

University of Manitoba  
Department of Sociology

**SOC 7160 T02**  
**Selected Topics in Sociology: Consumer Culture**  
Mondays 11.30am – 2.15pm  
335 Isbister Building  
Fall 2017, 3 Credit Hours



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**Course Objectives**

This course provides an advanced introduction to the socio-cultural analysis of what has been called 'consumer culture'. It begins with a consideration of classical accounts of the social and cultural significance of commodities and consumption. We then proceed to recent accounts of the stylization, or aestheticization of consumption, exploring and evaluating alternative explanations of the emergence and shape of contemporary consumer culture (e.g. production-led and consumption-led explanations). The course addresses the complex relationship between a growing emphasis on commodity aesthetics and the expansion and development of media forms such as advertising and branding. Related to this theme, we will explore the role of 'cultural intermediaries' in processes of aestheticization and configurations of contemporary consumers. Turning attention to consumers and practices of consumption, the course will consider issues of identity, lifestyle, and social distinction, and explore some of the ways in which consumption is bound up with the production and maintenance of social and cultural inequalities. Finally, we look at some recent developments and themes in the sociology of consumption, such as the rise of digital consumption and debates surrounding ethical consumption.

## **Required Readings**

Required readings will be on reserve in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library. Various readings will also be available electronically and/or will be made available in the photocopy room in the Department of Sociology.

## **Assessment**

### Participation

- The course will follow a seminar format, involving student presentations and discussion of assigned readings. Each week a student or pair of students will be responsible for presenting the readings to the class (summarizing the readings in approximately 15 minutes), raising questions, and facilitating discussion.
- All students are expected to complete the required readings prior to the class, and actively participate in class discussions.

### Critical reviews

- Students are required to write two short papers (4-5 pages), each of which will provide a critical review of all the readings for one week. Students will likely (but not necessarily) want to submit papers for the set of readings they are covering in their presentations. Critical reviews are due at the end of the class in which the articles reviewed are presented.
- Due: In class

### Essay

- Students will be required to write an essay of 5000 words. The essay topic will be chosen by the student, and must fit within the broad themes of the course, drawing on the theories and concepts we have considered. Topics must be approved by the instructor. Papers will be presented to the class near the end of the course, as a work in progress. Presentation marks will be based in part on peer assessment.
- Due: December 4, 2017

**Note:** Students are instructed to *always keep a personal copy of any submitted work* in the case that they are required to submit another copy.

## **Grade Weights**

### 1. Participation 30%

- Seminar presentations 10%
- Class participation when not presenting 20%

### 2. Critical Reviews 30% (15% each)

### 3. Essay 40%

- Paper 35%
- Presentation 5%

## Grade Distribution

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Description</i>
A+	91-100%	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-90%	4.0	Excellent
B+	75-79%	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74%	3.0	Good
C+	65-69%	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64%	2.0	Adequate
D	50-59%	1.0	Marginal
F	49% or less	0	Failure

## Evaluative Feedback

Students can expect to receive written comments and grades within two to three weeks of the date assignments, essays, or tests are submitted to the instructor.

## Late Submissions, Missed Presentations, Missed Classes

- Students who are absent on their assigned date of presentations will receive a grade of 0. Medical documentation will normally be required to waive this penalty.
- Missed classes, failure to read assigned texts, and disruptive or negative classroom behaviour will result in lower participation marks.
- Late papers will be penalized 3% per day late (including weekends) unless an extension has been obtained from the professor PRIOR to the deadline. Medical documentation will normally be required to waive this penalty.

## Academic Integrity

University policy on academic integrity will be enforced. A full description of academic integrity matters, including plagiarism and cheating, can be found in Section 8 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements of the University of Manitoba.

**Note:** The Faculty of Arts reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

## Unclaimed Term Work Disposal

Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for four (4) months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will become property of the Faculty of Arts and be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.

## Special Learning Needs

Students with special learning needs (who, for legitimate reasons, require extra time to write a test, or who require aids or other supports) should introduce themselves to the instructor during the first week of the course in order to organize suitable accommodation and assessment arrangements.

## Religious Holidays

The University of Manitoba acknowledges the right of all students to observe recognized holy days of their faith. You will need to inform the instructor in writing of your intended absence(s) at least three weeks in advance.

**Voluntary Withdrawal**

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course without academic penalty is **November 17, 2017**.

**Lecture Topics and Readings**  
*Handed out on the first day of term*