

Syllabus for SPCM 3310 – Consumer Culture (Summer 2007)

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Office Hours: MWF 11:00—12:00, AND By Appointment

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Required Texts:

All readings posted on Webct, unless otherwise notified.

Please notice that the Bordo and hooks readings come in multiple parts.

Course Description:

In this course, we will explore the practice of consumption and the ideology of consumerism in modern American life. Specifically, we will focus on the effects of consumerism and commodification on culture and public communication. The class is divided into four primary sections, all representing a critique of consumerism. The sections are 1) labor practices 2) environmental effects 3) democratic effects and 4) other moral and ethical issues. After covering in detail these various critiques, the class will turn to some possible alternatives, exploring everything from ethical consumerism, simple life, and boycotts to fair trade, green consumerism, and responsible design.

Course Goals:

- 1) To promote awareness of the effects of consumption on the surrounding world and culture
- 2) To explore the effects of commodification and corporatization on public and democratic communication
- 3) To encourage critical thinking, writing, and rhetorical skills, with an aim towards creating an engaged and participatory citizen
- 4) To provide students with resources for and knowledge about alternative consumer habits

Attendance:

There is no official attendance policy. There are a significant number of points, however, for in class participation. Also, there will be certain days (unannounced) with quizzes on the reading. These quizzes can not be made up.

Grades and Grade Scale

Participation	52 points
Reading Quizzes	280 points
Online Responses	48 points
Presentation	100 points
Culture Jam Artifact	100 points
<u>Final Paper (CJ Analysis)</u>	<u>280 points</u>
Total	860 points

A	93-100 %
A-	90-92%
B+	88-89%
B	83-87%
B-	80-82%
C+	78-79%
C	73-77%
C-	70-72%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Assignments:

- 1) Participation – Participation will be crucial for success in this class. I will assign “game balls” at the end of every class for the best participators. At the end of the semester, I will use the numbers of game balls to determine your participation score.
- 2) Reading Quizzes – Since participation is so crucial, reading is also essential. To ensure people are reading, there will be 11 reading quizzes. I will take your seven best scores, meaning you can miss four days (or totally bomb it). The quizzes can not be made up. Each of the quizzes will have eight questions, worth a total of forty points.
- 3) Online Responses – After each day of online class, each student will be responsible for posting a 300-600 word final thought about the video we watch. It can be critical or supportive. You can also choose to respond to a fellow student’s response if you like. Once again, these can not be made up. Each one of the 13 days will be worth 4 points, for a total of 52 points. I will try to grade these each day and keep a running tally on webct. Post your response to the webct message board.
- 4) Presentation – During the last week of class, each student will have 5-7 minutes to present their culture jam and the paper associated with it. Follow the guidelines of public speaking, although I will be grading more on content and organization. More details will come in class.

- 5) Culture Jam Artifact – Each student will create a culture jam—that is, a media artifact that expresses a critical perspective on consumption. This can be anything from a short video to a photoshopped image to a mock advertisement. On youtube you can find multiple examples. Also, the magazine Adbusters presents numerous examples. We will read about culture jamming in class and more guidelines will be forthcoming at that time.
- 6) Culture Jam Analysis Paper – Each student will write an 11-16 page RESEARCH paper detailing their culture jam. The paper should include a section describing the criticism they sought to make with their culture jam, including outside research and in class readings to support that criticism. The paper should then spend about 1/3 of the space on potential alternatives to this criticism (different places to shop, things to buy—probably pick one from the last few weeks of class). I will grade the paper on the effort at outside research, the clarity and strength of your criticism and alternative, and some minor deductions from grammatical and stylistic errors.

Tentative Schedule:

Date	Topics	Assignments
1-7	Get to Know	None
1-9	Syllabus	Syllabus Agreement
1-11	Glickman—Born to Shop	Reading/Quiz
1-14	Marx—Commodity Fetish	Reading/Quiz
1-16	“Consumerism—Part 1-4”	Movie Day
1-18	Lury—Stylization of Consumption	Reading/Quiz
1-21	NO CLASS	MLK Holiday
1-23	“Culture Jam (Just Do It) “Adbusters” “Blackspot shoe” “Founder of Adbusters on CNN”	Movie Day
1-25	Lasn—Culture Jam Harold—Culture Jam	Reading/Quiz
1-28	Group Project Day	Vote for Roles
1-30	Guidelines Day	Guide for papers and projects
2-1	Ewen—Consumption and Social Change Dyer—Origins of Ads	Reading/Quiz
2-4	Williams—Advertising, the Magic System Dyer—Ch 4 & 5	Reading/Quiz
2-6	“Light Criticism” “Truth in advertising” “Advertising and the end of	Movie Day

	the world” “advertising to kids”	
2-8	Rushkoff—Atmospherics	Reading/Quiz
2-11	Heath & Potter—I hate myself and I want to buy	Reading/Quiz
2-13	“The Corporation—Parts 1-5 & 22”	Movie Day
2-15	Campbell—Ch. 3 & 5	Reading/Quiz
2-18	Klein—The Discarded Factory	Reading/Quiz
2-20	“Walmart—High cost, low price”	Movie Day
2-22	Bergmann—Ecology and New Work	Reading/Quiz
2-25	Taylor & Tilford—Why Consumption Matters	Reading/Quiz
2-27	“Devouring the Earth”	Movie Day
2-29	Durning—An environmentalist’s perspective	Reading/Quiz
3-3	Klein—Ch. 6 & 7	Reading/Quiz
3-5	“No Logo”	Movie Day
3-7	Project Workshop Day	TBA
3-17	McNally—Consumer Culture Kills Democracy	Reading/Quiz
3-19	Copyright and Media Monopoly Videos	Movie Day
3-21	Klein—“Corporate Censorship” Waldman—“Tyranny of Choice”	Reading/Quiz
3-24	Bordo—“Hunger as Ideology” Hooks—“Eating the Other”	Reading/Quiz
3-26	Race and Gender Videos	Movie Day
3-28	Twitchell—“Three Cheers for materialism”	Reading/Quiz
3-31	Harrison—Ethical Consumer	Reading/Quiz
4-2	“Killer Coke—Part 6” “Where there is a will—part 1-3”	Movie Day
4-4	Friedman—Consumer Buycotts	Reading/Quiz
4-7	Elkington—Green Consumer	Reading/Quiz

	Berry—Pleasures of Eating	
4-9	Green Design Videos	Movie Day
4-11	Mau—Massive Change Reinfort—Open Source	Reading/Quiz
4-14	Nicholls—Fair Trade	Reading/Quiz
4-16	Fair Trade Videos	Movie Day
4-18	Elgin—Voluntary Simplicity	Reading/Quiz
4-21	Project Work Day	Project Work
4-23	Project Work Day	Project Work
4-25	Practice Presentation	Presentation Day
4-28	No regular class	Group Project Day
	Time TBA	
5-5	Papers Due by 2:00 PM	Final Papers Due!!!!

I have read and understand the syllabus for SPCM 3310 taught by Eric Jenkins, Spring 2008.

Your Name (Printed) - _____

Your Signature - _____

Date _____