

Media Studies 9203

Self and Commodity

Alison Hearn

Winter 2018

Class Time: Wednesday 1:30-4:40
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00-1 or by
appointment
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This course will explore the intersection of ideas about 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, performance 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 economic 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

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*

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

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The commercialization of human feeling*

Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to do What you Love: gender, social media and aspirational work*

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 10. Course Introduction and Overview

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

Jan 17. 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 24. 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 31. 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 7. 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 14. The Post War Consuming Self and the problem of authenticity and fame

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*

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

Screening: "It Should Happen to You"

Feb 21. READING WEEK

Feb 24. 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>

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

Elizabeth Wissinger, "Modeling a Way of Life: Immaterial and Affective Labour in the fashion modeling industry"

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

Contemporary Forms of Selfhood

March 7. 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>

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

<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 14. 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)

Brooke Duffy, Chapters 1 and 2 in *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What you Love: gender, social media and aspirational work*

Kara Van Cleaf, "Of Woman Born to Mommy Blogged: The Journey from the Personal as Political to the Personal as Commodity"

Recommended: Michael Hardt, "Affective Labour"

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

March 21. Self-commodification/self-promotion and its celebrity templates

Reading:

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

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

Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff, "From celebrity to influencer: Tracing the diffusion of celebrity value across the data stream"

Alice Marwick, "You may know me from Youtube: Micro-Celebrity in Social Media"

Recommended:

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

March 28. The Branded Self/Self-monetization via social media influence

Reading:

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

Brooke Duffy, Chs. 3-5 in *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What you Love: gender, social media and aspirational work*

Crystal Abidin, "Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram"

April 4. The anticipatory 'algorithmic', 'quantified' self

Reading:

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

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"

Alison Hearn, "Verified: Self-presentation, identity management, and selfhood in the age of big data"

Recommended

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

April 11. Performing hope/aspirational labour as perpetually indebted 'new media workers'?

Reading:

Mauricio Lazzarato, Ch 3- Conclusion, "The Making of the Indebted Man"

Rosalind Gill, "Life is a Pitch: Managing the Self in New Media Work"

Brooke Duffy, Ch 7 in *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What you Love: gender, social media and aspirational work*

Miya Tokumitsu, "In the Name of Love" <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/>

Statement on Academic Offences Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Support Services Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help

****Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).*