HIST 3080  American Consumer Culture  
Winter 2015

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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. It is noted in the syllabus – some weeks consist of one lecture, and one class devoted to an informal discussion of the readings. 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. I work hard to make the discussions inclusive, and they help you to get to know the other students in the class. Keeping up with the readings will also help you prepare for the final exam. 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.

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 March 19.

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review (500-750 words)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising Analysis (750-1000 words)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay (2000-2500 words)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Final Exam</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65%</strong></td>
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Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>90 and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>81-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>75-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>70-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly above average</td>
<td>65-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>60-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>50-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>below 50</td>
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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*

Course Schedule

Week 1
January 6       Introduction
January 8       Theoretical Frameworks

Readings:
from Glickman, *A Reader in Consumer History*, to p. 32
  preface and introduction
  Williams, “Consumer”
  Campbell, “Consuming Goods and the Good of Consuming”

Week 2
January 13      Markets and trade in early America
                 – assignment sheets handed out
January 15      Consumption and the American Revolution

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

Week 3
January 20      Discussion of the Axtell, Breen and Appleby articles from last week– also some instruction on upcoming book review
January 22      Changing technology, changing trade

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](http://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 “Databases A-Z” then look for JSTOR under the letter J. You can also search by title and author from the main search engine page of the library)

Week 4
January 27   Discussion of Perkins and Jaffee articles from last week

January 29   Branding and Mass Distribution

Readings:


Week 5
February 3   Name Brand Case Study: Coca Cola

February 5   The Commodification of Leisure

Readings:


Week 6
February 10  Retailing: rise of the Great Emporiums

*** Book Review due in class, Ad Analysis sheet handed out

February 12  Regional Variations

Readings:

Week 7  Reading Week – no classes

Week 8
February 24  Urban Culture and Consumption

February 26  Discussion
– come with questions about upcoming Ad Analysis

Readings:
from Glickman, 147-206
Cohen, “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots”
Sanchez, “Familiar Sounds of Change”
Heinz, “From Scarcity to Abundance”

Week 9
March 3  Emergence of Professional Advertising

March 5  Advertising: The Industry, the Ad Man and the Audience

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


Week 10
March 10  The Depression and faith in the Consumer Society

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

March 12  Economic Nationalism and WWII

Readings:
from Glickman, 241-273
Greenberg, “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work”


**Week 11**

March 17 Postwar Prosperity

March 19 Advertising in the Postwar Period

Readings:


***March 19: Last date for voluntary withdrawal from Winter term courses***
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 12**

March 24 Suburbanization and the Shopping Mall

March 26 Mass Marketing, Target Marketing

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


By now you should be well on your way to completing your essay. We will spend a short amount of time on March 26 talking about structuring your papers, and writing an effective thesis statement. Please bring your notes and rough materials to class.

**Week 13**

March 31 1980s affluence

April 2 Discussion of Moreton, Cohen article and in-class work on revision of
essay drafts

Readings:
    Moreton, Walmart, pp. 145-192

Week 14
    April 9    Globalization and the 21st Century Consumer
    April 9    Review
***Essays due in class – Take-Home Exams distributed

Readings:
from Glickman, 277-297, 316-325
    Moorhouse, “‘Work Ethic’ and ‘Leisure’ Activity”
    Weems, “The Revolution Will Be Marketed”

    Moreton, Walmart – to end

The exam is due in my office, 353 University College, on Wednesday, April 22. I will be in the office between 9:30 and 1:00. Do NOT submit the exam electronically, or drop it off in the History Department. Only exams which are handed in to me directly will be accepted.