

**Media Studies 9203
Self and Commodity
Alison Hearn
Winter 2016**

Class: Tuesday 1:30-4:30
Office: NCB 214
Email: ahearn2@uwo.ca

This course will explore the intersection of notions of the 'self' with the capitalist mode of production, the commodity form, logics of promotion, new technologies, and labour. We will examine theories of the self and subjectivity in the writings of Marx, Adam Smith, Althusser, Gramsci and Foucault and will explore theories of the outer-directed performative self from sociology, gender studies, and history in the work of Butler, Giddens, and Goffman. We will then examine contemporary debates about the ways in which self-construction and performance have come to constitute new forms of "immaterial" labour under post-Fordist capital, in, what Jason Read has called, "the micropolitics of capital." We will also assess the gendered dimensions of these new forms of labour and examine the ways in which this contemporary subsumption of selfhood to capitalist interests has its roots in the history and politics of women's struggles around work and cultural recognition. We will trace the emergence of new venues for self-commodification, self-branding and self-promotion on television and online, and will explore the concomitant styles, templates and modalities of selfhood propagated by them. Finally, we will examine the dissolution of the self into data in the era of micro-marketing and personalization on the semantic web. Contemporary theories of these transformations come from critical marketing studies, autonomist Marxist criticism, performance studies, feminist criticism and cultural studies and include the work of Sternberg, Virno, Lazzarato, King, Read, Federici, Illouz, and Hochschild.

Course Texts

Jason Read, *The Micropolitics of Capital*
Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*
Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The commercialization of human feeling*
Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*
Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*
Mauricio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*

All other readings will be available for downloading via DropBox.

Course Assignments

M.A. Students:

1 Short Conference Paper – presented in class - (approx. 10 pages)	20%
In-class presentation (45 minutes)	25%
Final Research Paper	35%
Class participation*	20%

Ph.D. Students:

1 Short Conference Paper - presented in class - (approx 10 pages)	20%
In-class presentation (45 minutes)	20%
Book Review Essay	15%
Final Research Paper	35%
Class participation*	10%

*Participation grades will be based on a combination of attendance and active contribution to class discussion.

Course Schedule

Jan 5. Course Introduction and Overview

Modern and Post-Modern Modalities of the Self, Labour, Commerce and Commodity

Jan. 12. Marx and the legacy of the alienated, subjected self

Reading:

Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour", *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof", *Capital Vol 1*.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S4>

Erich Fromm, "Alienation", in *Marx's Concept of Man*

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/fromm/works/1961/man/ch05.htm>

Antonio Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism", *The Prison Notebooks, Notebook 4*

Nick Dyer-Witheford "1844/2004/2044: The Return of Species Being", *Historical Materialism Vol 12:4*

Jan. 19. Adam Smith and the ethics of rational self-interest in a commercial society

Jerrold Siegel, "Adam Smith and modern self-fashioning" in *The Idea of the Self*

Adam Smith, Part 1, Ch 3 "How prosperity and adversity affect our judgments about the rightness of actions; and why it is easier to win our approval in prosperity than in adversity" in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

<http://www.excellentfuture.ca/sites/default/files/Theory%20of%20Moral%20Sentiments%20Adam%20Smith.pdf>

Thomas Wells, "Adam Smith on Morality and Self-interest"

Toby L. Vitz, "Formative Ventures: Eighteenth Century Commercial Letters and the Articulation of Experience"

Jan 26. The Self as Discourse/ Technologies of the Self

Michel Foucault, "What is an author?", *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*

Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power", *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*

Michel Foucault, Part 1, 2, and 5 in *The History of Sexuality Vol 1: The Will to Knowledge*

Herbert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, "From the Repressive Hypothesis to Bio-power" and "The genealogy of the modern individual as subject", *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*

Feb. 2. The Performing Self/The "Self" as Performed

Reading:

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (Omit Chapter 2 if necessary)

The Self at Work /The Self as Work

Feb. 9. The Post War Consuming Self

Reading:

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (omit Chapter 7 if necessary)

Zygmunt Baumann, "Consuming Life", *Journal of Consumer Culture*

Philip Cushman, "Why the Self is Empty", *American Psychologist*

READING WEEK

Feb. 23. The "Self" in/as Capital: the virtuoso and immaterial labour

Reading:

Marx, "The Fragment on Machines", *Grundrisse* p. 690-706.

Mauricio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour"

<http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm>

Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, (Omit pgs. 29-45)

Jason Read, "The Real Subsumption of Subjectivity by Capital" in *The Micro-politics of Capital*

Recommended:

Brian Holmes, "The Flexible Personality: For A New Cultural Critique"

<http://www.geocities.com/CognitiveCapitalism/holmes1.html>

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "The Becoming Common of Labour" *Multitude*, pgs. 109-115

March 1. Affective Labour, emotional economies, and their gendered dimensions

Reading:

Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation* (Omit pgs 219-243 if necessary)

Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* Chs. 1-2

Recommended: Michael Hardt, "Affective Labour"

http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_affectivelabour.htm

Paolo Virno, "General Intellect"

<http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpvirno10.htm>

Contemporary Forms of Selfhood

March 8. The new 'working' self: subjectivity and emotion put to work

Reading:

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*

Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, "The New Spirit of Capitalism"

www.sociologiadip.unimib.it/mastersqs/rivi/boltan.pdf

<http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/7-1/7-1index.htm>

Recommended: Paolo Virno, "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment" *Radical Thought in Italy*

Paul duGay, "Markets and Meanings: Re-imagining organizational life", *The Expressive Organization*

March 15. Self-commodification and its celebrity templates

Reading:

Warren Sussman, "Personality And the Making of the Twentieth Century Culture", *Culture as History: The transformation of American Society in the 20th Century*

Daniel Boorstin, "From Human to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event" *Celebrity Culture Reader*

Ernest Sternberg, "Phantasmagoric Labour: The new economies of self-presentation", *Celebrity Culture Reader*

Michael Madow, "Private Ownership of Public Image: Popular Culture and Publicity Rights", *California Law Review*

Barry King, "Modularity and the Aesthetics of Self-Commodification", *As Radical as Reality Itself: Essays in Marxism and Art for the 21st Century*

March 22. The Branded Self (online and off) and the rise of the reputation economy

Reading:

Alison Hearn, "Meat, Mask, Burden: Probing the Contours of the Branded Self" *Journal of Consumer Culture*

Andrew Wernick, "Imaging Commodities" and "The Promotional Condition of Contemporary Culture", in *Promotional Culture*

Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, Ch 3.

Alison Hearn, "Structuring Feeling: web 2.0, online ranking and rating and the digital 'reputation' economy"

March 29. The anticipatory 'algorithmic' or 'quantified' self

Reading:

Joe Turow, "The Long Click" in *The Daily You*

Adrian MacKenzie, "Programming Subjects in the regime of Anticipation: Software Studies and subjectivity"

John Cheney-Lippold, "A New Algorithmic Identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control"

Taina Bucher, "Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook"

Mauricio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*

Recommended

Gary Wolf, "The Data Driven Life" http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/02/magazine/02self-measurement-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

April 5. The (still material) permanently indebted self and the limits of the immaterial labour thesis

Reading:

Mauricio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*

Mark Andrejevic, "Cutting through the Glut: Knowledge small enough to know", in *Infoglut*

Steve Wright, "Reality Check: Are we living in an immaterial world?"

<http://www.metamute.org/en/node/5594>

Emma Dowling, "Producing the Dining Experience: Measure, Subjectivity and the Affective Worker"

<http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/7-1/7-1index.htm>

Alison Hearn, "Reality Television, The Hills and the Limits of the Immaterial Labour Thesis"

<http://triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/viewArticle/206>

Andrew Ross, "In Search of the Lost Pay Cheque" in *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*