. 2013. "Keeping Up Appearances: Reputational Threat and Impression Management after Social Movement Boycotts." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 58(3): 387-419.

Wednesday, October 30th

- Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz. 1991. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *American Journal of Sociology* 61: 908-927.
- Geneviève Zubrycki and Anna Wozny. 2020. "The Comparative Politics of Collective Memory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 46: 175-194.
- Nicole Iturriaga. 2019. "At the Foot of the Grave: Challenging Collective Memories of Violence in Post-Franco Spain." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5: 1-16

Week 7:

Gorgeous: Habitus, Appearance, and the Embodiment of Class

Monday, November 4th

- Jessica McCrory Calarco. 2014. "Coached for the Classroom: Parents' Cultural Transmission and Children's Reproduction of Educational Inequalities." *American Sociological Review* 79(5): 1015-1037.
- Peter Francis Harvey. 2023. "'Everyone Thinks They're Special': How Schools Teach Children Their Social Station." *American Sociological Review* 88(3): 493-521.

- Ashley Mears and Heather Mooney. 2024. "Getting In: Status Stratification and the Pursuit of the Good College Party." *Qualitative Sociology* 47: 221-247.

Wednesday, November 6th

- Ashley Mears. 2015. "Girls as Elite Distinction: The Appropriation of Bodily Capital." *Poetics* 53: 22-37.
- Kjerstin Gruys. 2012. "Does This Make Me Look Fat? Aesthetic Labor and Fat Talk as Emotional Labor in a Women's Plus-Size Clothing Store." *Social Problems* 59(4): 481-500.
- Anne Monier and Ashley Mears. 2024. "Elites, Bodies, and Gender: Women's Appearance as Class Distinction." *Ethnography* 1-18.

Week 8:

Dress: The Production, Consumption, and Consecration of Cultural Objects

Monday, November 11th

- Richard A. Peterson and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 311-334.
- Claudio E. Benzecry. 2008. "Azul y Oro: The Many Social Lives of a Football Jersey." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 25(1): 49-76
- Chris Mench. 2018. "How Album and Ticket Bundles Reshaped the Billboard Charts in 2017." *Genius*.
- Brett Milano. 2024. "Taylor's Version of Copyright." *Harvard Law Today*.

Wednesday, November 13th

- Paul DiMaggio. 1982. "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." *Media, Culture, and Society* 4: 33-50.
- Claudio E. Benzecry. 2009. "Becoming a Fan: On the Seductions of Opera." *Qualitative Sociology* 32: 131-151.

- Kristina Kolbe. 2024. "The Art of (self)Legitimization: How Private Museums Help Their Founders Claim Legitimacy as Elite Actors." *Socio-Economic Review* 22(3): 1119-1140.

Week 9:

This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: The Matthew Effect, Superstars, and (some of) the Social Mechanisms of Success (and failure)

Monday, November 18th

- Robert K. Merton. 1968. "The Matthew Effect in Science: The Reward and Communication Systems of Science are Considered." *Science* 159(3810): 56-63.
- Max Besbris, Jacob William Faber, Peter Rich, and Patrick Sharkey. 2015. "Effect of Neighborhood Stigma on Economic Transactions." *PNAS* 112(16): 4994-4998
- Josh Pacewicz and John N. Robinson III. 2021. "Pocketbook Policing: How Race Shapes Municipal Reliance on Punitive Fines and Fees in the Chicago Suburbs." *Socio-Economic Review* 19(3): 975-1003.

Wednesday, November 20th

- Alan B. Krueger. 2005. "The Economics of Real Superstars: The Market of Rock concerts in the Material World." *Journal of Labor Economics* 23(1): 1-30.
- Julie Holland Mortimer, Chris Nosko, and Alan Sorensen. 2012. "Supply Responses to Digital Distribution: Recorded music and Live Performances." *Information Economics and Policy* 24(1): 3-14.
- David Schieber. 2018. "My Body of Work: Promotional Labor and the Bundling of Complementary Work." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 4: 1-13.

Week 10:

So It Goes... Death, Dying, and the Meaning Behind Wrapping Things Up

Monday, November 25th

- Stefan Timmermans. 2005. "Death Brokering: Constructing Culturally Appropriate Deaths." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 27(7): 993-1013.
- Stefan Timmermans and Pamela J. Prickett. 2021. "The Social Autopsy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 52(4): 1681-1706.
- David Schieber. 2024. "Remembering My Teacher, Mr. Sackett." *The Daily Northwestern*.

Wednesday, November 27th

- I plan to be in lecture lecturing about something this day. I understand many people will be traveling. That's not a problem. There are no assigned readings for this day. If you still have a reading response to complete, you can read the readings for a previous reading response you have not completed, and turn it into the November 27th submission portal.

If you made it this far, thanks for reading!