

MIT 3216F
The Culture of Consumption
2014

Fridays 10:30am - 1:20pm in NCB 117

Professor Edward Comor

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Office Hours: Mondays 9:30-10:20am; Fridays 12:30-1:20pm; *or by appointment*

This course examines the historical development and social significance of our culture of consumption. Through the use of history, concepts and theories, the contemporary role of consumption (as an institution) is assessed in relation to various subjects, including the role of advertising and marketing, socialization, globalization, environmental concerns, identity, meaning, and power.

Course Prerequisite:

MIT 2100F/G

Graded Assignments:

* Early-semester test (Week V): 20%

This 60 minute test consisting of 5 multiple choice and 3 (of 5) short answer identification questions will evaluate student comprehension of early semester readings and concepts.

* Late-semester test (Week IX): 20%

This 70 minute test consisting of an essay question (choice of 1 of 3) is designed to evaluate the ability to apply readings and concepts.

* Group Presentation (see below): 20%

* End-of-semester assignment (questions distributed in class November 24; due December 1, 2014): 40%

This assignment consists of students answering two equally weighted essay questions (1500 words each). It is designed to assess their critical comprehension of course lectures, concepts, and readings addressed throughout the semester. *Late assignments must be accompanied by appropriate documentation – such as a medical certificate – or they will not be accepted.*

Required Texts:

MIT 3216F Custom Course Book (Book No. 10970)

Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness** (any edition)

Suggested Text:

Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life** (any edition)

SCHEDULE and READINGS

With the exception of Ewen's *Captains of Consciousness*, Bauman's *Consuming Life*, and readings 'to be distributed', all readings are contained in the Coursepack (pages for each of these readings refer to pages in the Pack).

I. September 8 – Introduction

No readings

II. September 15 – Definitions and Dynamics

Raymond Williams, 'Consumer' in *Keywords*, pp. 1-2

Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life**, pp. 25-51

Submit Group Presentation Preferences Today

III. September 22 – Core Concepts and History of Consumer Culture I

James G. Carrier, 'The Emergence of Impersonal Trade' in *Gifts and Commodities*, pp. 3-7

Grant McCracken, *Culture & Consumption*, pp. 9-19

James G. Carrier, 'Christmas and the Ceremony of the Gift' in *Gifts and Commodities*, pp. 21-31

IV. September 29 – Core Concepts and History of Consumer Culture, Part II

Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness**, pp. 23-184

V. October 6 – question & answer session and early-semester test**October 13 – Thanksgiving****VI. October 20 – Socialization and Consumer Culture**

Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life**, pp. 52-116

Group presentations:

* *Childrearing*

* *Gender*

VII. October 27 – Digital Technologies and Alienation

Comor, in *Ephemeria* at <<http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/digital-prosumption-and-alienation>>

Mark Davis, “Hurried Lives: Dialectics of Time and Technology in Liquid Modernity” in *Thesis 11*, pp. 33-44

CBC “A Brand New World” radio documentary at

<<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/The+Sunday+Edition/ID/2406139657/>>

Group presentations:

* *Education*

* *Relationships and Sexuality*

VIII. November 3 – Social-Psychological Implications

Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* Chapters IV-V, pp. 45-60

Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, pp. 122-140

Group presentation:

* *Mental Health*

IX. November 10 – question & answer session and early-semester test

X. November 17 – Acquiescence, Resistance, Alternatives, Part I

Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, ‘The Rebel Sell’ in *This Magazine* (July 1, 2006) at

<<http://www.thismagazine.ca/issues/2002/11/rebelsell.php>>

Michael Schudson, ‘Delectable Materialism’ in L.B. Glickman (ed.), *Consumer Society in American History*, pp. 61-70

Group presentation:

* *Entertainment*

* *Food*

XI. November 24 – Acquiescence, Resistance, Alternatives, Part II

Michael Schudson, ‘Citizens, Consumers and the Good Society’ in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 611 (2007), pp. 71-77

Russel Belk, ‘Why Not Share Rather Than Own?’ in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 611 (2007), pp. 79-84

Eric Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* Chapter I, pp. 85-89

Group presentations:

* *Architecture & Urban Spaces*

* *Politics*

XII. November 24 – Conclusions and Course Review

No readings - distribution of end-of-semester assignment

XIII. December 1 – Exam Answers Due Today

No class – *end-of-semester assignment due today by 4pm*

* Available at the Weldon Library Reserves and the FIMS Graduate Resource Center (2nd floor NCB)

Group Presentations:

This semester, eight group presentations will take place. Following student selections of their three preferred presentation subjects from the list and dates shown below, Prof. Comor will organize groups normally made up of five students. Each group will be responsible for one 30-minute presentation (25-minutes for four-person groups and 35-minutes for six-person groups) assessing a particular subject *in the context of, and through the application of, concepts and readings addressed in class*. An annotated bibliography indicating the sources used and who in the group utilized them is required on the day of each presentation. Grades will be based on the group's comprehension of the subject matter, use of course concepts, and their ability to engage fellow students. Groups may use audio-visual aids and are strongly encouraged to use sources not addressed in class. Lastly, groups are encouraged to rehearse their presentations to ensure that they do not exceed mandated timeframes. Students failing to contribute to or taking part in a presentation will be given a make-up assignment *only* upon presentation of a medical or equivalent certificate (otherwise, the student will receive 0 (zero) for this assignment).

Presentation Subjects and Dates:

Childrearing – October 20

Gender – October 20

Education – October 27

Relationships & Sexuality – October 27

Mental Health – November 3

Entertainment – November 17

Food – November 17

Architecture & Urban Spaces – November 24

Politics – November 24

Note: Along with the submission of your three presentation preferences, please provide **your email address and telephone number** where you can be readily reached and a detailed message left. If your presentation requires any special needs, please notify Prof. Comor at least one week in advance. Also, *if your presentation involves materials or activities that may offend or significantly disturb, these should be cleared by Prof. Comor.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE: THIS COURSE PROHIBITS THE USE OF LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURES. THESE WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY UPON THE SUBMISSION OF APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION. HOWEVER, THESE DEVICES MAY BE USED WHEN MAKING PRESENTATIONS.

Notes from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies

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/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf .

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Academic Accommodation

Medical Accommodation

For Western University policy on accommodation for medical illness, see:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Student Medical Certificate (SMC): studentservices.uwo.ca under the Medical Documentation heading

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic accommodation on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may, however, decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crises, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Bereavement

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation.

For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation.

Students seeking additional bereavement leave for religious or other reasons should contact their Academic Counsellors, and provide valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>
Further specific information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

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.

Other support services on campus:

Office of the Registrar: www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with Disabilities: www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility Information: www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services : indigenous.uwo.ca/

International and Exchange Student Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/int

Career Centre at Western: www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS recently changed its class average policies, which specify the range between which the average marks for courses at particular levels (1000, 2000, 3000) must fall. Previously, these policies applied to all courses. Now they apply only to required MIT courses.

The MIT program now has the following class average policy:

- All 1000-level MIT required courses (i.e., 1200, 1500, 1700) will have a class average of between 67 and 72%.
- All 2000-level MIT required courses (i.e. 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) will have a class average of between 70 and 75%.
- All 3000-level MIT required courses (i.e. 3000, 3100) will have a class average of between 72 and 77%.
- 4000-level MIT courses and courses with fewer than 20 enrolled students will be exempt from this grading policy.
- Elective courses have no class average requirement.

FIMS remains committed to rigorous academic standards, and to grading practices that give high marks only for high quality work. To this end, FIMS undergraduate instructors mark according to the Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range, using the full range of marks available. Please consult these Guidelines to see the standards work is expected to meet. http://www.fims.uwo.ca/acad_programs/undergrad/mit_mpi/courses/grading/averages.htm

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.