

# **Culture**

**Sociology 101**  
**Principles of Sociology**  
**Spring 2008**

# Elements of Culture

- Symbols
- Language
- Gestures
- Norms
- Sanctions
- Values

# Symbolic Meaning

**Symbol:** Something to which people attach meaning, and use as a basis for communication

**Language:** A system of symbols that can be combined in an infinite number of ways to communicate with others.

**Gesture:** Using one's body to communicate with others, conveying meaning without words

# Normative Controls

**Norm:** An expectation or rule of behavior that derives from a group's values

**Sanction:** Positive or negative reactions to the ways in which people observe or adhere to norms

**Law:** Formal norms enforced by the state

**Mores:** The strongest norms that elicit the harshest sanctions, and that reflect society's most cherished principles

**Folkways:** Informal norms that govern everyday behavior

# Values

**Value:** A group's collective ideas about what is worthwhile or desirable in life; standards by which a group defines what is good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, etc.

Values shape individual preferences and choices