

Exploring Consumerism in Contemporary Society - 3 ECTS

SYLLABUS

Instructor's contact information

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Course information

- Academic Year, Period: 2021/22, IV
- Language of Instruction: English

1. OVERVIEW

The course will introduce the idea of consumer culture, and engage students in understanding consumption and their role as consumers and producers within this cultural context. The course will further focus on aesthetics as part of consumer culture and its relationship to consumption and production. The course will take on a multicultural and inclusive perspective on topics through the use of varied literature and practical examples.

The course will be interdisciplinary in its nature and thus involve topics from various academic fields such as consumer research, marketing, sociology, anthropology, aesthetics, design, and art education. The course will further be both practical and theoretical, allowing students to gain an understanding of aesthetics and consumer culture conceptually, but also be able to apply of these ideas in practice within multidisciplinary contexts.

2. PREREQUISITES

N/A

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understanding the idea of consumer society, as well as the role of consumption in contemporary culture
- Engaging and deconstructing power structures connected to consumerism
- Learning to reflect on how one engages in consumption and how one can critically approach this both on an individual and professional levels
- Reflecting on one's own main field of study within the framework of the course

4. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The course is graded on a scale of 1-5.

A passing grade requires completion of all assignments and participation in the classroom. Students are required to attend 80% of lectures to pass the course.

Grade	Points	Description
5	90-100	Work of high to exceptionally high quality showing excellent knowledge of subject matter, well-articulated concepts, high level of originality and critical thinking.
4	80-89	Work showing good grasp of subject matter. Clearly developed and articulated concepts. Evidence of critical thinking.
3	70-79	Work showing an adequate understanding of subject matter. Argumentation, conceptual and critical thinking present, but limited.
2	60-69	Work showing a basic understanding of subject matter. Argumentation, conceptual and critical thinking present, but limited.
1	50-59	Work showing a basic understanding of subject matter. Argumentation, conceptual and critical thinking present, but limited.
F	Below 50	Work lacking breadth and depth.

5. ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment	Description	Assignment due
Individual Essay	<p>Choose a topic related to consumerism (e.g. one of the lesson topics) and explore it through a critical literature review.</p> <p>What to submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An essay of 1500-2000 words <p>The essay must include academic literature both from the course reading list as well as additional academic literature you have found yourself</p>	9.4.2022
Group assignment (in groups of 3-5)	<p>In groups of 3-5, create an artistic response to your chosen topic that is relevant to the themes of this course. The medium and specific subject are free to choose.</p> <p>Work will be guided and supported by the lecturer. Moreover, the work will not be judged on artistic merit, but rather engagement in subject areas. You will have a chance to work on and get feedback on your work during the contact sessions.</p> <p>What to submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide documentation of your work and its progression. This can be photos of physical work, digital sketched, written reflections, etc. Please provide evidence of developmental work, i.e., I need to be able to see how you've worked on the project.• Include a short description and reflection on your final work. Max 1-2pages.	16.4.2022

6. READINGS

A variety of book chapters and journal articles. Please see schedule below. All readings will be uploaded to MyCourses.

7. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The course will consist of discussion-based lectures as well as a variety of art- and ethnography-based exercises to get students to engage topics bodily.

Contact sessions will require preparation through readings and reflections. The course will be taught fully online.

Session	Date	Times	Contact session	Readings/other preparation for lectures
1	01.03.2022	15:15-18:00	Introduction to course, its approaches and themes	<p>The first part of the session will deal with a general discussion about the course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes • Expectations • Process • Readings • Groups • Assignment, etc. <p>In the second part of the session, we will discuss how different theories, concepts, and ideas discussed throughout the sessions can inform your work.</p> <p>We will take a few “consumption objects” as examples and discuss them together. This is meant to provide an appreciation and an entry to what is to follow.</p>
2	08.03.2022	15:15-18:00	Consumer Culture	<p>Readings:</p> <p><i>Slater, D. (1997): Consumer Culture and Modernity, Chapter 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the chapter carefully and write down at least three questions or comments you think are interesting, relevant, important to you and your professional interests. • Additionally, have ready for the session one consumption object (or a photo of it) that you find aesthetic and that you use regularly. • Have some collaging materials ready: paper, glue, scissors, magazines, etc. <p><i>*This is a very important chapter for understanding the concept of consumer culture. A good comprehension of the chapter will help you critically understand and digest the following readings.</i></p>

3	15.03.2022	15:15-18:00	Aesthetics in consumer culture	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schroeder, J. (2006): Introduction to the special issue on aesthetics, images, and vision • Warren, S. and Rehn, A. (2006): Oppression, Art, and Aesthetics <p>We will start working in groups more concretely in this session. Have some art materials ready: paper, glue, scissors, magazines, etc.</p>
4	22.03.2022	15:15-18:00	Consumption, aesthetics, and the self	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bauman, Z (2007): Consuming life, Introduction chapter <p>Additionally, please prepare an idea for your group project. You will have a chance to discuss these with the lecturer and get some feedback.</p>
5	29.03.2022	15:15-18:00	Consumption, aesthetics, and community	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McAlexander, J.H. and Schouten,, J.W. (1995): An Ethnography of the New Bikers
6	05.04.2022	15:15-18:00	Consumption, aesthetics, and place Wrapping up course	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy, A. et al (2014): <i>M(art)worlds: Consumer Perceptions of How Luxury Brand Stores Become Art Institutions</i>

8. COURSE WORKLOAD

Classroom hours	18h
Class preparation and reflection	22h
Assignments	41h
Total	81h (3 ECTS)

9. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof <https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=3772443>

10. OTHER ISSUES

While there are no prerequisites, the course is directed at late stage bachelor students, as some familiarity with one's own field of study will be expected and used as part of the learning process. Master's and Doctoral level students are also welcome.