

Course Syllabus
Department of Sociology
The University of British Columbia
SOCI 342 921
Consumers and Consumption
Summer 2016

Instructor: Sayyed Mohsen Fatemi, Ph.D.

Day & Time: Monday and Wednesday 18:00 p.m. to 21:00 p.m.

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Information:

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Course Description

This course is about consumers and consumption. Our world is rife with sundry manifestations of consumption. This course critically examines the underlying elements of consumptions, the societal implications of consumptions for consumers, the traditional view on consumption, the encouraging factors behind consumption, the role and the impact of consumption in our contemporary society, the relationship between ideology and consumption, the critique of consumption from different perspectives, consumption and culture, consumption and agency, consumption and language, consumption and media, the future of consumption, consumption and alienation, commodification and desire. We will explore a wide variety of contexts, examples, medium and arguments to enrich our discussions. Our journey is meant to be exiting, interesting and illuminating.

Course Aims and Objectives

- Understand the concepts behind consumption
- Assess characteristics of consumers
- Outline the critique of consumption
- Examine causes of consumption
- Explain relationship between consumption and individual agency
- Outline the relationship between culture and consumption
- Describe the relationship between media and consumption
- Explain the relationship between contexts and consumption
- Discuss the implications of consumptions for changes in society
- Outline the relationship between consumption and ideology, consumption and desire and consumption and language
- Explain the relationship between consumption and alienation, consumption and commodification and consumption and identity
- Describe the future of consumption

Expected Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Understand the concepts behind consumption
- Assess characteristics of consumers
- Outline the critique of consumption
- Examine causes of consumption
- Explain relationship between consumption and individual agency
- Outline the relationship between culture and consumption
- Describe the relationship between media and consumption
- Explain the relationship between contexts and consumption
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Course Policies and Expectations

The course is meant to be exciting, inviting, engaging and thought provoking. Your participation in the class will increase your rigorous understanding of the course materials. It is expected that you attend classes regularly. Missing more than four classes will deprive you of passing the course. Please note that reading the book and suggested readings need to be accompanied by listening to lectures. Lectures are not merely meant to be the repetition of the readings.

Required Text Book:

Eating Culture (an Anthropological Guide to Food)” by Crowher ISBN 9781442604650

Recommended Readings:

Omnivore’s Dilemma (natural history of four meals)” by Pollan ISBN 9780143038580.

Identifying

Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society. By Dunn, Robert G.
Philadelphia PA: Temple University Press.

1) Class Participation and Attendance- 15%

Your thoughtful responses and your reflective questions to each meeting's readings and presentations will substantiate your active participation.

2) Mid-Term Exam/ Quiz/group activity: Details to be discussed- 35%**3) Final Exam 50%****Grades**

An 'A' grade [80%-84% = A-, 85%-89% = A, 90%-100% = A+] will be awarded for exceptional performance.

A 'B' grade [68%-71% = B-, 72%-75% = B, 76%-79% = B+] will be awarded for competent performance.

A 'C' grade [55%-59% = C-, 60%-63% = C, 64%-67% = C+] will be awarded for adequate performance.

A 'D' grade [50%-54%] will be awarded for just-adequate performance.

An 'F' grade [0%-49%] will be awarded for an inadequate performance.

Academic Integrity - Please refer to UBC policies on this.

Course Schedule

DATE	DAY	TOPIC
July 4	Monday	Lecture: Introduction to the course Defining consumption. Consumption studies. Consumerism. Modern and postmodern critiques of consumption. Consumption and subjectivity. A synthesis of critical and cultural theory.
6	Wednesday	Critiques of consumption. Alienation and commodity Fetishism. Reification. Domination. Emulation and status seeking. Hedonism. Social control. Narcissism
11	Monday	Mindfulness and its implications for consumption. Psychological, linguistic, cultural and performative turns in sociology. Semiotics and consumption.
13	Wednesday	Anthropological functionalism. Consumption and class. Cultural studies. The significance of symbols. Performance and consumption.
18	Monday	The importance of economic context. Status and consumption. Lifestyle and consumption.
20	Wednesday	Media and consumption. Style and fashion. Identity and postmodern consumer capitalism.
25	Monday	The issue of identity. Modern and postmodern conceptions of identity. Social constructionism and identity. Rethinking identity and consumption.
27	Wednesday	Consumers and consumption. Avoiding reductionism and determinism. Connecting the project of the self to the rise of consumerculture. Commodities or objects. Aesthetics.
August 1	Monday British Columbia Day	Holiday
3	Wednesday	Group activity: The consequences of consumption. Commodification. Environmental security

8	Monday	Group activity: The consequences of consumption. Commodification. Environmental security
10	Thurs	Group activity
		<i>Final exam TBA (to be announced)</i>