We live in a consumer society, where advertising, shopping, having and displaying goods is central to the economy and to the social construction of everyday life—who we are (our identities, fantasies and experience), how we live, and our impact on the environment around us. We also live in a world that is gendered—where bodies express and enact masculinity and femininity and where life chances are structured and unequal. This course examines the relationships between consumption and gender, focusing on several important themes, including: 1) histories of the gendered divisions of labor in society where “men work and women shop,” 2) women’s responsibility for family consumption in the (heterosexual) domestic sphere, 3) representations of men and women in advertising, 4) the role of commodities in the embodiment of gender (clothing, cosmetics, etc.) and 5) ecofeminism/feminist environmentalism, consumption and the environment. This course takes an intersectional approach to gender, which means that it is considered in relation to other structures of inequality and difference such as race, class, and sexuality.

CLASS MECHANICS:

Readings: Many of the readings for this course are available online. They may be accessed directly from the O’Neill library course reserves website.

In addition, the three books listed below are on sale at the BC Bookstore. These will also be available on two hour course reserve at O’Neill.


The fourth book below, is out of print. You should be able to find a used copy on amazon.com or half.com. It will also be on reserve at the library.


**Course Website:** There is a Blackboard Vista site for this course.

**Requirements:**

1. Consistent attendance.
2. Active, serious and respectful participation in class and small group discussions.
3. Thorough reading of course materials, including note-taking and/or response writing to be referenced in class discussion.
4. On-time, thoughtful completion of all assignments.
5. Strict adherence to campus policies regarding plagiarism and intellectual integrity.

**Assessments:**

1. Class preparation, attendance and participation. **25%**
2. Lead group discussion during one class period, with a partner. **10%**
3. Five 400-500 word thought pieces on course reading (6% each). **30%**
4. Term Paper **35%**

**1. Class attendance** is mandatory. Since I don’t want to waste too much time taking attendance, I will not take roll every day. Instead, I will take attendance at random intervals during the semester. If you are not there for one of those classes, you will not be penalized, but after that, unexcused absences will impact your final grade. Class starts promptly at 2:00. Chronic lateness to class will have a negative impact on your class participation grade. Keep in mind that if you are not in class you cannot participate. Your participation involves completing and taking notes on the assigned reading and bringing questions to class.

- If you come to class regularly, but never speak, the highest grade you are eligible to receive for class participation is a C-.
- If you participate regularly, but never or rarely address the reading, the highest grade you are eligible to receive is a C-.

**The course reading is difficult. Completing it will be time consuming. Plan accordingly.**
2. Discussion. The last half hour of ten class periods will be reserved for student lead discussion. You and your partner will bring questions to class to foster discussion. You are responsible for and will be graded on stimulating and managing the discussion and should prepare accordingly. It is usually best to ask specific questions one at a time. Feel free to follow up on points raised or pursue a debate if it is relevant to the course material. This is your opportunity to focus the class on what matters to you in the reading: take advantage of it!

3. Thought pieces: This class deals with complex ideas that require regular completion of the readings and regular attendance. To help you actively process the readings and relate them to the world around you, you are required to write five 400-500 word thought-pieces over the course of the semester. Thought pieces should respond to questions and/or comments found on Blackboard and deal explicitly with the readings they reference. They can be informal or unconventional in style, but thoughtless, cursory or late pieces will not receive credit. Thought pieces should be posted on the Blackboard website in the Assignments section. Your five thought pieces may be selected from six opportunities, due by 11pm: Feb. 14, Feb. 28, March 21, April 4, April 18, May 2.

4. Term Paper. Your term paper has three components. 1) A one page proposal due March 1st. 2) A short outline with an annotated bibliography containing no fewer than seven relevant sources due April 5th. (Ten is better.) The outline can be in traditional format or written as prose. 3) Final 20 page paper is due May 10th at 10am. You are welcome to submit any of these assignments as soon as you are finished. All should be submitted in the assignments section of Blackboard. Your paper must have a thesis and be written with grammar, spelling, prose and attribution appropriate to college level writing.

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to comply with the standards for academic honesty outlined by the University’s Academic Policies and Procedures at http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity). Any plagiarism or cheating – including on thought pieces – will result at a minimum in an F on that piece of work and notification of the academic dean.

Late Paper Policy: All assignments should be submitted to Blackboard. Every calendar day your assignment is late results in the lowering of your grade by one third. For example, if you turn an “A” paper in on a Friday when it was due on the previous Tuesday, your grade will be a B. Papers late by only a few hours will be counted as one day late.

Grade Scale: (no rounding, an 89.9% is a B+)

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Class Environment

- Laptops are not allowed in the classroom.
- Cell phones should be turned off before class, not just silenced.
- You may bring drinks to class and, if you need it, a small snack. Please do not eat full meals or make noise with wrappers.
- Please be respectful of each other, especially during class discussions where you may have disagreements over course material.
- We will take a short break about halfway through class to stretch and use the restroom.

CLASS SCHEDULE (LR=readings to be found on library reserve)

*I reserve the right to alter the schedule with due notice.*

1. INTRODUCTION TO GENDER AND CONSUMER SOCIETY

January 18:

- In class film: *Codes of Gender*

January 25


Recommended, but not required:

2. MEN WORK AND WOMEN SHOP? HISTORY AND DIVISIONS OF LABOR IN SOCIETY

February 1

  - Victoria de Grazia, Introduction, pp. 11-24
  - David Kuchta, “The Making of the Self-Made Man: Class, Clothing, and English Masculinity, 1688-1832”
  - Abigail Soloman-Godeau, “The Other Side of Venus: The Visual Economy of Feminine Display”

February 8

- Part II—All: Establishing the Modern Consumer Household from *The Sex of Things*, pp. 151-274.
  - Victoria de Grazia, Introduction, pp. 151-161
  - Anna R. Igra, “Male Providerhood and the Public Purse: Anti-Desertion Reform in the Progressive Era”
  - Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, “The Technological Revolution That Never Was: Gender, Class, and the Diffusion of Household Appliances in Interwar England”

Recommended, but not required:

- Andrew Heinze, “Jewish Women and the Making of an American Home,” in *TGACCR #1*
- Steven M. Gelber, “Do-It-Yourself: Constructing, Repairing, and Maintaining Domestic Masculinity,” in *TGACCR #4*
February 15 (shopping: work, leisure, or ?)

- Erika D. Rappaport, “‘A New Era of Shopping’: The Promotion of Women’s Pleasure in London’s West End, 1909-1914,” in TGACCR #2

Recommended, but not required:


3. GENDER AND ADVERTISING

February 22 (message makers)

- Intro and Chapters 1 & 2 from Food is Love
- Kenon Breazeale, “In Spite of Women: Esquire Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer,” in TGACCR #13
- TGACCR #17 Archival material: New Yorker and Fortune Cartoons
- Kathy Peiss, Chapters 4-5, Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture
Recommended, but not required:


March 1 (advertisements) – One page proposals due.

- Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,” in TGACC#7
- Robert E. Weems, Jr. “Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America,” in TGACC#9
- Katherine J. Parkin, Chapters 3-end (pp. 79-224) from Food is Love
- View the short film Killing Us Softly 3 online before coming to class.
  http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1993368502337678412#
  - You can view Killing Us Softly 4, an updated version, in the media center at the library. Given the time commitment already involved in your reading, you are not required to view it. The themes are similar in 3 and 4, so the online version will suffice.

Recommended, but not required:

- Jeffrey Steele, “Reduced to Images: American Indians in Nineteenth-Century Advertising,” in TGACC#6

March 8: NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK.

4. COMMODITIES AND THE EMBODIMENT OF GENDER

March 15

- Kathy Peiss, Chapters 6-8, Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture

**March 22 (clothing/fashion)**

- Malcom Gladwell, “Listening to Khakis: What America’s Most Popular Pants Tell Us about the Way Guys Think,” in *TGACCR #10*
- Stuart Cosgrove, “The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare,” in *TGACCR #20*

Recommended, but not required:


**March 29 (focus on weddings)**


Recommended, but not required:


April 5 (focus on masculinity) – Outline with Annotated Bibliography Due


Recommended, but not required:

5. SEXUALITY AND CONSUMPTION

April 12 (focus on gay and lesbian consumption)

- George Chauncey, “Lots of Friends at the YMCA: Rooming Houses, Cafeterias, and Other Gay Social Centers,” in TGACCR #3
- Lillian Faderman, “Lesbian Chic: Experimentation and Repression in the 1920s,” in TGACCR #8
- Danae Clark, “Commodity Lesbianism,” in TGACCR #22

Recommended, but not required:


April 19 (sex tourism)

- Cowboys in Paradise-In Class Film
6. FEMINISM & CONSUMPTION

April 26 (resistance or cooptation?)

- Elaine S. Abelson, “Shoplifting Ladies,” in *TGACCR #18*
- Natasha B. Barnes, “Face of the Nation: Race, Nationalisms, and Identities in Jamaican Beauty Pageants,” in *TGACCR #21*
- Susan J. Douglas, “Narcissism as Liberation,” in *TGACCR #15*
- Rachel Bowlby, “Soft-Sell: Marketing Rhetoric in Feminist Criticism” in *The Sex of Things*

Recommended, but not required:

- Kathy Peiss, “‘Charity Girls’ and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880-1920,” in *TGACCR #19*

May 3 (ecofeminism/feminist environmentalism)