

SYLLABUS
SOCL 3103
The Consumer Society
Fall 2021
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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- The Social Impact of Advertising
Tony Kelso (2019). ISBN: 978-1-5381-0114-8
- 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 three grades (totaling 300 points):

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 and two papers. This will equal 100 points. The journal 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 40 points for the video analysis of Big Pharma and 20 points for the Themed Environment Paper. 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.

Grade 3: You have only one exam.

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 - 2: 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 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to class.
Aug. 25th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Well Spent. Pgs. 1-13, Chap. 1 in <i>Luxury Fever</i> by Robert H. Frank. • "Spending Christmas with Family" in <i>I Want That</i> by Hines (2002) • Born to buy <p>Video: Overspent American</p>
Aug. 30st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory (I'll cover this). You will read more theory material later • Consumer Diversity in <i>Consumer Behavior</i> by Hoyer et. al. (2016)
Aug. 30th 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 before class. This is NOT a date to turn in your journal.
Sept. 1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Consequences of Consumerism. Pgs. 140-159 in <i>Consumer Society</i> By Smart (2010). <p>Video: The Persuaders (to go along with theory above)</p>
Sept. 1st Journal assign.#2	See the list of questions under journal assignments later in this syllabus. Obviously, the question about the video can't be completed until after you have watched in class.

Week 3-4: 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. 8th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coolhunt by Malcom Gladwell • Born to buy <p>Video: The Merchants of Cool*OR* Kid influencers: few rules, big money; How Social Media Influencers Make money; Why are Brands Choosing to Work with influencers (Forbes)—All are on Youtube; Inside the big business of being a social media influencer (hauls)</p>
Sept. 8th Journal assignment #3	See the list of questions under journal assignments
Sept. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Disney Magic and the Corporate Media Shape Youth Identity in the Digital Age, by Henry Giroux and Grace Pollock, Thruthout Op-Ed. <p>Video: Mickey Mouse Monopoly</p>
Sept. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT: Chap. 8: Building Brand Loyalty from the Womb: Advertising to children. <p>Video: Behind the Screens: Hollywood goes Hypercommercial or Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood</p>
Sept. 15 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 16 th . That won't be included since you won't see it until the 16 th .

Week 5-8: 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.

Sept. 20	Cultivating Consumers: Advertising, Marketing, and in Consumer Society by Smart.(2010)
Sept. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT: Chap 1 Introduction.(pages 1 to the-top of page 8 only). • TEXT: Chap. 2 Promoting Heaven on Earth
Sept. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brands Woo Millennials • Naomi Klein: No Logo, Ad Nauseum • New Branded World in No Logo, by Naomi Klein (for use for first writing assignment) • The Brand Expands: How the logo grabbed center stage, in No logo, by Naomi Klein (for use for first writing assignment) <p>Video: No LOGO</p>
Sept. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT: Chap. 4 Always Keep 'em Happy
Oct. 4	<p>.</p> <p>Video: Big Bucks, Big Pharma: Marketing Disease & Pushing Drugs.</p>
Oct. 6 Journal assignment #5 journal turn in today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT: Chap 5 The Message beneath the Message <p>Journal Turn-in Today. You should have all journal postings through The Chapter 5 reading for today.</p> <p>Video on Tobacco or tobacco and alcohol (this will be on journal #6)</p>

Oct. 11	Advertising & the Edge of the Apocalypse (2017)
Oct. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Dream Cause: Breast Cancer, Corporate Philanthropy, and the Market for Generosity. IN Pink Ribbons, Inc. by Samantha King. Video: Youtube: Pinkwashing for a Cure and Raise A stink: How Corporations Turn Breast Cancer Pink into Green Profits
Oct. 15 Journal assignment #6	See list of journal questions. I realize that you do not have class today. I am just letting you know that this is the date you should shoot for to have this entry done

Week 9-10: Gender and sexual orientation; race and ethnicity. 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. We do not see a full spectrum of portrayals of gay men or lesbians either, not to mention that of nonbinary individuals either. People of color do not have the same access to positions of power as their white counterparts. However, we'll take a look at the gatekeeper model by looking at the issue of freedom of expression that would take over the mainstream (Hip-Hop and fashion).

Oct. 18	Video: Codes of Gender or Killing Us Softly 4 PAPER #1 due: See the instructions
Oct. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEXT: Chap. 6: Buying into Identity: Gender and sexual orientation
Oct 25 Journal Assignment #7 Second journal turn-in today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEXT: Chap. 7: Buying into Identity (Part 2): Race and Ethnicity Journal turn-in Today. See list of journal questions. You should include everything through your text chapter 7 journal posting, which is due today.
Oct. 27	Video: Fresh Dressed
Nov. 3rd Exam	This exam covers chapter 6 and 7 in your text as well as the two videos in this section

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 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tour of the New Means of Consumption by George Ritzer
Nov. 10 Journal #8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-enchantment, chap. 5 and 6. Ritzer. This is about spectacles, simulations and extravaganzas. See list of questions for journal assignments

Week 14: Globalization

Nov 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEXT Chap. 9: Sponsoring Exploitation and Environmental Destruction. Video: Consumerism & the Limits to Imagination
Nov. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap Eats, pgs, 163-187 in Cheap by Shell. Video: A Killer Bargain
Nov. 22 Journal assignment #9	See list of questions under journal assignments Video: Bag It

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

Nov. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consuming Futures II: Green and Sustainable Alternatives. Chap. 9, in Consumer Society, Smart. • Learning Diderot's Lesson: Stopping the Upward Creep of Desire, in The Overspent American, by Schor. • What's Your Consumption Factor by Jared Diamond (2008) Video: Visualizing a plentitude economy How to shop ethically
Dec 1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Downshifter Next Door. Chap. 5 in Overspent American, Schor • new dream for change in consuming • culture jamming in wikipedia • guerrilla girls and culture jamming Video: The Case For Collaborative Consumption (TED Talk)
Dec 8 Journal assignment #10 due. Themed env. paper due as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third and final Journal turn-in due Dec. 8th by 3:30 • Themed environment paper due Dec. 8th by 3:30 as well.

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.

***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 84th 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.

