**Rationale and Description**

The study of consumption is now central for understanding the dynamics of contemporary societies. The rise of a market society and a culture of consumerism are increasingly tangible topics, whether in relation to protest, the inexhaustible world of consumer goods, environmental crises, or the financial crises of global economies. The point of this class is to help students connect these ‘big issues’ with the rather ordinary and routine practices of consumption in daily life such as eating and drinking, using social media, shopping, doing exercise, and so on.

Building on the introductory SOCY306 class, the course enables an advanced engagement with the major theories and empirical studies of consumer culture with emphasis upon the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects of consumption in sociological context, enabling students to further pursue aspects of contemporary sociology in relation to a wide range of topics and issues. The course is in two parts. Firstly, we examine some different approaches to the study of culture and consumption, in the context of wider debates around modernity, global capitalism, visual, and material culture. This section will critically examine different conceptions of identity, lifestyle, freedom, choice, signification, and power. Secondly, we will develop some of these ideas by engaging with several cultures of consumption, orientated around food, technology, environment, identity, brands, bodies.
Aims

This course will introduce students to the idea that there are many diverse cultures of consumption. Students will engage with historical and theoretical perspectives on consumption, and apply their knowledge to a critical examination of spaces and practices of consumption using a variety of methods.

Learning Outcomes

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

- The current dynamics of consumerism;
- Several different approaches to the study of consumption, consumers, and commodities;
- How these approaches have been used to analyze specific consumption practices;
- Central debates about commodification and consumerism;
- How to use visual methods in contemporary sociology

Organization

The course will be a seminar course. Students are expected to complete the required reading provided before class and be able to confidently discuss the ideas and issues in detail. Accordingly, a substantial portion of the marks will be assigned to effective seminar participation (i.e. not simply attendance and anecdotes).

Assessment

- (20%) Effective Seminar Participation: students will be expected to play a significant role in conducting the seminar through discussion and debate every week;
- (20%) Seminar Presentation: students will give an 20-30-minute oral presentation in the second part of the course on one of the topics listed (in pairs);
- (20%) Visual Assignment: students will produce a visual document (with minimal explanatory notes) that captures and analyses key aspects of visual consumer culture, in consultation with the instructor (6 pages). Due 3rd February
- (40%) Final Paper: students will write an essay drawn from a list of circulated questions, or alternatively propose their own question in consultation with the instructor (12 pages). Due 5th April

See OnQ for more details on all assignments and due dates. Additional information will be provided in the first session of the course.
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:

<table>
<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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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below</td>
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Submission

Assignments are to be submitted in 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](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/](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:
http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations. 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

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see 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).

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), 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.

Reading and Other Resources

The required readings are in OnQ. It is essential that you are familiar with them prior to each seminar. You will be expected to use your initiative in seeking out additional scholarly and non-scholarly resources at this advanced level. The material on the website is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in SOCY430. 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 SOC430. 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

[1] 7th Jan  
Introduction: Global Consumer Cultures

PART ONE: CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

[2] 14th Jan  
Consumption, Consumerism, & Contemporary Cultures

Reading  


[3] 21st Jan  
Visual Consumption & Image Economies

Reading  


[4] 28th Jan  
Ordinary Consumption & Material Culture

Reading  

PART TWO: DIMENSIONS OF CONSUMPTION

[5] 4th Feb
Environment & Waste

Reading


[6] 11th Feb
Food & Eating

Reading


[7] 18th Feb
Reading Week

[8] 25th Feb
Time & Technology

Reading


[9] 4th March
Brands, Mega-Events, & Theming

Reading


[10] 11th March  

**Identity & Belonging**

**Reading**  


**Consuming Bodies**

**Reading**  


[12] 25th March  

**No Class. Extended Office Hours Wednesday 27th 9.30 – 3.30pm (final essay planning)**

[13] 1st April  

**Conclusion**