THE SOCIOLOGY OF AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC (SOAP)
COURSE OUTLINE/GUIDELINES

Unit 1
Part I: The 3 Theoretical Perspectives of Sociology

Unit 2
Jazz: New Orleans, the Swing era, Bebop & Beyond (1920s-present)

Unit 3
Rock & Roll (1950s-present)

Unit 4
Country Music & The Urban Folk Revival (1920s-present)

Unit 5
Soul, Motown & Funk (1950s-1970s)

Unit 6
Hip-Hop & Rap (1970s-present)

GRADING

Grades will be based on the following:

1. tests/quizzes (50% of semester grade)
2. homework/classwork assignments (20% of semester grade)
3. Artist Spotlight Project (20% of semester grade)
4. class participation/behavior (10% of semester grade)

Assignments must be turned in on time to earn full credit. You will receive half credit for assignments turned in one class period after the due date, and no credit will be given for assignments turned in after this point. If you know you are going to miss class, it is your responsibility to contact me regarding make-up assignments or tests. If you have any questions, please see me.

STUDENTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO TAKE MAKE-UP UNIT TESTS OR FINAL EXAMS IF THEIR ABSENCE ON THE ORIGINAL TEST DAY IS UNEXCUSED. Test/quiz dates are clearly posted on the board next to the agenda and on the online class calendar (see class website homepage). Therefore, THERE ARE NO EXCUSES FOR NOT KNOWING TEST/QUIZ DATES. IF YOU ARE PRESENT IN CLASS ON A TEST DAY, YOU MUST TAKE THE TEST. IF YOU ARE ABSENT ON ANY DAYS BEFORE THE TEST, YOU ARE STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR BEING PREPARED AND TAKING THE TEST ON THE ASSIGNED DAY.
**Tardy Policy:** When a student receives **four tardies**, he or she will be assigned one hour of detention. Another hour of detention will be given for each consecutive tardy.

**CLASSROOM GUIDELINES**

In order to maintain a productive and positive classroom environment, all students must observe the following:

1. **Come prepared.** Make sure to come to class each day with all required materials (notes, notebook, pen, paper, assignments, etc.). Coming unprepared will result in the loss of points.
2. **Keep food and drink outside the classroom.** Bottled water is OK, but please finish eating/drinking before coming to class. Eating/drinking in class will result in a loss of points.
3. **Keep all electronic equipment at home.** Cell phones, iPods, etc. are disruptions in the classroom. If I see or hear them in class, they will be turned over to school administrators.
4. **Show courtesy and respect to fellow classmates.** This positive behavior will help to ensure a comfortable classroom environment.
5. **Come to class on time, pay attention, participate, be nice to your teacher, and have fun!**

**PLEASE READ AND SIGN BELOW:** I have read the class guidelines and will respect/observe all requirements listed above.

Student’s Name (Print) ___________________________ Date __________________

Parent’s Signature ___________________________ Date __________________
Dear Parents:

As we begin a new semester, I feel the time is appropriate to quickly go over my classroom policy regarding cell phones. I agree that cell phones can be lifesavers in some emergency situations. However, when cell phones ring or are used for text messaging during class time, the learning process is disrupted. Last year there were many instances in my classroom when cell phones rang in class, despite my rule about keeping phones out of sight and turned off. In several cases, parents were the ones making the call.

My rule regarding cell phones is simple: they should not be seen or heard during class time. Any phone that rings or is being used for text messaging during class will be turned over to school administrators. If parents or friends must contact a student during an emergency, the school office is the appropriate place to call.

We, the faculty and staff at OPHS, are dedicated to providing students with the best education possible, and the only way we can truly succeed in this endeavor is to have the support of all students and parents. I know that your cooperation in this matter will help to ensure a quality learning environment during this upcoming semester. Thanks for your understanding.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at my email address:

cmeyer@oakparkusd.org

Sincerely,

Chris Meyer
Social Science Department
OPHS

PLEASE CHECK OFF AND SIGN BELOW:

_______ I understand and will support the classroom rule regarding cell phones.

Student’s Name (Print)__________________________________________________________

Parent’s Signature ___________________________________________________________

Date________________________
THE SOCIOLOGY OF AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC (SOAP)

VIDEO CONSENT FORM

The following unrated videos to be shown in class this semester contain brief (and minimal) use of strong language:

Unit 2: “Jazz”
Unit 3: “The History of Rock ‘n’ Roll”
Unit 4: “Searching for Sugar Man”
Unit 6: “Up From the Underground”
Unit 6: “The Hip Hop Years”
Unit 6: “Louder Than a Bomb”

These award-winning documentaries are powerful films that effectively tell the story of the sociological and historical context in which these uniquely American music genres were created.

____ My son/daughter has my permission to watch the videos listed above.

____ I would prefer that my son/daughter complete alternative assignments.

Student’s Name (print) ____________________________________________

Parent’s Name (signature) _________________________________________

Date ___________________
THE SOCIOLOGY OF
AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC
(SOAP)

UNIT 1 NOTES

Part I - The Three Theoretical Perspectives of Sociology

Part II - The Origins of 20th Century American Music: The Roots of Anglo and African-American Music, Minstrelsy, the Blues, and Ragtime
perception - the way the brain interprets an image or event

definitions:

perspective - a particular point of view - influenced by one's beliefs/values - draws your attention to some things, blinds you to others

sociology - the scientific study of social structure (human social behavior)
- concentrates on patterns of social relationships, primarily in modern societies
- sociologists are concerned with explaining behavior in terms of societal causes

sociological perspective - a view that looks at behavior of groups, not individuals (psychology)

social structure - the patterned interaction of people in social relationships
- sociologists try to understand why and how these patterns exist
- people's behavior within a group setting can't be predicted from their personal characteristics - examples: 1) civil disturbance in L.A. after Lakers NBA championship 2) death of 12 Texas A&M students preparing pregame bonfire - Texas rivals joined A&M fans/students in paying tribute to those killed

sociological imagination - the ability to see the link between society and self
- can help us understand the effects of events on our daily lives

conventional wisdom - what most people believe to be true
- questioning this wisdom is an important aspect of sociology
Part I: The Three Theoretical Perspectives of Sociology

1. **functionalism** - a society holds a consensus on values
   - according to functionalists, consensus accounts for the high degree of cooperation in a society
   - economies, families, governments and religions serve to promote a society's survival and welfare

2. **conflict perspective** - supporters see social living as a contest
   - those with power (the ability to control the behavior of others) get the largest share of whatever is considered valuable in society
   - as the balance of power among groups shifts, change occurs (e.g., women's movement)

3. **symbolic interactionism** - we learn the meaning of a symbol (anything that stands for something else and has an agreed-upon meaning attached to it) from the way we see others reacting to it
   - once we learn the meaning of symbols, we base our behavior on them
Part II
CHAPTER 3: THE ROOTS OF ANGLO-AMERICAN MUSIC

Anglo-American Music Within a Social and Historical Context

- Pilgrims from Holland fled because of religious persecution (1620 - Plymouth) - brought a tradition of of singing psalms, or sacred poems from the Old Testament of the Christian Bible - psalm book they used contained a number of psalms from England, France and the Netherlands that reflected the emerging Baroque style (Western music style popular from 1600 to 1750, defined by emotion, feeling, and an elaborate musical ornamentation that emphasized the use of vocal and instrumental color)
- Pilgrims from England (1630) - brought with them their own psalms - developed a new book in 1640 called the Bay Psalm Book - the 1st book printed in the British colonies of N. America - contained no music, only words
- very few later settlers had any musical training
- singing schools formed, using theory books (helped people learn to read music) and tune books (taught melodies)
- up until 1820, American music was dominated by the teaching of vocal music through singing books that used theory books and tune books containing religious music

folk songs - most of the colonists in New England came to escape religious persecution - over time, more settlers came to New England who were escaping poverty - most of these people were in the lower classes, illiterate, some were indentured servants, farmers or laborers
- these settlers brought with them a thriving folk music tradition
**folk songs** - songs of the common people, expressing the thoughts and feelings of ordinary human beings
- most songs were sung without accompaniment (unless someone had an instrument like a fiddle or dulcimer)
- most words were in English, but melodies came from England, Scotland, and Ireland

**Four Types of Folk Songs**
1. **Ballads** - songs that tell a story ("Barbara Allen")
2. **Lyric Songs** - convey a particular feeling or mood - often more private and introspective than dramatic and entertaining ballads - many are love songs ("The Water is Wide")
3. **Work Songs** - railroad songs, lumber songs, sea chanteys designed to move to a beat similar to the rhythm with which one would strike with a sledge hammer, wield an ax, or row with an oar ("I've Been Working on the Railroad," "Michael Row the Boat Ashore")
4. **Children's Songs** - simple songs sung by and for kids - lullabies to help babies fall asleep, songs to accompany games, and nonsense and humorous songs to provide children with amusement ("Skip to My Lou," "Rock-a-Bye Baby")

**Instrumental Music of the Early Settlers**
- British immigrants brought *communal social dancing* with them to America
- these dances were often accompanied by a *fiddle*, a violin played in a folk style, characterized by little or no vibrato, short, quick strokes with the bow, and a full, deep sound
- players played with the fiddle held against the chest rather than under the chin (like classical violinists)
- country dancing was a fun, social event in which anyone could participate, and it was not an aristocratic display of grace or skill
- many fiddlers learned tunes by ear and taught them to others in the same way
- "Yankee Doodle" - this song was probably created in the typical folk song process:
- someone whose name is now unknown created words to an older melody on a topic of much interest at the time, the strife between the English and the American colonials -> song became popular, various words were transmitted or created, song was disseminated, and became part of the ever-evolving repertoire of folk songs that's passed on from one generation to the next

CHAPTER 4: THE ROOTS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC

African Commonalities

Integration of Music with Life - throughout the history of African cultures, music was thoroughly integrated into all aspects of society, serving an important component in the observation and celebration of nearly every activity of the life cycle from birth to death, work to recreation, sowing the harvest, and hunts & feasts
- most tribes used songs, stories and dances to transmit important historical/social information from one generation to the next
- music was an essential, inseparable part of African life, heard in conjunction with other activities rather than separately as entertainment
- music was such an integral part of being human that, in some of the languages, there is no indigenous word for "music"; no reason to give it a separate name

**Close Relationship Between Performer and Community** - in Western traditions, it's been common for specially trained musicians to perform for passive audiences - in Africa, there was not a strong separation between musician and audience - most members of African societies took part in the musical activities - master musicians might provide drumming or singing leads, but everyone else participated in musical performance by singing choral parts, dancing, or adding to the general rhythmic texture with their own drums or handclapping

**Based in Oral Tradition and Improvisation** - although written language existed, most Africans depended on oral (spoken) and aural (listened to/heard) tradition for the transmission of music - the European tradition values musical composition with precise directions conveyed in notation (written music) that ensure that the music can be accurately reproduced in the future and in different geographic locations - in West African traditions, musicians and participants would improvise melodic ornamentation, rhythmic accompaniment, song forms, and dance movements that reflected the inspiration of the moment

**Use of Call-And-Response** - in this practice, a leader sings (or "calls") a phrase and the group responds with the same phrase or an answering phrase - this method of performance was important in Europe and the U.S.: leader would sing the phrase first and then the congregation would repeat it - in African practice, the leader fulfilled an important role, but it was the response that was considered the essential part of the tune - in European/American practice, the leader's phrase was a complete unit, but in African practice, the response provided the necessary completion to the phrase - leader's part/responsive part might overlap
African-American Music Within a Historical and Social Context

- 3 main kinds of vocal music were maintained or developed during the period of slavery in the U.S.:

1. **work songs** - typically sung in a call-and-response manner, these songs served the function of motivating laborers, providing a sense of community, ensuring that the work progressed at a steady pace, and coordinating movements so that when axes and hoes were used, accidents were avoided - work songs were an integral part of African culture long before Africans became slaves in the Americas - when Africans were brought to America as slaves, this tradition was deeply embedded in their culture - references to gods and religions of West Africa were suppressed by slaveowners - no drums could accompany the singing because drumming had great communicative powers

2. **cries, calls, and hollers** - melodic tradition that was used as a means for communicating across fields and even to nearby plantations - could convey a great variety of messages: calling people to work, bringing them in from the fields, conveying news, attracting attention of a girl - cries sometimes used spontaneously to express a range of emotions: loneliness, homesickness, contentment, exhilaration
3. **spirituals** - songs that could express themes of faith, love, humility, and salvation - scholars continue to debate whether black spirituals originated as copies of white spirituals or whether they had their own unique origins in Africa

- all three types of songs share a strong unifying formal element with clear African roots: **the predominance of variations of call-and-response**
CHAPTER 6: THE BLUES

- "the blues" refers to both a melancholy emotional state and to a specific type of music - the term's use to describe loneliness and sadness didn't come into general usage in the U.S. until the end of the 1800s - the blues as a distinct musical form developed after the Civil War following the emancipation of slaves, growing out of a fusion of several musical influences, most notably African-American work songs, spirituals, and field hollers

- the blues developed as a cross between African-American hollers, work songs, and spirituals and the European popular songs and ballads

- 3 main influences helped spread the blues and fostered its transition from the country/rural blues to the classic city blues:

1. urban migration - several factors contributed to this movement of blacks to cities in the North following the Civil War: intense racism that had resulted as a white backlash to having lost the war, extreme poverty in which the sharecropping farmers had to live, destruction of crops by the cotton boll weevil, simple desire to enjoy the new freedom of movement to explore new lands -country singers brought the blues with them to the cities, recalling their earlier lives and singing about their current predicament in a language and style that was understood by the farmers who had moved North
2. **minstrelsy** - the American minstrel show began in the 1830s and became a popular form of entertainment by the 1840s - white comedians would blacken their faces with burned cork and perform a series of songs and skits portraying black characters in a sentimental and patronizing manner - black began performing in these shows by 1855 - these minstrel shows featured a variety of acts, including wrestlers, comics, jugglers, and vaudeville teams, but they also contained a number of blues singers - popular early blues singers such as **Ma Rainey** and **Bessie Smith** began their performing careers with minstrel shows - they had heard country/rural blues growing up and modified the instrumentation to appeal to audiences by using a pianist and a backup band

- performers in early minstrel shows would travel the South by wagon (just like medicine and circus shows), but by the early 1900s, minstrel shows became stationary (performed in theaters)

3. **published blues of W.C. Handy (1873-1958)** - an African-American musician from Alabama who started a music publishing company in 1907 and began publishing blues songs (written by himself and others) in 1909 - he initiated a whole industry of commercial, composed, and published blues - known by many as the "Father of the Blues"
- 1920s - urbanized blues sung by mostly female blues singers coming out of the minstrel show tradition were the first recorded - singers were accompanied by bands and performed for audiences in theaters - black blues singer Mamie Smith was recording singing "Crazy Blues" by Perry Bradford in 1920 - record sold extremely well, and helped bring this popularized form of the composed blues to a much wider audience - both recording studios and mobile recording units were used to record both urban and rural blues
- 1930s - a heavier, ensemble blues became an influential style - near end of the decade there was a resurgence of interest in the rural style of blues and a new generation of blues singers from Mississippi
- 1940s - Muddy Waters - bluesman from Mississippi who was highly influenced by blues great Robert Johnson ("Cross Road Blues") - Waters added harmonica, piano, and additional guitar and drums to fill out the sound in the style of the Chicago blues groups that had gained popularity in the 1930s
- Howlin' Wolf (born Chester Burnett) - Memphis, TN - studied under early bluesman Charlie Patton - couldn't sing in falsetto (high pitch) style of the early blues singers, so he developed a sort of cry instead (hence his nickname) - his band fused powerful country blues style with the heavier band style from Chicago
- T-Bone Walker - virtuosic guitarist living in CA - had performed with blues singers like Ma Rainey - credited with being the first blues guitarist to use an electric guitar - had tremendous influence on later blues artists - used amplification to create a more powerful, louder style of blues
- **1950s - Rhythm 'n' Blues** - term used to categorize a broad variety of musical styles, including the works of older artists like Howlin' Wolf and T-Bone Walker, as well as younger artists such as Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley
  - accompanying the solo singer was an instrumental ensemble including electric piano or organ, electric bass, drums, and occasionally additional instruments from the jazz influence like saxophones or trumpets - singers sang in the throaty and hoarse style of the blues singers, and often sang slightly ahead of or slightly behind the beat - rhythm and blues singers sang at a faster tempo than traditional blues singers, and a heavy downbeat was a characteristic of this new style
- **exportation of blues to Europe** - 1940s/1950s - some American blues artists began to tour Britain and the European continent - some stayed and became enormously successful - "skiffle" music was an early by-product of these early tours - many bands that were part of the "British Invasion" of the 1960s started as skiffle bands (John Lennon's first group, The Quarrymen, was as blues skiffle band)
- **the 1960s and British Blues** - a number of British bands became influential in ultimately revitalizing American interest in the blues - examples: John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, The Yardbirds, Cream (Eric Clapton was a member of each of these bands), The Animals, The Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac, Jimi Hendrix (an American brought back to the U.S. as an imported act)
  - on their albums, these groups gave songwriting credits to the American blues artists that had influenced them
  - San Francisco rock artists of the 1960s like The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, and Big Brother and the Holding Company continued the tradition by creating highly amplified versions of both traditional blues and rhythm 'n' blues
- **1970s to the Present** - American interest in the blues has continued to flourish, as evidenced by blues festivals that attract large numbers of people and CD sales of blues recordings by current artists as well as reengineered and reissued CDs of early blues artists.
- In order to continue to be a viable musical tradition, the blues have had to adapt so that they can still speak for and to people living in today's world.
- Many new blues singers have adopted a more contemporary urban style because they have grown up in urban settings in the highly technological society of the late 20th century.
- The blues of today continues to build on the musical legacy left by African Americans in the South more than a century ago.
**Ragtime** - refers to a style of piano playing that emerged in the late 1880s that achieved great popularity from about 1895 to 1917 - grew out of the slave tradition of "ragging" a European melody to give it the more complex rhythmic characteristics slaves valued from their African music traditions - the basic rhythmic pattern was a regular, metrical rhythm in the bass over which a syncopated (offbeat) melody was played - by the late 1880s the most popular instrument for "ragging" was the piano, and piano rags became the most successful form of published ragtime - by the end of the 1800s, spread through the great urban migration of blacks out of the South following Emancipation, a variety of ragtime-based music traditions on solo instruments and in small ensembles were evident in many states in the Northeast, Midwest, and South

- **Scott Joplin** - African-American pianist who became the most famous composer of ragtime music (the songs "The Entertainer" and "Maple Leaf Rag" are among his most popular)

- this style of piano playing would be a precursor to the uniquely American art form and musical genre known as **jazz**
Theoretical Perspectives

Key Terms

- theoretical perspective
- functionalism
- manifest functions
- latent functions
- dysfunction
- conflict perspective
- power
- symbol
- symbolic interactionism
- dramaturgy

The Role of Theoretical Perspectives

Perception is the way the brain interprets an image or event. Similarly, perspective is the way you interpret the meaning of an image or event. Your perspective is influenced by beliefs or values you hold. It draws your attention to some things and blinds you to others. This is demonstrated in two drawings psychologists often use to illustrate the concept of perception. (See Figure 1.1.) If you stare at the old woman long enough, she becomes a beautiful young woman with a feather boa around her neck. If you stare at Figure 1.1b, it alternates between two facing profiles and a vase. You cannot, however, see the old woman and the young woman or the faces and the vase at the same time.

Which image is real depends on your focus—your perspective influences what you see. One perspective emphasizes certain aspects of an event, while another perspective accents different aspects of the same event. When a perspective highlights certain parts of something, it must place other parts in the background.

What is a theoretical perspective? A theoretical perspective is a set of assumptions about an area of study—in this case, about the workings of society. A theoretical perspective is viewed as true by its supporters and it helps them organize their research.

Competing, even conflicting, theories in science usually exist at the same time. Perhaps not enough evidence exists to determine which theory is accurate, or different theories may explain different aspects of the problem. This is even true in the so-called “hard” sciences like modern physics. Einstein's theory of general relativity, for example, contradicts the widely accepted Big Bang theory of the origin of the physical universe. Einstein himself never accepted the quantum theory. Nonetheless, this theory has become the foundation of modern developments in such fields as chemistry and molecular biology (Hawking, 1998). Today theories are being put forth that hold promise for combining relativity and quantum theory. If theories still compete in physics, it should not be surprising that several major theoretical perspectives exist in sociology.
Sociology has three overarching theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Each of these perspectives provides a different slant on human social behavior. The exclusive use of any one of them prevents our seeing other aspects of social behavior, just as one cannot see the old woman and the young woman at the same time. All three perspectives together, however, allow us to see most of the important dimensions of human social behavior.

**Functionalism**

Functionalism emphasizes the contributions (functions) of each part of a society. For example, family, economy, and religion are “parts” of a society. The family contributes to society by providing for the reproduction and care of its new members. The economy contributes by dealing with production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Religion contributes by emphasizing beliefs and practices related to sacred things.

How does functionalism explain social change? Functionalists see the parts of a society as an integrated whole. A change in one part of a society leads to changes in other parts. A major change in the economy, for example, may change the family—which is precisely what happened as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Before the Industrial Revolution, when most people made their living by farming, a large farm labor force was needed. Families fulfilled this need by having many children. The need disappeared as industrialization proceeded, and smaller families became the norm.

Functionalism assumes that societies tend to return to a state of stability after some upheaval has occurred. A society may change over time, but functionalists believe that it will return to a stable state. It will do this by changing in such a way that society will be similar to what it was before. Student unrest and other protests during the late 1960s illustrate this. The activities of protesters helped bring about some changes:

- Many Americans became suspicious of the federal government’s foreign policy.
- Schools and universities became more responsive to students’ needs and goals.
- Environmental protection became an important political issue to many Americans.

These changes, however, have not revolutionized American society. They have been absorbed into it. As a result, our society is only somewhat different from the way it was before the student unrest. In fact, most of the student radicals are now part of the middle-class society they once rejected.
Unit 1 Sociological Perspectives

Do all functions have a positive effect? Most aspects of a society exist to promote a society's survival and welfare. It is for this reason that all complex societies have economies, families, governments, and religions. If these elements did not contribute to a society's well-being and survival, they would disappear.

Recall that a function is a contribution made by some part of a society. According to Robert Merton (1996), there are two kinds of functions. **Manifest functions** are intended and recognized. **Latent functions** are unintended and unrecognized. One of the manifest functions of school, for example, is to teach math skills. A latent (and positive) function of schools is the development of close friendships.

Not all elements of a society make a positive contribution. Elements that have negative consequences result in **dysfunction**. Dysfunctions of bureaucracies, for example, include rigidity, inefficiency, and impersonality. When you go to the division of motor vehicles to register your car or get your driver's license, the clerk may treat you like a “number” rather than as an individual. You don't like his bureaucratic inflexibility and impersonality.

**How does functionalism view values?** Finally, according to functionalism, there is a consensus on values. Most Americans, for example, agree on the desirability of democracy, success, and equal opportunity. This consensus of values, say the functionalists, accounts for the high degree of cooperation found in any society.
### Figure 1.2 Focus on Theoretical Perspectives

**Assumptions of the Major Theoretical Perspectives.** This table compares the most important assumptions of the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Do you believe, as the functionalists do, that society is relatively well integrated? Or do you support the conflict theorists' assumption that society experiences conflict on all levels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functionalism</th>
<th>Conflict Perspective</th>
<th>Symbolic Interactionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A society is a relatively integrated whole.</td>
<td>1. A society experiences inconsistency and conflict everywhere.</td>
<td>1. People's interpretations of symbols are based on the meanings they learn from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A society tends to seek relative stability.</td>
<td>2. A society is continually subjected to change.</td>
<td>2. People base their interaction on their interpretations of symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most aspects of a society contribute to the society's well-being and survival.</td>
<td>3. A society involves the constraint and coercion of some members by others.</td>
<td>3. Symbols permit people to have internal conversations. Thus, they can gear their interaction to the behavior that they think others expect of them and the behavior they expect of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A society rests on the consensus of its members.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Conflict Perspective**

The **conflict perspective** emphasizes conflict, competition, change, and constraint within a society (Giddens, 1987, 1997). Understanding the conflict perspective is easier when you understand functionalism, because the assumptions behind these two perspectives are the reverse of each other. This is shown in Figure 1.2 above.

**What is the role of conflict and constraint?** Functionalists see a basic agreement on values within a society. This leads them to emphasize the ways people cooperate to reach common goals. The conflict perspective, in contrast, focuses on the disagreements among various groups in a society or between societies. Groups and societies compete as they attempt to preserve and promote their own special values and interests.

Supporters of the conflict perspective, then, see social living as a contest. Their central question is “Who gets what?” It is those with the most **power**—the ability to control the behavior of others—who get the largest share of...
How does the conflict perspective explain social change? Many conflicting groups exist in a society. As the balance of power among these groups shifts, change occurs. For example, the women’s movement is attempting to change the balance of power between men and women. As this movement progresses, we see larger numbers of women in occupations once limited to men. More women are either making or influencing decisions in business, politics, medicine, and law. Gender relations are changing in other ways as well. More women are choosing to remain single, to marry later in life, to have fewer children, and to divide household tasks with their husbands. According to the conflict perspective, these changes are the result of increasing power among women.

Which perspective is better? There is no “better” theoretical perspective. Each perspective highlights certain areas of social life. The advantages of one perspective are the disadvantages of the other. Functionalism explains much of the consensus, stability, and cooperation within a society. The conflict perspective explains much of the constraint, conflict, and change. Each chapter, throughout the text, will illustrate both perspectives, as well as the perspective discussed next—symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic Interactionism

Both functionalism and conflict theory deal with large social units, such as the economy, and broad social processes, such as conflict among social classes. At the close of the nineteenth century, some sociologists began to change their approach to the study of society. Instead of concentrating on large social structures, they began to recognize the importance of the ways people interact. Two sociologists, Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, developed the insight that groups exist only because their members influence each other’s behavior. These early American sociologists, in short, created symbolic interactionism, a perspective that focuses on the actual interaction among people.

What is the significance of symbols in symbolic interactionism? To understand social interactionism, we need to talk first about symbols. A symbol is something chosen to represent something else. It may be an object, a word, a gesture, a facial expression, a sound. A symbol is something observable that often represents something not observable, something that is abstract. For example, your school’s team mascot is often used as a symbol of school loyalty. The American flag is used as a symbol of the United States.

The meaning of a symbol is not determined by its own physical characteristics. Those who create and use the symbols assign the meanings to them. If people in a group do not share the same meanings for a given symbol, confusion results. For example, if some people interpreted the red light of a traffic signal to mean go, while others interpreted it to mean stop, chaos would result.

The importance of shared symbols is reflected in the formal definition of symbolic interactionism. It is the theoretical perspective that focuses on interaction among people—interaction based on mutually understood symbols.

What are the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism? Herbert Blumer (1969a, 1969b), who coined the term symbolic interactionism, outlined three assumptions central to this perspective. (Refer to Figure 1.2 on page 27.)

First, according to symbolic interactionism, we learn the meaning of a symbol from the way we see others reacting to it. For example, American musicians in Latin America soon learn that when audience members whistle at the end of a performance, they are expressing disapproval. In other words, their whistling is a symbol of disapproval, as booing is in the United States.
Second, once we learn the meanings of symbols, we base our behavior (interaction) on them. Now that the musicians have learned that whistling symbolizes a negative response, they will definitely avoid an encore if the crowd begins whistling. (They would likely have the opposite response in the United States, where the symbol of whistling has a very different meaning.)

Finally, we use the meanings of symbols to imagine how others will respond to our behavior. Through this capability, we can have “internal conversations” with ourselves. These conversations enable us to visualize how others will respond to us before we act. This is crucial because we guide our interactions with people according to the behavior we think others expect of us and we expect of others. Meanwhile, these others are also having internal conversations. The interaction (acting on each other) that follows is therefore symbolic interaction.

In an attempt to better understand human interaction, Erving Goffman introduced dramaturgy, which depicts human interaction as theatrical performance (Goffman, 1961a, 1963, 1974, 1979, 1983; Lemert and Bronaman, 1997). Like actors on a stage, people present themselves through dress, gestures, tone of voice. Teenagers sometimes act in a particular way in order to attract the attention of someone they want to like them. Goffman calls this presentation of self or impression management.

According to symbolic interactionism, social life can be likened to a theatrical performance. Don’t we convey as much about ourselves in the way we dress as do the actors above?
SOAP: UNIT 1

Reading Questions: The Fisk Jubilee Singers

1. What did music instructor George L. White propose in an effort to raise money for the Fisk School?

2. Name three reasons why the tour was dangerous and difficult.
   
   1)    
   
   2)    
   
   3)    

3. What kinds of music made up most of their concert repertoire?

4. What spiritual song performed by the group resulted in an overwhelmingly positive response from the audience in Oberlin, Ohio?

5. For which U.S. president did they perform?

6. How much money did the tour help raise for the school?

7. For which British monarch did they perform?

8. How much money did they raise during their 1873 European tour?

9. Name two schools that were inspired to establish spiritual-singing choirs following the success of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

10. Name two accomplishments of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.
1. Work gangs used a call-and-response style of singing which became the foundation for what kind of music?

2. By the early 20th century, what three mass-produced instruments could be obtained by anyone from mail order catalogs?

3. During slavery, European church music was blended with African song styles to create the _____________________.

4. What spiritual song helped to spread the popularity of the Fisk Jubilee Singers?

5. As the 20th century began, what technology was used to expose the nation to many kinds of music?

6. What was the first popular music recorded in America?

7. What helped workers in the Mississippi Delta cope with the oppressive culture they experienced?

8. Which blues artist, influenced by Son House and Willie Brown, grew up to be one of the most prolific writers and inventive guitarists of Delta blues?

**Episode 2: This Land Was Made For You And Me**

1. Folksong collector John Lomax started a project that would document American roots music for the _____________________.

2. Which black folk musician was discovered by John and Alan Lomax?

3. Who was the first black blues musician to be played on the radio?

4. Which legendary blues artist was inspired by hearing the blues on WDIA?

5. What was revolutionary about radio station WDIA?
6. Who opened a studio to record the blues artists who were gaining popularity in Memphis?

7. What record company did he begin?

8. Sam Phillips thought he’d become rich if he could find a white artist to sing the blues. Who did he discover who would make this a reality?

**Episode 3: The Times They Are A-Changin’**

1. Starting in the 1920s, why did African Americans from all across the South begin moving to northern cities?

2. Which guitarist was popularizing a new electric blues in Chicago by the early 1950s?

3. ________ Records became known as the best place to record because they got blues records played and distributed.

4. Many of Muddy Waters’ hits were written by ________________, who also wrote many hits for Howlin’ Wolf.

5. By the mid 1960s, who had earned the mantle of “the King of the Blues”?

6. His band was one of the first blues bands to incorporate ________________.

7. What is his signature song?
1. What did John and Alan Lomax do in the 1930s?

2. Why was this job important?

3. Which blues singer was discovered by John Lomax?

4. According to blues musician Corey Harris, in which U.S. state was the blues born?

5. According to Willie King, when a man sang the blues about a woman not treating him right, he was actually making an “undercover” reference to ____________________.

6. How old was Robert Johnson when he died? How many songs did he record?

7. Whose blues music was nostalgic, mysterious and haunting?

8. Before the Civil War, what could happen to a slave who was caught with a drum?

9. The rhythms are layered in fife and drum music, just like the rhythms of__________ ____________________.

10. When Salif Keita listens to American blues, he thinks about ____________________.

11. Kora player Tomani Diabate says that the only thing that couldn’t be taken from a slave was his ____________________.
Sociology of American Popular Music (SOAP)

Interview Assignment: Musical Biography

DIRECTIONS: You will interview someone from a previous generation (parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, family friend) to discern how music affected that person’s life. The chronologically organized biography must include answers to the questions listed below. Your interview can be conducted in person, on the phone, through email, or Skype/iChat.

All answers must be typed in the spaces provided between each question. If you need more room, include a separate attached sheet.

Please make sure to have your interviewee answer all questions as thoroughly and honestly as possible.

Name of interviewee_____________________________________________________

How is this person related to you?________________________________________

1. To what kinds of music were you exposed as a child, and who/what were your major influences? (Please be specific.)
2. What music did you enjoy in your teen years (genres/styles of music, names of recording artists, albums, songs, live performances, etc.)? What attracted you to this music? In your opinion, how did “your” music compare/contrast with “teen” music of subsequent (later) generations?
3. With what music did/do you identify with in your middle and/or “mature” years? Did your musical tastes change as you grew older? If so, how? Do your peers share your musical tastes?

4. In retrospect, do you believe popular music has reflected social change, initiated it, or both? What part, if any, did historical events play in the music of your time? Provide specific examples.
SOCIOLOGY OF AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC (SOAP)

LIVE MUSIC ASSIGNMENT

Due Date __________________________

Event______________________________

Assignment Objectives:

1. Experience a live music performance (blues, jazz, rock, pop, country, classical, World, etc.).

2. Expand your knowledge and appreciation for music and the performing arts.

Directions:

1. Attend a live music performance.

2. Proof of attendance (ticket, pamphlet, brochure) is required and will be turned in with your typed response.

3. Describe your experience by answering the following questions in paragraph form (typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, spell-checked, complete sentences):

   a. Summarize the event (name of artist, place, date, what you heard, etc.). Report this information objectively. DO NOT offer your opinion here (1-2 pages).

   b. Respond subjectively, explaining how you were affected by the experience. Voice your opinions and feelings here (1-2 pages).