HIST 3080  American Consumer Culture
Fall 2012

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Course Description
Welcome! This course will explore the emergence of the modern consumer society in the United States. From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, American culture seems to be defined by the conspicuous consumption of goods. It is important to remember, however, that phenomena like mass marketing, advertising, and mass distribution were not always so entrenched. A historical approach allows us to explore the changing relationship of Americans to consumer goods and the cultural transformation which went along with this change. The course is roughly chronological, with readings organized around a specific theme each week.

The course is designed as a combination lecture/seminar format. Most weeks, the Tuesday meeting of the course will consist of a lecture, and Thursday will be devoted at least in part to discussion. Success in this course requires a number of things: regular attendance, completion of the readings, active participation and prompt submission of written assignments. Students will be responsible for reading the assigned material each week and coming prepared to discuss the main issues raised by each author. This is good practice for taking history seminars; it can also be a lot of fun (really!). Do not be intimidated by the prospect of these class talks – if you are shy, we can work on this together.

Rules and Regulations
It pains me to have to repeat this, but all written work for the course must be original. Do not be tempted to “borrow” materials from the internet or other sources without attribution. If something looks suspicious, I will check! All assignments should be typed and double spaced. Further details about written assignments will be provided in class. You will be provided with some evaluation before the Winter Term Voluntary Withdrawal date of November 14, 2012.

Pay close attention to due dates. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, if you contact me directly before an assignment is due. Papers are due in class on the date indicated. Late papers will be penalized 2.5% per day. Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within 10 working days after the grade for the term work has been made available to them. Uncollected term work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.

The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can
also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication. The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty.

Grade Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review (500-750 words)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>October 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising Analysis (750-1000 words)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>November 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (2500-3750 words)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>November 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>December 14</td>
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Grade Distribution

- Exceptional: 90 and above A+
- Excellent: 81-89 A
- Very Good: 75-80 B+
- Good: 70-74 B
- Satisfactory: 65-69 C+
- Adequate: 60-64 C
- Marginal: 50-59 D
- Failure: below 50 F

Required Texts

These books are available at the campus bookstore. Other readings are available online or in the folder attached to my office door.

Lawrence Glickman, ed. *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*

Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940*
Course Schedule

Week 1
September 6  Introduction

Week 2
September 11  Theoretical Frameworks
September 13  Markets and trade in early America
              – assignment sheets handed out

Readings:
from Glickman, *A Reader in Consumer History*, to p. 77
  preface and introduction
  Williams, “Consumer”
  Campbell, “Consuming Goods and the Good of Consuming”
  Baudrillard, “Consumer Society”
  Fallows, “What is an Economy For?”

Week 3
September 18  Consumption and the American Revolution
September 20  Discussion – also some instruction on upcoming book review

Readings:
from Glickman, 85-144
  Axtell, “The First Consumer Revolution”
  Breen, “Narrative of Commercial Life”
  Appleby, “Consumption in Early Modern Social Thought”

Week 4
September 25  Changing technology, changing trade
September 27  Discussion

Readings:
Elizabeth A. Perkins, “The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky,” *Journal of American History* Vol. 78, Issue 2 (Sept. 1991) 486-510. (available online at www.jstor.org. This is an online database, which must be accessed through the U of M library server. From the library homepage, click on “Articles and Databases” under the “Find” tab, then look for JSTOR under the letter J. You can then search for the article by title.)

Week 5
October 2       Branding and Mass Distribution

October 4       Name Brand Case Study: Coca Cola

Readings:


Week 6
October 9       Retailing: rise of the Great Emporiums
*** Book Review due in class, Ad Analysis sheet handed out

October 11      Regional Variations

Readings:       Benson, *Counter Cultures*, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-123)

Week 7
October 16      Women, the Department Store and Public Space

October 18      Discussion
– come with questions about upcoming Ad Analysis

Readings:       Benson, *Counter Cultures*, to end


Week 8
October 23      The Commodification of Leisure

October 25      Emergence of Professional Advertising

Readings:
from Glickman, 147-206
Cohen, “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots”
Sanchez, “Familiar Sounds of Change”
Heinz, “From Scarcity to Abundance”
Week 9
October 30  Advertising:  The Industry, the Ad Man and the Audience

November 1  The Depression and faith in the Consumer Society

*** Advertising Analysis due in class
Essay assignment sheets handed out

Readings:
from Glickman, 207-240
Swiencicki, “Consuming Brotherhood”


Week 10

November 6  Economic Nationalism and WWII

November 8  Postwar Prosperity

Readings:
from Glickman, 241-273
Greenberg, “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work”
The readings are not long this week – make sure you finalize your essay topic. Come and see me if you are having trouble selecting a topic.

Week 11

November 13  Advertising in the Postwar Period

November 15  Suburbanization and the Shopping Mall

Readings:
from Glickman, 298-315
May, “The Commodity Gap”

***November 14:  Last date for voluntary withdrawal from first term courses
By now you should be well on your way to completing your essay.


**Week 12**

November 20   Mass Marketing, Target Marketing

November 22   Discussion

Readings:
Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” and Kenneth T. Jackson, “All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center,” both found in *American Historical Review* (Oct 1996).

**Week 13**

November 27   Advertising and the Teen Market

November 29   Globalization and the 21st Century Consumer

***Essays due in class***

Readings:
from Glickman, 277-297, 316-337
Moorhouse, “‘Work Ethic’ and ‘Leisure’ Activity”
Weems, “The Revolution Will Be Marketed”
Schor, “All Work and No Play”
Moody, “When High Wage Jobs are Gone”
Elkington et al, “Green Consumer”

**Week 14**

December 4   Review

Take Home Exam handed out - due December 14 at noon. You must hand this in to me in my office. Do not send an electronic version.