

AML 4453 /26781 /sec. 005F

Consumer Society

Course Meetings: T per. 4 (10:40-11:30) R per. 4-5 (10:40-12:35) in MAT 0113

Instructor: Professor Susan Hegeman / shegeman@ufl.edu / 352-294-2815 / TUR 4119

Office hours: Fridays, 1-3 pm, or by appointment

Course Description

The United States is the largest consumer market in the world. Americans have come to expect access to a wide range of goods and services on demand, and we often define our social status, happiness, and well-being in terms of our capacity to buy things. But this state of affairs has a relatively recent history, in which older values were displaced in favor of a set of new habits and ways of understanding the meaning of the good life. Additionally, many Americans have dissented from the values of consumer society, and some have sought alternatives to consumerism. In this course, we will examine a range of objects including novels, films, poetry, and essays in order to explore the history of consumerism and its sore points. We will consider celebrations of consumerism, as well as ethical, political, aesthetic, and environmentalist criticisms of consumerism. We will also discuss the psychological and social implications of consumerism, and its disparate meanings across lines of gender, race, and class.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn about the history of consumer society in the United States, from the early twentieth century to the present
- students will learn about, and engage with, the ethical, political, and cultural debates surrounding consumerism
- students will develop their skills in interpreting a variety of primary texts, including works of literature and films, through close reading and contextual analysis
- students will develop advanced skills in critical thinking, analysis, argumentation, and oral communication
- students will develop advanced critical writing skills through the completion of academic research papers and informal online posts

A Note on Course Content

The course materials describe, and we will discuss, potentially disturbing topics, including violence, sexual abuse, and disease. If you ever feel the need to leave a class discussion, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please get notes from another student or contact me individually. You are welcome to discuss your personal reactions to the course material with me in office hours. If you or a friend are in distress, please contact [U Matter, We Care](#) or the Counseling and Wellness Center at 352 392-1575.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

Tech Requirements and Policies

You are required to have access to Canvas for accessing course materials and turning in assignments.

For help with all tech issues, contact the UF Computing Help Desk:

Web: <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu> (Links to an external site.)

Phone: (352) 392-HELP (4357)

Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu

Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for accommodations (e.g. credit for overdue work) due to technical issues must be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem.

Recording Policy

According to state law, students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments

(quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Class Compartment

1. Respectful interactions among students are expected. Participation grades will be negatively affected by a failure to adhere to professional, polite, scholarly, and respectful communication in all formats, both written and oral.

2. In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.ufl.edu for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated. As with any excused absence, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

Course Requirements and Grading

GRADING SCALE

A	4.0	94-100	940-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-93	900-939	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

BREAKDOWN OF FINAL GRADE

Attendance and participation	150 points; 15% of final grade
Online discussion posts	150 points; 15% of final grade
Paper 1	350 points; 35% of final grade
paper 2	350 points; 35% of final grade

Attendance and participation (15% of final grade)

In this class, we will all learn by respectfully listening to, reading, and engaging with each others' ideas. It is therefore expected that students come to class, and that they come prepared to discuss the material assigned for that day. Students will be graded on their attendance and on the quality of their oral and written contributions to classroom discussion. Participation includes oral and chat contributions to class discussions via Canvas. The best grades will be given to those who offer informed, incisive, and relevant comments regarding the course readings and related discussions. Poor attendance will adversely effect students' participation grade.

University policy requires that absences be accepted with prior notice for university sponsored events (e.g., athletics) and religious holidays.

Students who are ill are expected to be considerate of others and self-quarantine. Students' grades will not be adversely affected by this if you inform the instructor of your medical situation. Students are expected to contact the instructor if they anticipate extended absences so that we can work on a plan to keep up with the class. Documentation will be required.

Online discussions (15% of final grade)

Students are expected to post weekly to the "Discussions" section of the Canvas course website. Posts should be about 100-300 words. They are due at 5 pm on Friday of the week for which they will get credit. They can be responses to prompts from me, reflections on readings or class discussions, further research on a topic of interest to you, comments on other students' posts, or a space for developing paper topics. Students are expected to maintain the same standards of respectful exchange and academic honesty that they are held to in class discussions and formal papers.

The online discussions will be graded as follows:

- 100 = 12 posts
- 93 = 11 posts
- 89 = 10 posts
- 86 = 9 posts
- 82 = 8 posts
- 79 = 7 posts
- 76 = 6 posts

- 72 = 5 posts
- 69 = 4 posts
- 66 = 3 posts
- 62 = 2 posts
- 59 = 1 post
- 0 = 0 posts

Papers (350 points or 35% of final grade, each)

Students will write two formal academic papers, of 1800-2400 words each. The paper assignments, including topics and guidelines, will be announced on Canvas well in advance of the due dates of October 14 and December 10, respectively.

Papers will be graded holistically on the following criteria, in general order of emphasis:

- Argumentation: clear thesis, logical sequence of argument, logical conclusions
- Use of appropriate evidence from the texts
- Demonstrated understanding of contextual issues in relation to works discussed (accurate explication of concepts and arguments; accurate use of terminology and historical information; accurate application to texts)
- Mechanics: punctuation, spelling, word choice and usage, sentence construction, paragraphing
- Proofreading and citations

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor. Students needing accommodations should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students are required to review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>).

Plagiarism or any other violation of the Student Honor and Conduct Code will result in an automatic failure of the assignment. A report will be filed with the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/>

According to the Student Conduct Code,
"Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.

4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author."

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend are in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, or 352 392-1575.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.
- Writing Studio, 2215 Turlington Hall, 846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.
- Disability Resource Center, Reid Hall. 392-8565. Help with academic and other accommodations. <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Make a Plan to Vote

All eligible students are urged to exercise their right to vote. You must be registered in order to vote. You have a right to register to vote at the address you consider the place where you live, whether that is your family's home or the place where you attend school. You should make sure you are registered at the voting address you prefer. You may only be registered and vote in one location.

- Register by October 11 to vote in the November 8 General Election
- Early voting for the general election is October 24-November 5th. All Alachua County voters can early vote at the Reitz Union

[Make a Plan to Vote \(Links to an external site.\)](#). Register, check your registration status, or update your address here: [TurboVote \(Links to an external site.\)](#). You can also register in person or get assistance with voting-related matters at the [Bob Graham Center for Public Service \(Links to an external site.\)](#), 220 Pugh Hall M-F 8:30 AM-4:00 PM.

Schedule of Readings, Discussions, and Assignments

This schedule represents my plans at the beginning of the semester. However, it may be changed to accommodate student needs and interests or other exigencies. I will announce any changes well in advance, both online and in class. Please bookmark the following page for a user-friendly schedule with complete links to readings: [Schedule of readings and discussions](#)

August

25 Thursday. Course introduction: what is consumerism? what is consumer society?
Review syllabus.

30 Tuesday. Changing views of consumerism, from the virtue of thrift to conspicuous consumption. Reading: selections from the New Testament; Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack; and Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*

September

1 Thursday. Begin reading Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

6 Tuesday. *Sister Carrie*

8 Thursday. *Sister Carrie*

13 Tuesday. *Sister Carrie*

15 Thursday. Nascent consumer society in the 1920s. Reading: Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*, Chs. 4-6

20 Tuesday. Begin reading Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

22 Thursday. *The Great Gatsby*

27 Tuesday. *The Great Gatsby*

29 Thursday. The 1950s: Consumer society achieved. Read Cohen, "A Consumers'

Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America" and Elaine Tyler May, "The Commodity Gap"

October

4 Tuesday. Female rebellion. Read Betty Friedan, "The Sexual Sell"

6 Thursday. Discussion of the film, *All that Heaven Allows*. Please watch on your own.

11 Tuesday. The meanings of consumption. Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California", Cottom on poor people's consumption

13 Thursday. Begin discussion of Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

18 Tuesday. *The Bluest Eye*

20 Thursday. *The Bluest Eye*

25 Tuesday. Contemporary critiques of consumerism 1: Reading: Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, "How the Chicken Nugget Became the True Symbol of Our Era"

27 Thursday. Contemporary critiques of consumerism 2: Wendell Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating" and introduction by Alice Waters

November

1 Tuesday. Contemporary critiques of consumerism 3: Amanda Hess, "The New Spiritual Consumerism"

3 Thursday. Contemporary critiques of consumerism 4: Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*, Chs.

8 Tuesday. Begin Whitehead, *Zone 1*

10 Thursday. *Zone 1*

15 Tuesday. Class cancelled

17 Thursday. *Zone 1*

22 Tuesday. Begin Egan, *The Candy House*

24 Thursday. Thanksgiving

29 Tuesday. *The Candy House*

December

1 Thursday. *The Candy House*

6 Tuesday. *The Candy House* and course conclusion