

SYLLABUS  
SOCL 3103  
The Consumer Society  
Fall 2019  
12:30-1:50

MW  
PY 100

PROFESSOR: Dr. Beverly L. Stiles

OFFICE: O'Donohoe 124

OFFICE HOURS:

Mon. 9:30-11:00

Tues. 9:00-9:30; 11:30-12:30

Wed. 9:30-11:00

Thurs. 9:00-9:30

Friday: By appointment

While I hold regular office hours, I am available to you outside of these times. However, it is best if you make an appointment to see me so that I am free when you stop by. If you do not have an appointment and I am free, I am more than willing to make some time to see you. However, if you just stop by, there will be times when I am unavailable or may be with another student. Do not take this personally.

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- Consumption and Everyday Life, Second Edition  
Mark Paterson
- Readings Provided

“Not only is shopping melting into everything, but everything is melting into shopping. Through successive waves of expansion...shopping has methodically encroached on a widening spectrum of territories so that it is now, arguably, the defining activity of our public life.”

--Leong, 2001:129

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. You should develop an understanding of some key theoretical debates in consumption studies
2. You should be able to critically analyze many of the things related to consumerism that go unnoticed in everyday life. This is the insight of sociology.
3. You should deepen your understanding and analysis of the reasons for and impacts of consumerism on a personal and cultural level.

4. You should learn a great deal about yourself and your relationship to the culture in which you live.
5. You should be better informed about the social forces that drive consumption and how you are manipulated by them.
6. You should learn about ways to resist consumerism if you should choose to do so, or even if you choose not to alter your behavior.

Significant changes are taking place in American Society and culture as the economic base continues the shift from the production of goods to consumption of goods, as well as to the consumption images and information. This is an excellent time to take a course on this topic, given the current state of our society. Like you, I am a consumer. I too am barraged with advertising messages telling me to buy and consume (clothes, travel, food, entertainment, housing, pharmaceuticals, perfumes etc. etc.). I am so excited about this course and this material.

## ATTENDANCE

You will find a high correlation between attendance and class grade. You will not do well if you do not come to class. This will be clear when you understand how grades are earned. I may drop a student for excessive absences at my discretion, and I will. You will receive 5 bonus points if you do not miss more than 2 classes for “whatever” reason, including even excused absences.

## GRADING

You will have two grades:

**Grade 1:** Your first grade is comprised of 10 pop quizzes to equal one test grade. I will actually give 11 or 12 quizzes, but will drop the lowest one or two, depending on how many are given above 10. Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Ten quizzes, each worth 10 points, equals 100 points (grade 1).

**Grade 2:** This is comprised of a Journal that will be turned in 3 times for grading. They must be typed. I am too tired of trying to figure out one’s writing. The dates for turning the journals in are in bold. This is worth 40 points (20 points for the first journal assignment and 10 points for each of the other two). If it is not turned in at the beginning of class, you will be docked half of the points for that assignment automatically. If it does not have the required assignments thoroughly completed, you will also lose half of the points automatically. By “thoroughly” I mean that I want some depth and real thought in your responses. I want you to thoroughly draw from the material you have read. If you turn a journal assignment in not completed, with questions unanswered, you will earn a zero for that journal. You have the listed required journal assignments, but you may also choose to record other observation or thoughts related to your increasing awareness of consumer issues. You will also have two additional writing assignments that will also be worth 30 points each (60 points total for the writing assignments). If the writing assignments are not turned in at the beginning of the class period that they are due, you will be docked 10 points. I will not accept papers after the day they are due. You will be required to have emailed the paper to me prior to coming to class as well. Possible additional Bonus Points: Bring your journal to class each day. In addition to turning your journal in 3 times during the semester, I will randomly check to see that your journal is current. If it is, then you can earn a point for each time that I check.

**Midterm Progress report:** If you are in danger of earning a D or F at the mid-point of the semester, I will be reporting your grade through WebWorld. Midterm grades are not calculated in the cumulative GPA. They simply give students an idea of where they stand at the midpoint of the semester. If you are at risk of a D or F at midpoint, and I report this, please come see me so that we can talk about your progress. This will be my estimate since you do not have actual exams in this class.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS:** The following outline indicates what we will be doing this semester and when.

Week 1 - 3: The Overspent American. Our theme for the first part of this semester will focus on the enormous influence corporations have on popular culture. The commercialization of culture is so vast and so complete that it is taken for granted as natural or just the way things are. Our task here will be to critically examine the corporations of culture and discuss its social, ethical, and political implications. We are hearing much these days about how overspent and materialist we Americans are. I think it is good to begin with this topic as it will provide a backdrop to many other topics through the semester.

DATE	Readings/Videos/Etc.
August 28th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money Well Spent. Pgs. 1-13, Chap. 1 in Luxury Fever by Robert H. Frank.</li> </ul> Video: Overspent American
Sept. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Theory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text: Chap 1, pages 26-39</li> <li>• Text: Chap. 2, bottom of page 43 to top of 46; &amp; 48 to top of 57</li> </ul>
Sept. 9th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Diversity. Pgs. 321-339 in Consumer Behavior by Hoyer, Maccinnis, and Pieters, (2016)</li> <li>• “Consequences of Consumerism. Pgs. 140-159 in Consumer Society By Smart (2010).</li> </ul> Video: The New Mad Men
Sept. 9 <sup>th</sup> Journal assignment #1	See the list of questions under journal assignments later in this syllabus. They are due to have been completed on this date. This is NOT a date to turn in your journal.
Sept. 11th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracing the Sex of Big Data Pgs. 122-141 in Digitalizing Consumption: How Devices Shape Consumer Culture by Peterson and McIntyre (2017)</li> </ul>
Sept. 16th	Video: The Great Hack (Netflix)
Sept. 16 Journal assign.#2	See the list of questions under journal assignments later in this syllabus.

Week 4-5: Merchants of Cool. We begin with a look at the ways that corporations have infiltrated youth culture in order to sell it back to teens and reap enormous profits. We look with a critical eye at the research methods marketers use to figure out what is cool in youth culture. We discuss the consequences of this colonization of youth culture on the culture at large and on young people in particular.

Sept. 18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Coolhunt by Malcom Gladwell</li> <li>• Text: pgs. 166-169 and 172-175 in chap 6.</li> </ul> Video: The Merchants of Cool
Sept. 18 Journal assignment #3	See the list of questions under journal assignments

Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How Disney Magic and the Corporate Media Shape Youth Identity in the Digital Age, by Henry Giroux and Grace Pollock, Thruthout Op-Ed.</li> </ul> Video: Mickey Mouse Monopoly
Sept. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction in Born to Buy, in Born to Buy, by Juliet Schor</li> <li>The Changing World of Children’s Consumption in Born to Buy</li> </ul> Video: Behind the Screens: Hollywood goes Hypercommercial
Sept. 30 Journal assignment #4	See the list of questions under journal assignments. You will need to be up to date on everything up to the video shown on the 30 <sup>th</sup> . That won’t be included since you won’t see it until the 30 <sup>th</sup> .

Week 5-9: Advertising and Media. We live in a consumer culture saturated with mass media images. Most of our physical and informational space is for sale (billboards, TV, magazines, newspapers, even the area behind home plate). All of these spaces pitch products promising to improve our lives. We are all, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, affected by this advertising, often in very subtle ways. We also now have to deal with the philanthropic endeavors as it relates to consumer culture. We now turn to examining the power of advertising. The fashions, styles, and attitude of hip-hop have been adopted by American’s commercial culture industries and by youths of all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sept. 30	Video: Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood
Oct. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertising at the edge of the apocalypse, <a href="#">advertising article by Sut Jhally</a></li> </ul> Video: Advertising & the End of the World
Oct. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivating Consumers: Advertising, Marketing, and Branding. Chap. 3, pgs. 60-83 in Consumer Society, by Smart.</li> <li>Running it up a Flagpole to see if Anyone Salutes, pgs 73-96 by Berger (2015)</li> </ul>
Oct. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text: Pgs. 148-161 in Chap. 6.</li> </ul> Video: The Psychology Behind Today’s Advertising (2013) Video: Deadly Persuasion: The advertising of alcohol & tobacco.
Oct. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Dream Cause: Breast Cancer, Corporate Philanthropy, and the Market for Generosity. IN Pink Ribbons, Inc. by Samantha King.</li> </ul> Video: Youtube: Pinkwashing for a Cure and Raise A stink: How Corporations Turn Breast Cancer Pink into Green Profits.
Oct. 16 Journal assignment #5 journal turn in today.	Your journal is due to be turned in today.
Oct. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designing Obsolescence, Promoting Consumer Demand, Chap.4, pgs. 84-108 in Consumer Society, by Smart.</li> </ul>
Oct. 16 Journal Assignment #6 due	See list of questions under journal assignments.
Oct. 21	Video: Fresh Dressed: The Evolution of Rap Fashion

Week 10 and 11: We are looking more at branding and logos, because they are everywhere.

Oct. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brands Woo Millenialls</li> <li>Text: Chap. 9. Just Do it. The Poetics and Politics of Brands and Logos.</li> </ul> Video: No Logo
Oct. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Branded World in No Logo, by Naomi Klein (for use for first writing assignment)</li> <li>The Brand Explands: How the logo grabbed center stage, in No logo, by Naomi Klein (for use for first writing assignment)</li> <li>Naomi Klein: No Logo, Ad Nauseum</li> </ul>
Oct. 30	Video: Big Bucks, Big Pharma: Marketing Disease & Pushing Drugs
Nov. 4 Writing assignment #1 due	Write an essay in which you relate how the ideas behind branding that Naomi Klein examines are relevant to an understanding of the marketing of pharmaceuticals. You should also draw from any other material on branding that is relevant (brands Woo Millennials etc.). This should be approximately 4 pages. You need to provide page references from the material too.

Week 12: Gender. Gender advertisements represent the idealized woman as thin without having to struggle to be so, and frequently exploit many women's struggles to take control of their appetites and hunger. Here we also grapple with the marketers' view of women. Women, especially housewives were the backbone of the consumer economy. Images of girls and girlhood are also being packaged. Girl Power has been co-opted by marketers of music, fashion, books, and television to mean the power to shop and attract boys.

Nov. 6	Video: Codes of Gender or Killing Us Softly 4
Nov. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexuality and Gender in Advertising, pgs. 99-122 in Ads, Fads &amp; Consumer Culture, by Berger (2015).</li> <li>The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising, by Frith, Shaw, and Cheng, in The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader. 2009.</li> </ul>
Nov. 11 Journal Assignment #7 Second journal turn-in today.	See list of questions under journal assignments. Your second journal submission is due to be turned in today.

Week 13: Themed Environments. Some of the readings this week deal with the McDonaldization of society. Ritzer attempts to show a relationship between these factors and a single outcome – increased homogeneity in both production and consumption of goods and experiences. These readings deal with issues and settings with which you are familiar, but perhaps had not thought about quite like you will after this week. McDonaldization continues to expand and proliferate. An overlapping theme is the “Theming of America.”

Nov 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A tour of the New Means of Consumption by George Ritzer</li> <li>Text: Chap. 4, Nature, Inc.</li> </ul>
Nov. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-enchantment, chap. 5 and 6. Ritzer. This is about spectacles, simulations and extravaganzas.</li> <li>Text: Pgs 218-224 in Chap. 8</li> </ul>
Nov. 18 Journal #8	See list of questions under journal assignments.

Week 14: Globalization

Nov 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalization and Modern Consumer Culture. Chap. 5 in Consumer Society, by Smart.</li> <li>• Text: pgs 271-282 in Chap. 10</li> </ul>
Nov. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap Eats, pgs, 163-187 in Cheap by Shell.</li> </ul> Video: A Killer Bargain Video: Bag It
Nov. 25 Journal assignment #9	See list of questions under journal assignments

Week 15: Culture change and Activism. Where can we go from here?

Dec. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consuming Futures KK: Green and Sustainable Alternatives. Chap. 9, in Consumer Society, Smart.</li> <li>• Learning Diderot's Lesson: Stopping the Upward Creep of Desire, in The Overspent American, by Schor.</li> </ul> Video: Visualizing a plentitude economy Ethical shopping guide that I'll show you in class.
Dec. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Downshifter Next Door. Chap. 5 in Overspent American, Schor</li> <li>• <a href="#">new dream for change in consuming</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">culture jamming in wikipedia</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">guerrilla girls and culture jamming</a></li> </ul> Video: The Case For Collaborative Consumption (TED Talk)
Dec 11 Journal assignment #10 due. Themed env.paper due as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal Assignment due Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> by 3:30</li> <li>• Themed environment paper due Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> by 3:30 as well.</li> </ul>

**\*RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITES FOR MSU STUDENTS\***

**\*RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES AT MSU:** Enhancing Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a program that supports faculty and students in a cooperative research process. For more information, contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at 940-397-6275 or [eureka@msutexas.edu](mailto:eureka@msutexas.edu).

**\*MSU WRITING CENTER:** I encourage you to begin drafting papers as early as possible and to take advantage of the MSU Writing Center. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide you with specific suggestions for improving your writing. The Writing Center, located in 201B Prothro-Yeager, is open from 9-4, Monday through Thursday. Tutors are also available Thursday and Sunday from 6-9 in 210 Moffett Library.

**\*ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage.