

SOC243:10 CONSUMER SOCIETY
Fall, 2020 (online)
Instructor, Dr. P. Cormack

Office hours: 11:15 – 1:00 (Monday – Friday) by appointment (Teams or Collaborate).
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What is a “consumer society” and how is it different from other types of societies? In this course we will explore this question by way of classic and contemporary theoretical literatures as well as empirical studies. We will discuss issues that include social class, gender, mass society, inequalities, advertising, marketing, and brands.

Evaluation

Study questions (20 readings) = 20 points
Forum Discussions (20 readings) = 20 points
Midterm exam (Oct 13) = 20 points
Final exam = 40 points (optional)

- All study questions for the week are due before the beginning of each lecture (see dates below). No late submissions will be accepted. Moodle will close as class begins.
- All forum discussions close Friday 4 pm of each week – forum discussions may be written after the lecture. Forum discussions will be graded for knowledge of reading, application of concepts from reading, engagement with other posts in the same forum, originality/creativity of examples. Students should post only ONE paragraph (about 50 words) for each reading. The later you post, the more you will be expected to respond to the posts ahead of yours. If you miss a forum post deadline, make it up in the quality of subsequent postings.
- Bonus forum (5 points) – see moodle for details.
- The final exam is optional. You will know your standing grade from your study questions, forums, and midterm. If you are happy with that grade, you need not write the final exam. If you do write the final exam, your grade will not be lowered (no risk).
- *Exams containing any materials directly from the internet will be given a grade of zero.*
- ALL DEADLINE CUT OFFS ARE IN LOCAL NOVA SCOTIA TIME (ATLANTIC DAYLIGHT TIME)

Required Reading

- Readings posted to moodle.

Schedule

Sept. 17: Campbell, "What is Wrong with Consumerism"?

Sept 22: Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and Secret Thereof."

Sept 24: Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry."

Sept 29: Galbraith, "The Dependence Effect."

Oct 1: Baudrillard, "The Ideological Genesis of Needs."

Oct 6: Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption."

Oct 8: Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital"

OCT 13 – MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 15: Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?"

Oct 20: Bookman, "Coffee Brands, Class and Culture in a Canadian City".

Oct 22: Halnon, "Poor Chic: The Rational Consumption of Poverty".

Oct 27: Rock, "Discomforting Comfort Foods: Stirring the Pot on Kraft Dinner".

Oct 29: Cairns, et. a. "Feeding the Organic Child"

Nov 3: Hochschild, "The Commercial Spirit of Intimate Life and the Abduction of Feminism: Signs from Women's Advice Books".

Nov 5: Ducille, "Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference".

Nov 10 : Zukin, et al, "The omnivore's neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification".

Nov 12: Bordo, "Hunger as Ideology".

Nov 17: Arvidsson, "Brands".

Nov 19: Wilk, "Bottled Water: The Pure Commodity in the Age of Branding"

Nov 24: Biro, "Reading a Water Bottle Menu".

Nov 26: Fiske, "Shopping for Pleasure: Malls, Power, and Resistance."

DEC 1: **Review for exam**