Consumer Culture--Sociology 49.8
Prof. Goodman
Period 2A 2:00-4:00 Tues & Thur Winter 2010

Course Description: The purpose of this class is to introduce you to the scholarly analysis of consumer culture and to encourage your creative inquiry through thinking and writing about the key social, moral, political and practical questions concerning consumer culture.

We will cover the following topics:
- Emergence and History of Consumer Culture and how it differs from other cultures.
- Economic System of Consumer Culture.
- Commodification of Everything. What is and is not for sale.
- Consuming Culture. Popular Culture as a Commodity.
- Culture of Advertising and Shopping.
- Materialism, Morality and Religion in Consumer Culture.
- Identity and Rebellion.
- Community and Clustering.
- Spread of Consumer Culture: Children and Globalization
- Alternatives to Consumer Culture.

Grades: Your grade will depend on reading points, writing assignments and two exams, according to the following formula:

- Reading Points 15%
- Short Papers 30%
- Wiki Project 15%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final 20%

Incompletes will only be given when the student is otherwise passing the course and cannot complete it due to circumstances that are unforeseen and beyond the student's control.

Reading Points: I will provide reading points for most assignments. You will be graded on your ability to provide a summary of the author on those points when called on in class. Only students called on in class will be graded on that day. If you are absent the day that I call on you without a university defined excuse, you will receive an 'F'. Since each student is likely to be called on only 4 or 5 times, it is important that you be prepared for every class. I will give everyone one 'free pass' for the quarter on reading points. In other words, you can let me know that you will be unprepared to answer the reading points for that day. However, you must do this before class starts, either in person, phone message or email. You will not be given a free pass after I have called on you.
I will sometimes have you write a short paragraph to answer one of the reading points. That answer should be submitted on Blackboard by 12:30 p.m. the day of class. It will count as one reading point. A free pass for that day will also apply to that.

**Short Papers:** There will be three papers 4-6 pages long. Fuller descriptions of these assignments will be provided. These papers will not require any outside research. They will draw on the readings and class discussion to develop your own analysis.

**Wiki Project:** This will be a group project. Each student will interview about 15 acquaintances on core, vaguely defined topics such as happiness, morality, family, love, God, community, etc. Themes from those interviews will be developed, analyzed and published on a class wiki. A fuller description of this assignment will be provided.

**Midterm and Final Exam:** The exams will be short essays. I will provide you with a list of study questions and the exam questions will be a subset of the study questions.

**Readings:** All readings will be provided as downloadable pdf's on Blackboard. Please let me know if you anticipate any problems with those formats and we will figure out an alternative.

**Help:** I will hold office hours Tues. & Thurs from 12:00 to 2:00 and from 4:00 to 4:30. I can also be reached by phone or email. I check my email often and it is my preferred mode of communication. Messages can also be left for me in the Sociology office.

*Please let me know if you have any disabilities which will affect your participation in this class. I will make every effort to accommodate you.*
Schedule of Readings

History of Consumer Culture (1/7 - 1/12)


"From Salvation to Self-Realization" in *The Culture of Consumption*. T. Lears 1983.

Economics of Consumer Sovereignty (1/14-1/19)


Commodification of Everything (1/21)


"Commodification as a Worldview" in *Contested Commodities*. Margaret Radin 1996.


Consumer Culture (1/26-2/2)


Materialism & Morality (2/4)


Identity (2/11)


Religion (2/16)


Natural Blues.mp3 on Blackboard. Moby.
Natural Blues.mp3 on Blackboard. Vera Hall.

Consumer Rebels (2/18)


Social Connections through Consumption (2/23)


Inequality in Consumer Culture (2/25)


Spread of Consumer Culture (3/2)

The Commercialization Of Childhood: Understanding The Problem And Finding Solutions" in Psychology and Consumer Culture. Diane Levin & Susan Linn 2004


Alternatives to Consumer Culture (3-4)
