

**Sociology 771 Understanding Consumer Society
Fall 2006**

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Office hours: Monday 11-12:45 and by appointment*

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Course Objectives and Requirements

This course is designed to expose and train graduate students in the sociology of consumption. As such the major emphasis is on the literature in sociology, but the reading list also includes authors from related disciplines such as history, cultural studies and anthropology. Although consumption has been studied for more than a century, in the 1980s, the literature exploded, in a variety of areas, and from a number of fields. It is now large, and includes studies of the ways in which people consume media, food, cultural products, clothing and fashion, vehicles, technology, celebrity, etc. Originally the literature centered on the critiques of writers such as Marx, Veblen, Simmel, and the Frankfurt school. It has since moved on to consider issues such as the ways in which consumption structures and reproduces social difference, the role of consumer practices in the constitution of culture and personal identity, how consumption becomes a site of sub-cultural resistance, the role of consumption in modernity and post-modernity, and so forth. These theoretical perspectives form the structure of the course.

In sociology, the journal *Theory, Culture and Society* was an early outlet for the revival of the study of consumption, more recently the *Journal of Consumer Culture* has emerged. Over the last 20 years, *The Journal of Consumer Research* has also carried many articles of strong interest to sociologists. For those of you planning to do a field in the sociology of consumption, I suggest you begin reading the *JCC* on a regular basis, and begin familiarizing yourself with back issues of the other two.

There are three requirements for the class. The first is to keep up with the weekly reading assignments. I have tried to keep weekly assignments reasonable, but there is quite a bit of reading. In a few cases I have denoted works of lesser importance with asterisks. Each week, I will go over the next week's reading in class, to apportion readings for units that cover two weeks and to keep the load manageable. In some cases, I have not provided page numbers for books, I give those the week before we meet. The purpose of the large recommended list is to provide you with a larger bibliography in the field. This is something you can draw on if you go on to do a field exam in consumption.

The class will be run as lecture/discussion. I will come each week with a lecture, but I expect that a good portion of the class will be discussion. In a graduate seminar, everyone who participates is expected to take responsibility for critically digesting the readings and talking about them. Depending on how the class discussions go, I may also ask for weekly response papers to the reading, or provide discussion questions in advance.

The second requirement is a final paper of approximately 25 pages. For most of you, this paper should entail doing at least some primary research. The paper will be due on the first day of exams, but there will be intermediate deadlines along the way. (paper proposal, research design, first draft, etc.) For those of you who have a long term interest in this topic, you should think of this paper as a future journal article, or even the start of a dissertation topic. It can certainly turn into second year paper or masters thesis. I urge you to start thinking about a topic as soon as possible, and to consider this paper a serious piece of work.

Third, you will be asked to write a book review of one recent major sociological book on consumption. At the beginning of the semester, I will provide a list with some possibilities, but you can also propose alternatives. If we can find a time, we will have a session to discuss these reviews.

Booklist.

The books below should be available at the BC bookstore under this course number. In cases where the readings are not included in the books below, they are either available on-line at the O'Neill course reserves or they are journals, available online. I have pdfs of many of the journal articles and will send them to you. For those of you with limited financial resources for purchasing books, I have extra copies of some of these available and would be happy to lend them to you.

Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed., Mark Poster, (Stanford 2001, expanded edition)
Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard 1984)
Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (University of California Press 1994)
Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford 1991)
Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* (University of North Carolina Press 1984)
Juliet Schor and Douglas Holt, *The Consumer Society Reader*, (New Press 2000)
Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1997)
Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Dover Thrift Edition)

Reading List

September 11 History and Theory

Erica Rappaport, "A Husband and His Wife's Dresses: Consumer Credit and the Debtor Family in England, 1864-1914," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed., Victoria de Grazia (California 1996).

Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, ch 3, pp. 36-41. (Routledge 1996)

Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, chs 1, 3.

Juliet Schor and Douglas Holt, "Introduction," in Schor and Holt, pp. vii-xxiii.

Recommended:

Daniel Miller, *Acknowledging Consumption*.

Jean-Christophe Agnew, "Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds., John Brewer and Roy Porter (Routledge 1994).

Mark Gottdiener, "Approaches to Consumption," in *New Forms of Consumption* (Rowman and Littlefield 2000).

Eric J. Arnould and Craig J. Thompson, "Reflections: Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, March 2005, 31:868-882.

Erica Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the making of London's West End* (Princeton 2000).

William Leach, *Land of Desire*, (New York: Knopf 1984).

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Political of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (Knopf 2003).

Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

Lawrence Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Cornell University Press 1999).

September 18 Production-Oriented Critiques of Consumer Culture and the Agency-Manipulation Debate

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 120-167. (excerpted version in Schor and Holt, pp. 3-19).

Douglas Holt, "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble?" *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29:70-91 (2002).

John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Dependence Effect," in Schor and Holt, pp. 20-25.

Slater, chs. 2,4.

Michael Schudson, "Delectable Materialism: Were the Critics of Consumer Culture Wrong All Along?" *The American Prospect*, Spring 1991:26-35, (reprinted in Glickman).

Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Routledge 1992), ch. 1, pp. 9-49.

Dan Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood* (Duke 2004), ch 1.

Jane Schneider, In and Out of Polyester, Desire, Disdain and Global Fiber Competitions, *Anthropology Today*, 10(4):2-10

Recommended:

Betty Friedan, "The Sexual Sell," *The Feminine Mystique*, reprinted in Schor and Holt, pp. 26-46.

Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), esp, ch 4.

Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American* (New York: Basic Books 1992), chapter 5.

Juliet Schor, "In Praise of the Consumer Critic," unpublished.

Robert V. Kozinets and Jay M. Handelman, "Adversaries of Consumption: Consumer Movements, Activism and Ideology," *JCR*, December 2004, 31:691-704.

James Twitchell, "Two Cheers for Materialism," in Schor and Holt, pp. 281-290.

Richard Klein, *Cigarettes Are Sublime* (Duke 1993), chs. 1-2, pp. 1-49.

Giles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, (Princeton 1994), pp. 3-55.

George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Pine Science Press 2000).

Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. Stuart Hall et al (London: Hutchinson 1980).

September 25 and Re-schedule of October 2* Symbolic Consumption, Advertising and the Post-Modern Consumer

(*Oct 2 is Yom Kippur and we will have to reschedule this meeting.)

Baudrillard, Jean, *Selected Writings*, ed., Mark Poster and *Simulations* (Brooklyn, NY: Semiotext[e] 1983).

Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, (Verso 1980), pp. 170-195.

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, "Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning," *Sign Wars*, reprinted in Schor and Holt, pp. 81-98.

Thomas Frank, "Advertising as Cultural Criticism," in Schor and Holt, pp. 374-394.

*Douglas Holt, *How Brands Become Icons*, (Harvard Business School Press 2004), chs 1-2.

Slater, pp. 137-147.

Noam Chomsky, *Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (South End Press 1989)

Frederick Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* #146, 1984.

Fuat Firat and Alladi Venkatesh, "Liberatory Postmodernism and the Re-enchantment of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22:239-267, 1995.

Elizabeth Wilson, "Feminism and Fashion" from *Adorned in Dreams*, reprinted in Schor and Holt pp. 291-306.

Llewellyn Negrin, "The Self as Image: A Critical Appraisal of Post-Modern Theories of Fashion," *Theory, Culture and Society* (1999) 16(3):99-118.

Recommended:

Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars 1978).

William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising* (Routledge 1990).

Guy de Bord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Post-Modernism* (Sage 1991).

Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* (California 1993).

Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images* (Basic Books 1988).

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (Chicago 1997).

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising*, (New York: Guilford Press 1996).

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, *Nike Culture* (Sage 1998)

Douglas Holt, "Poststructuralist Lifestyle Analysis: Conceptualizing the Social Patterning of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(March): 326-350.

Douglas Holt, "Jack Daniel's America: Iconic Brands as Ideological Parasites and Proselytizers," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, forthcoming.

Malcolm Gladwell, "The Coolhunt," in Schor and Holt, pp. 360-374.

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, (Pantheon 2002).

October 16 and 23 Sociological Critiques: Class and Differentiation

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, chs 2, 4,5.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, chs. 1-5, pp. 1-317.

Douglas Holt, "Does Culture Capital Structure American Consumption?" *Journal of Consumer Research*, reprinted in Schor and Holt, pp. 212-252.

Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau, 1988, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *Sociological Theory*, 6(2):153-168.

Douglas Holt, 1997, "Distinction in America: Recovering Bourdieu's Theory of Tastes from its Critics," *Poetics*, 24:326-350.

Brian Spooner, "Weavers and dealers: the authenticity of an oriental carpet," in Appadurai, *The Social Life of Commodities* (Cambridge University Press 1986), pp. 195-235.

Juliet Schor, *The Overspent American*, chs 1-3 (Basic Books, 1998).

Slater, ch 6.

Recommended:

Grant McCracken, "Ever Dearer in Our Thoughts: Patina and the Representation of Status before and after the Eighteenth Century," *Culture and Consumption*, (Indiana 1990) ch 2, pp. 31-43.

Grant McCracken, "Consumer Goods, Gender Construction, and a Rehabilitated Trickle Down Theory," and "Meaning Manufacture and Movement in the World of Goods," *Culture and Consumption*, chs 6,5.

Georg Simmel, "On Fashion," *American Journal of Sociology* 62:54-58, 1957.

David Halle, *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago 1993), ch 2, pp. 59-86.

Angela Chao and Juliet Schor, "Empirical Tests of Status Consumption," *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 19(1):107-131, 1998.

Michele Lamont, *Money, Morals and Manners*, (Chicago 1992).

Murray Milner, *Freaks, Geeks and Cool Kids* (Routledge 2004).

David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise* (Simon and Schuster 1999).

Juliet Schor, "Conspicuous Consumption," entry for *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, ed. George Ritzer (Blackwell, forthcoming 2006).

"Interview with Juliet Schor" (by Douglas Holt), *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1):5-21, 2005.

October 30 Women and Consumer Culture

Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," in Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, eds., *The Shopping Experience*, (Sage 1997), pp.56-91.

Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance*.

Susan Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe and the Contemporary Body," In *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*, (University of California 1997), pp. 27-65.

Kathy Peiss, "Making Up, Making Over" in Victoria de Grazia, *The Sex of Things*.

Recommended:

Victoria de Grazia, ed., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (California 1996).

William R. Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *Journal of American History* 1(2):319-342 Sept 1984.

Susan Willis, *A Primer for Everyday Life* (Routledge 1991).

Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* (California 1995)

Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Harper Perennial 2002)

Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar* (Metropolitan 1998).

Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (Harper and Row 1979).

Susan Fournier, "Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24:343-373, March 1998.

Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase* (Routledge 2004).

Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption* (Routledge 1996).

Douglas B. Holt and J. Craig Thompson, "Man-of-Action Heroes" The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption, *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

November 6 Race and Consumer Culture

Bridget T. Hennigan, *Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination* (Mississippi 2004), chs 1-2, pp. 3-85.

Stuart Cosgrove, "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," reprinted in Jennifer Scanlon, *Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, (NYU Press) pp. 342-354.

Ann DuCille, "Toy Theory: Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference," in *Skin Trade*, reprinted in Schor and Holt, pp. 259-278.

Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," in Russell Ferguson et al, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, (MIT Press 1990), pp. 247-264.

Elizabeth Chin, *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture* (Minnesota 2001), ch 2, pp. 27-61.

Howard Campbell, "Chicano Lite: Mexican Consumer Culture on the Border," *JCC*, 5(2)207-233, 2005.

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papsion, "Alienation, Hope, and Transcendence: Determinism or Determination?", in *Nike Culture*, 94-117.

Recommended:

Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Wesleyan/New England 1994)

Carl Nightengale, *On the Edge: A History of Poor Children and their American Dreams* (Basic Books 1993), esp ch. 5.

Rooks, Noliwe, M. *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African-American Women* (Rutgers 1996).

Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, "How Blacks Use Consumption to Shape their Collective Identity," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2001, 1(1):31-45.

Robert E. Weems, "Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America," in Scanlon, pp. 166-178.

Amy Best, *Romancing the Prom* (Routledge 2000).

Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase* (Routledge 2004), chs 2, 6.

Arlene Davilla, *Latinos, Inc.* (California 2000).

November 13 Analysing the consumer: identity, celebrity and self in the contemporary market

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*.

Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 64-91.

Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame*.

Eva Illouz, "Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery," (Columbia University Press), ch 2, pp. 16-46.

*Guy Redden, "The New Agents: Personal Transformation and Radical Privatization in New Age Self-Help," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2(1):33-52.

*Brian J. McVeigh, "How Hello Kitty Commodifies the Cute, Cool and Camp: *Journal of Material Culture*, 5(2):225-245.

*Russell W. Belk, Melanie Wallendorf and John F. Sherry, Jr., "The Sacred and the Profane in the Consumer Behavior: Theodicy on the Odyssey," *Journal of Consumer Research* 16:1-37, June 1989.

Recommended:

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Open University Press 1998)

Ulrich Beck, *The Risk Society* (Sage 1992).

Russell Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*,

Helga Dittmar, *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions* (Harvester Wheatsheaf 1992)

Russell Belk and Guliz Ger, "Consumer Passion," *Journal of Consumer Research* 30(3):326-.

Thomas C. O'Guinn, "Touching Greatness," in Schor and Holt, pp. 155-168.

November 27 Globalization and Consumer Culture: Is the Mouse Eating the World?

Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*, parts I and II. (Routledge 1996).

David Howes, *Cross Cultural Consumption*, (Routledge 1996), Introduction

Richard Wilk, "Learning to Be Local in Belize: Global Systems of Common Difference," in Daniel Miller, ed., *Worlds Apart: Modernity Through the Prism of the Local*, (London: Routledge), pp. 110-113.

Daniel Miller, "The Young and the Restless in Trinidad," in Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch, eds, *consuming technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, (Routledge 1992), pp. 163-182.

Daniel Miller, "The Myth of Cultural Erosion," in *Consumption and Macromarketing*, eds, Russell W. Belk et al (Cincinnati: Southwestern College Publishing 1996), pp. 153-65.

Benjamin Barber, "Jihad versus McWorld," *Atlantic Monthly* March 1992, pp. 53-63.

Helena Norberg-Hodge, "The Pressure to Modernize and Globalize," in *The Case Against the Global Economy*, eds., Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books 1996), pp. 33-46.

Zine Magubane, "The Globalization of Gangster Rap: Hip-Hop in the Post-Apartheid City," in *The Vinyl Ain't Final*, ed. Sid Lemelle (London: Pluto Press, forthcoming).

*James Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East* (Stanford 1997), pp. 1-109.

Recommended:

Edward M. Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 9(4):435-470.

George Ritzer, *The Globalization of Nothing* (Pine Science Press 2003).

Craig Thompson and Zeynep Arsel, "The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experiences of Globalization," *JCR* 31:631-642, December 2004.

Jonathan Friedman, "The Political Economy of Elegance: An African Cult of Beauty," in *Consumption and Identity* (Gordon and Breach Science Pub 1995), ch. 7, pp. 167-187.

Mark Liechty, *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*, (Princeton 2002).

Robert Foster, *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption, and Media in Papua New Guinea*, (Indiana University Press 2002).

Juliet Schor, "Is the Mouse Eating the World?" (unpublished)

December 4 Subculture and Resistance

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge 1988).

John Schouten and James McAlexander, "Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of New Bikers," *Journal of Consumer Research* 22(June): 43-61.

Stephen Kates, "The Protean Quality of Subcultural Consumption: An Ethnographic Account of Gay Consumers," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29:383-399, December 2002.

Thornton, Sarah, *Club Cultures: Music Media and Subcultural Capital*. (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press) 1996, chs 1-2, pp. 1-86.

Vince Carducci, "Culture jamming: A Sociological Perspective," *JCC* 6(1): 116-238, 2006.

*Albert M. Muniz, Jr. and Thomas C. O'Guinn, "Brand Community," *JCR*, March 2001 27: 412-432.

*Michel de Certeau, "Making Do": Uses and Tactics, ch 3, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (California 1984), pp. 29-42.

*John Fisk, "Shopping for Pleasure: Malls, Power and Resistance," in Schor and Holt, pp. 306-328.

Recommended:

Stuart Hall and T. Jefferson, *Resistance and Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain* (Routledge 1993).

Dick Hebdige, "Object as Image: The Italian Motor Scooter," in *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, reprinted in Schor and Holt, pp. 117-154.

Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton, *The Subculture Reader second edition* (Routledge 2006)

Straw, Will, "Characterizing Rock Music Culture: The Case of Heavy Metal," *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Second Edition, S. During, ed. (Routledge 1999).

December 11 The Ecological Critique of Consumption*

**Subject to scheduling

Readings TBA