SOCY306 Introduction to Consumer Culture

Lectures: Mondays 2.30 – 4.00pm
Seminars: Thursdays 4.00 – 5.30pm

Monday Lecture: Mac-Corry B201
Thursday Seminar Rooms

Surnames A – Far Jeffrey Hall 102 M. Hand (handm)
Surnames Fi – Lin Ontario Hall 209 J. Whitaker (12jhcw)
Surnames Ma – Ro Goodwin Hall 247 K. Rider (16kar4)
Surnames Sc – Z Ellis Hall 218 L. Byberg (13lb7)

Instructor

Dr. Martin Hand
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Queen’s University
Mac-Corry D529
613 533 6000 ext. 74494
handm@queensu.ca

Office Hours: Thursday 2 -4 pm

Course Description

A comprehensive introduction to the major theories and empirical studies of consumer culture with emphasis upon the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects of consumption in sociological context; substantive focus upon diverse topics such as food, tourism, the home, children, and marketing. The study of consumption is now central to many of the key debates within contemporary sociology – particularly around notions of markets, choice and inequality, individualization and collectively organized practices, identity and difference, discourse and materiality, and so on. This course will provide students with an introduction to this increasingly important area, allowing them to further pursue aspects of social theory in relation to a wide range of phenomena and practice.
Aims

This course will introduce students to the broad field of consumer culture. Students will engage with historical and theoretical perspectives on consumer culture, and apply their knowledge to a critical examination of substantive topics in the sociology of consumer culture.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should have an appreciation and understanding of:

- The historical genesis of modern consumer culture;
- Several different approaches to the study of consumer culture;
- How these approaches have been used to analyze specific consumption practices;
- Central debates within studies of consumer culture

Organization

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminars. On Mondays, there will be a full lecture and discussion period.

The class is also organized into four separate interactive seminar discussion groups of 25 students. Seminar groups will meet in the Thursday session. The instructor or one of the TAs will lead each group. Students will engage with the reading material in small working groups and the larger group format. It is essential that students are familiar with the readings prior to each Thursday seminar class. This is crucial for success.

Assessment

Effective Participation: students will be evaluated on their attendance and effective participation in class during the whole course. 15%

Paper 1: (5 pages). Due 5th October. 25%

Paper 2: (6-7 pages). Due 2nd November. 25%

Major Essay: (10-12 pages). Due 7th December. 35%

More details on all assignments in OnQ.
Grading

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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Submission

Assignments are to be submitted on OnQ. There will be a penalty of 5% per day on all late assignments, where the following do not apply:

The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/ACADACCOMMPOLICY2016.pdf). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/

Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time, not to exceed three months. Students receiving academic consideration must meet all essential requirements of a course. Arts and Science undergraduate students can find the Faculty of Arts and Science protocol and the portal where a request can be submitted at:
Students in other Faculties and Schools who are enrolled in this course should refer to the protocol for their home Faculty.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you will be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following:

**Instructor/Coordinator Name: Dr. Martin Hand**  
**Instructor/Coordinator email address: handm@queensu.ca**

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### Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities)).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see [Academic Regulation 1](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1)), on the Arts and Science website (see [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity)), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

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### Reading and Other Resources

This course uses OnQ to provide all the required resources, including course outline, lecture slides, all readings, assignment details and submission, and TA information. The material on the website is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in SOCY306. The material on this website may be downloaded for a registered student’s personal use, but shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in SOCY306. Failure to
_abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement._

**Course Structure**

|   |   | Lecture: Sociology of Consumer Culture  
|   |   | Seminar: *What do we know about consumer culture?*
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 10th September  
|   | 13th September  
| [1] |  | Lecture: Capitalism, Consumerism, and Consumption  
|   |   | Seminar: *How and why did consumer culture develop?*
| 2 | 17th September  
|   | 20th September  
|   |   | Seminar: *What is advertising and (how) does it work?*
| 3 | 24th September  
|   | 27th September  
| [3] |  | Lecture: Consumption, Status, and Class  
|   |   | Seminar: *What shapes practices of consumption?*
| 4 | 1st October  
|   | 4th October  
| [4] |  | Lecture: Consuming Place  
|   |   | Seminar: *What do images consume?*
| 5 | 8th October  
|   | 11th October  
|   |   | No class: *Thanksgiving*
| 6 | 15th October  
|   | 18th October  
| [6] |  | Lecture: Consuming Race  
|   |   | Seminar: *Are children consumers?*
| 7 | 22nd October  
|   | 25th October  
|   |   | Seminar: *What is the good life?*