

DEREE COLLEGE SYLLABUS FOR: SO3119 CONSUMER SOCIETY

(Updated Spring 2022)

UK LEVEL: 5
UK CREDITS: 15
US CREDITS: 3/0/3**PREREQUISITES:**SO 1000 Introduction to Sociology
OR
SO1001 Sociology of Modern Life**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Consumer society as an expression of material culture in the post-modern globalized world. Emphasis on collective trends (fashion), conspicuous consumption (luxury), lifestyles (identity), class and gender divisions, places of consumption (e.g., shopping malls), etc. The pathology of consumption: alienation, objectification, pseudo-individualism, and the romantic search for the “new.”

RATIONALE:

The course introduces students to the study of consumer society, one of the critical conceptual schemes that captures the complexity of global reality in our post-modern times. Using key theoretical debates that have contributed to the emergence of sociology of consumption, it intends to explore various aspects of consumer society by emphasizing on a number of issues from technology and aesthetics to commodification and subject-object relation, class distinctions, gender preferences, taste, identity and subjectivity. Special reference to topics such as conspicuous consumption, consumer rites, spaces of consumption case studies (e.g. food, fashion), consumer activism and ethical consumption, consumption problems, etc. The course aims to attract the interest of students from all fields of social sciences, humanities, and business.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

As a result of taking this course, the students could be able to:

1. Demonstrate critical understanding of major theoretical approaches to consumer culture and society as well as of empirical research findings.
2. Apply the sociological analysis on consumption to case studies and demonstrate ability to explain different types of consumer practices and phenomena.
3. Explain and critically analyse the overall impact of consumer culture and its implications for individuals and society at large

METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:

In congruence with the teaching and learning strategy of the college, the following tools are used:

- Classes consist of lectures, use of audio-visual material and class discussions based on course readings, theories or studies presented in class.
- Office hours: students are encouraged to make full use of the office hours of their lecturer, where they can address issues pertinent to the course material, ask questions and seek guidance on their paper.

➤ Use of a blackboard site, where instructors post lecture notes, assignment instructions, timely announcements, as well as additional resources.

ASSESSMENT:

Summative:

First Assessment: Midterm Exam (essays)	40
Final Assessment: Term Paper 2,500 words with a visual component. Critical, evaluative presentation and analysis of a specific “object”, consumption site, or phenomenon of consumer culture	60

Formative:

	0
In-class exercises, online assignments, blog, application on case studies	0

The formative assessments aim to prepare students for the examination and paper and test Learning Outcomes 1,2,3

The first assessment (midterm exam) tests Learning Outcomes 1,3
 The final assessment (research paper) tests Learning Outcomes 1,2,3

The final grade for this module will be determined by averaging all summative assessment grades, based on the predetermined weights for each assessment. If students pass the comprehensive assessment that tests all Learning Outcomes for this module and the average grade for the module is 40 or higher, students are not required to resit any failed assessments.

INDICATIVE READING:

REQUIRED READING:

Wiedenhof-Murphy, W. (2017) *Consumer Culture and Society*, LA: Sage.

Additional book chapters and journal articles will be reserved in the JSB Library or will be available in electronic form (required)

Aldridge, A. (2003) *Consumption*, Cambridge: Polity.

Arnould, E.J. and Thompson, C.J (2019) *Consumer Culture Theory*, London: Sage.

Chan, T.W. (2019) “Understanding Cultural Omnivores: Social and Political Attitudes,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 70(3): 784-806.

Corrigan, P. (1997) *The Sociology of Consumption*, London: Sage.

Falk, P. & Campbell, C. (1997) *The Shopping Experience*, London: Sage.

- Glickman, L. B. (1999) *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, Ithaca: Cornell University.
- Gottdiener, M. (2000) *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kravets, O. Maclaran, P. Miles, S. Venkatesh, A. eds (2018) *The SAGE Handbook of Consumer Culture*, London: Sage.
- Lang, T. and Gabriel (2005) "A brief History of Consumer Activism", in Harrison, R, Newholm, T. Sahw, D. eds *The Ethical Consumer*, London: Sage.
- Lee, M. ed. (2000) *The Consumer Society Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lury, C. (2015) *Consumer Culture*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- Mathur, N. ed. (2019) *Consumer Culture, Modernity and Identity*, London: Sage.
- Miles, S. (2010) *Spaces for Consumption*, London: Sage.
- Miles, S. (2020) *The Experience Society: Consumer Capitalism Rebooted*, London: Pluto Press.
- Nava, M. ed. (1997) *Buy this Book: Studies in Advertising and Consumption*, New York: Routledge.
- Peterson, R.A. & Kern, R. M. (1996) "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore", *American Sociological Review*, 6(5): 900
- Ritzer, G. (2010) *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*, Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Sassatelli, R. (2007) *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics*, London: Sage.
- Schor, J. and Holt, B. D. eds (2000) *The Consumer Society Reader*, New York; The New Press.
- Simmel, G. (1957) "On Fashion," *American Journal of Sociology* 62:54-58.
- Slater, D. (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Smart, B. (2010) *Consumer Society: Critical Issues and Environmental Consequences*, London: Sage.
- Tepperman, L. and Meredith, N. (2021) *Consumer Society*, Oakville, Ontario: Rock's Mills Press.

Wherry, F. F. and Woodward, I. eds (2019) *The Oxford Handbook of Consumption*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Baudrillard, J. (2016) *The Consumer Society*, (rev. ed), Sage.

Bauman, Z. (2007) *Consuming Life*, Cambridge: Polity.

Berger, A.A. (2010) *The Objects of Affection: Semiotics and Consumer Culture*, NY: Palgrave.

Berger, A. A. (2015) *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising's Impact on American Character and Society*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction*, New York: Routledge.

Brewer, J and Trentmann, F. (2006) *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives*, Oxford: Berg.

Campbell, C. (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Consumerism*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Elgin, D. (2010) *Voluntary Simplicity*, NY: Harper & Collins.

[Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture \(2013\) Sage](#)

Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London: Sage.

Fiske, J. (2000) *Reading the Popular*, New York: Routledge (ch2)

Harrison, R.T., Nweholm, T. and Shaw, D. (eds) *The Ethical Consumer*, London: Sage.

Hebdidge, D. (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Methuen

Kellner, D. (1983) "Critical Theory, Commodities and Consumer Society", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 3: 66-84.

Klein, N. (2001) *NoLogo*, London: Flamingo.

Lasch, C. (1979) *The Culture of Narcissism*, London: Abacus.

Lee, M.J. ed. (2000), *The Consumer Society Reader*, London; Blackwell.

McCracken, G. (1990) *Culture and Consumption*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Miller, D. Jackson, P. Thrift, N. Holbrook, B. and Rowlands, M. (1998) *Shopping Place and Identity*, London: Routledge.

	<p>Miller, D. (1987) <i>Material Culture and Mass Consumption</i>, London: Blackwell.</p> <p>Miller, D. (2001) <i>Consumption: Critical Concept in Social Sciences</i>, New York: Routledge. (4 vols)</p> <p>Otnes, C.C & Tuncay Zayer, L. eds (2012) <i>Gender, Culture, and Consumer Behavior</i>, NY: Routledge.</p> <p>Rappaport, E. (2000) <i>Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the making of London's West End</i>, Princeton: Princeton University Press.</p> <p>Ritzer, G. (2001) <i>Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption</i>, Routledge.</p> <p>Ritzer, G. (1993) <i>The McDonaldization of Society</i>, Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.</p> <p>Schor, J. B (2005) <i>Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture</i>, NY: Scribner.</p> <p>Smart, B. (2010) <i>Consumer Society: Critical Issues and Environmental Consequences</i>, London: Sage.</p> <p>Strasser, S. (2003). "The Alien Past: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective" <i>Journal of Consumer Policy</i>, 26(4), pp. 375-393.</p> <p>Trentmann, F. (2005) <i>The Making of the Consumer</i>, London: Berg.</p> <p>Veblen, T. (1925) <i>The Theory of the Leisure Class</i>, London: Allen and Unwin.</p>
<p>INDICATIVE MATERIAL: (e.g. audiovisual, digital material, etc.)</p>	<p>REQUIRED MATERIAL: Ppts and specific videos/ reports posted on BB each time</p> <p>RECOMMENDED MATERIAL: videos/ reports posted on BB each time</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:</p>	<p>Verbal skills using academic / professional English.</p>
<p>SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS:</p>	<p>Word, ppt</p>
<p>WWW RESOURCES:</p>	<p>www.homepages.gold.ac.uk/slater/comsumer www.ingenta.com/journals/browsw/sage/joc www.sagepub.com/journal.aspx?pid=265 www.popcultures.com/article/consumer.htm www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol!no!/peiss.htm www.questia.com/index.jsp?CRID=consumer_culture&OFFID=se1 www.theory.org.uk www.culturemachine.net/research</p>

	<p>Useful specialized Journals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Journal of Consumer Culture</i> ✓ <i>Theory, Culture and Society</i> ✓ <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>
<p>INDICATIVE CONTENT:</p>	<p>1. Why Consumption matters: Consumption as a subject of study</p> <p>2. Consumption, material culture, consumerism and the consumer</p> <p>3. Consumer Culture and Modernity: The Genesis of Consumer Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The rise of mass consumer culture and society - Capitalism and the Consumer Revolution <p>4. Production and Consumption</p> <p>Historical changes in the economy; consumption and social stratification; lifestyles & identity in the era of post-Fordism; global capitalism and consumption</p> <p>5. Theorizing Consumption: Overview of the Classical and Contemporary Sociological and Anthropological Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marx, Weber and the sociology of consumption - Material culture and the social life of things: The Anthropological contribution <p>5. Commodification, Objects and their Meanings: The social construction of desire</p> <p>The fetishism of commodities (Marx); the value of commodities; the meaning of commodities</p> <p>6. The subjects of consumption: Passive dupes or Active Agents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Emulation, Distinction, or Rebellion?</i> (Veblen, Simmel, Bourdieu, the Birmingham School) - <i>Passive Dupes?</i> (The Frankfurt School.) - <i>Utility or hedonism?</i> Sovereignty and choice; desire and difference (Campbell, and postmodernism) - Class practices and lifestyles (examples: food, music) <p>7. The Case of Fashion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sociology of fashion (Simmel and beyond); the fashion industry; fashion and the desire for the new - Fashion and Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gender, race/ethnicity and consumption (shopping for identity) ○ subcultures, countercultures and the meaning of style; the commodification of rebellion <p>8. Consumption and Identity: Consumer Ethic and the Self</p> <p>9. Enchanting the Disenchanted World: The spaces of consumption and the consumption of space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From the Arcades (Benjamin) to e-commerce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Department Store: Women and the City ○ The “Cathedrals of Consumption ○ Online shopping

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The privatization of the public sphere <p>10. Case Studies: Tourism, Higher Education, Food, etc. (The topics will vary from semester to semester)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ <i>Tourism</i>: The consumption of objects and the consumption of space; cultural commodification; in search of authenticity or fun?✓ <i>Food</i>: Industrial food chains, organic food, local food; class and status relations; places of consumption (e.g., supermarkets, dining out)✓ <i>Higher Education</i> as a place and an object of consumption (MOOCs, credentialism, students as consumers, etc.) <p>11. The Commodification of Everything? Consumerism goes global</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ From McDonaldization and Beyond (Starbuckization, Disneyization, e-Bayzation,)○ Consumerism as global ideology; globalization and localization; global brands <p>12. Ethical Concerns and Consumer Activism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Consumer movement & anti-corporate activism; fair Trade; alternative forms of consumption○ Towards a post-consumer society?