Alcohol and culture: Social control under the influence
Alcohol lubricates memorable celebrations yet also causes disease, tragedy and the loss of self-control. This course explores how the meanings of alcohol are as powerful as its chemistry. We examine communities where alcoholism is rare to those where it is rampant and the social movements that have shifted norms and legislation. At bottom, the sociology of alcohol highlights our assumptions about free will, social control, and rewarding social relations. Participants will produce original empirical research.

This course satisfies requirements for core seminars in Law and Society (LAWS), the cultural diversity requirement (CD), and is writing intensive (WR).

Required texts:

Keeping in touch
greggor.mattson@oberlin.edu
Mailbox on my door, King 305c
Office hours: W 2-5pm. Friday lunchtime for you.

Assessment
Leadership in discussions  10%
Research memos  60
Final research paper  20
Presentation of findings  10

Course Goals
• learn primary findings by social scientists on alcohol and alcoholism
• synthesize the work of your Oberlin sociology career
• produce a solid pilot study of research you may use in the future
• apply insights of social theorists Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to your empirical data
• assist your peers in the crafting and writing of their research project
Grading rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(clearly stated research question, defended with evidence, and assessed in the conclusion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(original data are presented and analyzed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(ideas grouped in paragraphs, evidence for main points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(synthesizes a variety of course and outside texts, cited properly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(creativity, connections between texts, use of language, sparkle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(stapled, grammar, 1” margins, spelling, punctuated, 12-pt. font)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation in seminar

A seminar class involves participating in discussions about challenging ideas. Doing the readings before class is essential to inform your opinions and give us a common foundation to critique ideas and apply them to our research projects. **Come prepared to ask and answer questions.**

Attendance

Your on-time attendance is essential to your ability to participate in seminar. It is your responsibility to get notes or handouts if you miss. Our time together is short—only 14 classes!

Honor Code: [http://www.oberlin.edu/students-links-life/honorcode.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students-links-life/honorcode.html)

Sign the honor code on each assignment—it is your reminder to know the boundaries of cheating (not doing your own work), plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s work), and fabrication (making up sources, quotations or observations). Refer to the honor code and/or talk to me if you have concerns or are feeling so pressed that cheating seems attractive.

Research Paper and Memos

You will produce a 15-20 page research paper in this class on a topic of your choosing. You will supplement the course readings with 4-8 sources specific to your topic. About every two weeks you will turn in a research memo at the beginning of class as indicated on the syllabus. These memos allow you to discuss your work with the class, get advice on interpreting your data, and build towards your final paper. Research memos need be only 3-4 double-spaced pages.

Note that you will choose a topic by the second class meeting, and that a first draft of your paper is due by APRIL 23. Research paper memos are marked on the syllabus by the ► symbol.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will lose one letter grade for each day late – this includes not turning in a hard copy at the beginning of class. Excused lateness must come from a Class Dean.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability, make sure you’ve registered with the Office of Disability Services (Peters G-27/28 x55588) to develop a plan to meet your academic needs. Bring their recommendations to me at least two weeks before any due date or exam.
Legal notice
Your research must obey all College policies regarding alcohol consumption. But you already knew that. For more information visit:

http://new.oberlin.edu/office/oswell/overview/

Sources & Citations (APA format)
You need not make a works cited for course readings but you must cite them properly in the text in APA format. Wikipedia is not an academic source, but may lead you to primary sources.

Paraphrasing primary sources (preferred):
  Media in the 1950s catered to the rising middle class, giving a misleading impression of America’s families (Coontz 1990, p. 31).

Direct quotations (use sparingly) must be introduced:
  Stephanie Coontz cites the enduring power of the media for creating a new American tradition during the baby boom: “The happy, homogenous families that we ‘remember’ from the 1950s were… a result of the media’s denial of diversity” (1990, p. 31).

Examples of potential research paper topics:
What are the social meanings of attending wine tastings? Sake factory tours? Vodka tastings? Microbrewery tours?
What are the social meanings of alcohol for Coops? For athletes? For the experiences in chain restaurants like Chi-Chis or T.G.I.Fridays? Of rum for Puerto Ricans or Cubans? Vodka for Russians or Poles? Soju for Koreans? Whiskey for the Japanese or Swedes? Is there a difference between older and younger generations?
What are the gendered meanings of cocktails?
When is it okay to drink on the job? Taboo?
What are the social meanings of teetotalism amongst college students?
What are Bartender/Mixology guides selling, and why do people buy them?
To what identities do college anti drinking campaigns appeal? With whom are they successful?
How do police determine when public drunkenness necessitates an arrest?
How have American attitudes toward alcohol changed in the past 30 years?
What are the meanings of having distilled spirits available in the home? Wine? Beer? Of having a dry home?
How do bouncers manage conflict with inebriated patrons differently than with sober ones?
What are the differences between Black working- and middle-class drinking practices and meanings?
How do police decide when to enforce prohibitions against public alcohol consumption?
What are the social meanings of bars for gay men? For lesbians? For gays of color?
What have been the effects of the professionalization of sommeliers?
What does it mean to get drunk? What differences exist between the way people talk about it, experience, make it come about, and the social effects they hope it will produce?
Feb 4 Week 1: Drunk on culture (or: everything you know about alcohol is wrong)

EXTRA FILES:

Introduction to the themes and requirements of the course. What is drunken comportment, and what can we say about it cross-culturally? How does culture shape drunkenness? How does the biology of alcohol affect the human organism? How is this different from the cultural effects of alcohol?

Feb 11 Week 2: Sober thoughts on capstone research methods:

► Research Memo: Propose your topic, summarize what you know about it, and outline how you will go about learning more

EXTRA FILES:

Feb 18 Week 3: Theorizing alcohol in America
Ch. 2 and 4 from Contested Meanings, “Passage to Play: Rituals of Drinking Time in American Society”
Ch. 1 and 12 from Drinking Cultures, “Drinking Politics: Alcohol, Drugs, and the Problem of US Civil Society”

Feb 25 Week 4 Animal House: College Drinking Alcohol as a danger in the welfare state
Dowdall, Chapters 1-5 + 8
http://blogs.oberlin.edu/about/ethos/alcohol.shtml

▶ Research Memo: Sharing first data (interview transcripts, ethnographic fieldnotes, statistical tables) What are your initial findings? What do you still need to learn? How do you know what you know?

Mar 4 Week 5: Spirit of the people
Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 8 of Drinking Cultures

Extras:

How does alcohol underpin national and ethnic identities? What is the significance of drinking rituals to everyday identity? How can this help us understand the success or failure of laws to control alcohol consumption across countries or subcultures within one country?

Mar 11 Week 6: Can’t hold their liquor: gender and drinking cultures
Chapter 11 in Drinking Cultures

What are the various meanings that alcohol holds for individuals? What are the ways in which alcohol interacts with dominant gender norms to create social problems, self-destructive behaviors, self-esteem... or romance? What are the ways in which alcohol facilitated women’s legitimacy in national politics?

Mar 18 Week 7: Alcohol, social control and the law
Gusfield’s Contested Meanings Chs. 6 & 7: “Competence and Incompetence in Drinking and driving” and “The Bar as a Context of Social Control”
What are the promises or pitfalls of doing alcohol research in bars? What can be seen and what cannot? What, do the authors suggest, is the danger of relying on visible alcohol consumption to make policy recommendations?

Mar 25 Week 8 *** SPRING BREAK ***

Apr 1 Week 9: The individual is the wine in the bottle of society
Chapter 7 of Drinking Cultures

What does social class have to do with identity? How do individuals reflect and enact themselves in their drinking practices? What is the significance of alcohol on wealth and inequality anyways?

Apr 8 Week 10: Alcohol in everyday life
Alasuutari’s Desire and Craving, chapters 1-4

Alasuutari discusses how everyday people use stories to explain their drinking behaviors. What is cultural about drinking for the Finns, and how does it differ by social class? How can their experiences help us understand what happens here in the US, or here at Oberlin?

Apr 15 Week 11 Alcoholism in everyday life
Alasuutari’s Desire and Craving, chapters 5-9

What does Alasuutari mean that alcoholism is culturally constructed? From what are people getting sick? What “cures” does he propose—both legal and normative? What can we learn from alcoholism about the way that desire is constructed in other spheres of our lives?

► Return your colleague’s paper and get yours back.

Apr 22 Week 12: Medicalizing and legalizing social problems
Valverde’s Diseases of the Will, Chapters 1-4

If the disease model of alcoholism has to be reproduced even at the interpersonal level, where did this model come from? What is the history of considering alcohol a disease? How did individuals come to accept this model, and how do they reproduce it in their everyday lives?

► Memo: Rewrite methods section and introduction

Apr 29 Week 13: Citizenship and the state of the will
Valverde’s Diseases of the Will, Chapters 5-8

Why do governments bother legislating alcohol? How did theories of proper governance construct individuals as “rational” citizens? In what way is alcoholism a social movement? What are the paradoxes of “harm reduction” and social policy for individual heavy drinkers? What can we learn from alcoholism about the social meanings of individualism, self-control, and an orderly society?

► Final draft due. Final peer edit swap

May 6 Week 14: Alcohol and industrialism
Schivelbusch’s Tastes of Paradise, chapters 5-7.

How did the material reality of alcohol change with industrialization? How did the social meanings change? How did those meanings affect the meanings early Europeans gave to other “intoxicants” they encountered, such as coffee, tobacco and chocolate? How can we fit this material history of alcoholism with how it comes to be governed later?

► Return papers to colleague.

► May 18 7-8:45pm final papers due. It’s ovah.
## SOCI 426 Research memo timeline

**Greggor Mattson**

**Spring 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of grade</th>
<th>Due at the beginning of class:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Erry day</strong> Discussion participation / leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 4 Initial research proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 11 IRB draft due / draft research proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 12 IRB/research proposal peer edits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feb 13 IRB final edit / final research proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feb 25 First data memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 1 Senior Symposium <a href="#">interest form due</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>March 4 Second data memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>March 11 Draft abstract + annotated bibliography due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 15 Senior Symposium final abstracts and biographies due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>March 18 Data analysis memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 8 First draft due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 15 Peer edits due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 26 Senior symposium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 29 Final draft due. Swap with colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>May 6 Research presentations. Return peer edits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>May 18 Final paper due by 8:45pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion leader timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb 11</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>