Hello and welcome to sociological studies. As always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to study society. In today’s lesson, we’re going to discuss a topic that’s really exciting for me, that’s high culture versus low culture, or high culture versus popular culture.

High culture is the consumption patterns, mannerisms, beliefs, amusement, leisure activities, and tastes and preferences of a society’s elite. And we’re going to define society’s elite as those with advanced education or economic success. And popular culture is the same thing, but for the mass of society.

So a popular culture then is the consumption patterns, mannerisms, beliefs, amusements, leisure activities, and tastes and preferences of the mass of society. So for instance, musical taste. You listen to jazz, classical, Bluegrass, R&B, hip hop, or country. Or some of them and not others, all the above. These are typically considered high culture musical tastes. Whereas country, hip hop and R&B for instance, might be considered more popular culture.

You listen to what’s on the radio, top 40 popular culture, you’re not going to find any jazz, classical, Bluegrass. You’re only going to find R&B, hip hop, country, and rock and roll, things like that. So these are historically popular cultural amusements.

And now with food, tastes for food and drink. Have you been to an IHOP, or Applebee’s, Chili’s, Olive Garden, famous Dave’s, or any chain restaurant like this. Have you been to any of those in the last year. Or do you prefer small chef owned restaurant serving things foie gras, escargot, oysters, bone marrow, and scallops? The majority of Americans, the mass of society popular culture, eats at these restaurants.

Whereas people with high cultural capital, may tend to prefer these smaller chef owned restaurant serving exotic foods. It’s important to point out that high culture is not inherently better than popular culture. High culture is high culture because it excludes the mass of society. Often times in order to participate in high culture, one needs to have a certain amount of economic success.

So in this way, people with lots of economic success like to consume these things because it says they’re successful, it says they’re powerful. And at the same time, excludes the rest of society who can’t afford to consume these things. So it’s not that high cultures better, it just acts as a means of excluding the popular culture, and saying something about the status of people who go to these restaurants, and consume these foods.

And this is where it’s really interesting for sociologist to study high and low culture is for these reasons about how people then use culture to set up boundaries with other people to say things about themselves, this is who I’m not,
this is who I am. So a very, very famous sociologist anthropologist social scientist named Pierre Bourdieu. He's famous for studying these things, how class position relates to our tastes, and consumption preferences.

If you ask me, he's one of the greatest, most advanced social thinkers of all time. In his book *Distinction, A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, I think it's probably the best social scientific text ever written. So in that book, Bourdieu gave us this theory of how we internalize our class positions, the one we're born into, a very young age. And this then structures our tastes and preferences for life.

He called this a habitus. So Bourdieu then is really the first to give us this idea of how our subjective meanings, thoughts, and beliefs relate to broad structures, such as class. So that's why he's remembered. Thank you very much for joining me. I hope you enjoyed this brief discussion of high culture and popular culture. Have a great rest of your day.