**BIS 393C: Consumption and Sustainable Practices**

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| Instructor: Rebeca Rivera | Office: UW1-142 |
| Time: Tuesday and Thursdays 6pm-8:30pm  Location: UW1-030 | Office Hours: 5pm-6pm, or by appointment |
| E-mail: rebeca@u.washington.edu | Phone: 206.372.8952 (cell for emergencies) |

**Course Overview**

The impacts of American consumption are linked to environmental problems and increased social inequality on a global scale. At the 1992 Earth Summit countries of the global South gained enough political power to bring Northern over-consumption to the forefront of the global environmental agenda. However, in the United States and other Northern countries sustainable consumption initiatives have not lived up to the expectations of the 1992 Earth Summit. This course will examine some of the reasons why issues of consumption have been difficult to address.

This course will investigate why we consume the way we do, the environmental and social impacts of consumption, and examine possibilities for change. This course will be a holistic survey of the study of consumption from multi-disciplinary perspectives. At the end of this course you will have an understanding of consumption theory, issues, and practices.

**Student learning goals**

1. To understand theories of consumption practices
2. To understand and apply ethnographic methods
3. To think critically and articulate issues related to consumption at the local, national, and global levels
4. To analyze your own consumption practices utilizing course material
5. To engage in thoughtful and respectful discourse around important topics
6. To facilitate class discussions—to develop discussion questions and facilitation skills that fosters a safe environment, student participation and the inclusion of multiple perspectives

**Grading**

Final grades will be assigned based on the following breakdown:

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| --- | --- |
| **Assignment/Activity** | **Points** |
|  |  |
| Reading Assignments | 30 |
| Other Assignments | 15 |
| Contribution | 10 |
| Student facilitation | 10 |
| Ethnography | 35 |
| Total Points | **100** |

Grading Scale: Final grade will be calculated based on the following scale

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | % | Grade | % | Grade | % | Grade | % | Grade | % |
| 4 | 100-99 | 3.3 | 86-85 | 2.6 | 76 | 1.9 | 69 | 1.2 | 62 |
| 3.9 | 98-97 | 3.2 | 84-83 | 2.5 | 75 | 1.8 | 68 | 1.1 | 61 |
| 3.8 | 96-95 | 3.1 | 82-81 | 2.4 | 74 | 1.7 | 67 | 1 | 60 |
| 3.7 | 94-93 | 3 | 80 | 2.3 | 73 | 1.6 | 66 | 0.9 | 59 |
| 3.6 | 92-91 | 2.9 | 79 | 2.2 | 72 | 1.5 | 65 | 0.8 | 58 |
| 3.5 | 90-89 | 2.8 | 78 | 2.1 | 71 | 1.4 | 64 | 0.7 | 57 |
| 3.4 | 88-87 | 2.7 | 77 | 2 | 70 | 1.3 | 63 | .6-0.0 | 56 |

The letter grade equivalents for the numerical grades listed above may be found here: http://www.washington.edu/students/gencat/front/Grading\_Sys.html

**Course Requirements**

**Course Readings**

All readings are available electronically through electronic reserves at the library and the course website (https://catalysttools.washington.edu/workspace/rebeca/14312/). You may find course readings by week on the course schedule. Each week’s readings need to be completed before each Tuesday’s class. Course readings and topics are subject to change due to interest and pace of the class. If there is a change in any reading assignments I will give you at least one week notice.

**Reading Assignments**

For readings due weeks 2-8 you will need to write a 400-500 word response due by Tuesday at 5: 50 p.m. Your response should indicate that you have a critical understanding of the material. In your response you should reflect on the author’s style, argument, methods, assumptions, imagery, and/or tone. You might also address the following questions: Does the reading make you think differently about the topic? Are there areas of the reading you didn’t understand? What are the similarities and difference between the readings for the week? You are required to write responses for 6 of the 7 weeks. Each response is worth 5 points.

**Other Assignments**

You will have two assignments. The first to complete an ecological footprint quiz by the second week is worth 5 points. The second, a consumption journal, will be due at the beginning of class on July 20th.

Ecological Footprint Quiz

You will need to have completed an ecological footprint quiz (really a survey) worth 5 points. You will need to take this quiz and submit your results through the course web page.

Consumption Diary

During week 4 you will keep a consumption diary, worth 10 points, where you will keep track of all you consume. Using the course materials for weeks 5 and 6 you will be analyzing and discussing the consumption diaries in class. You will receive more information on the consumption diary in week 3.

**Contribution**

Your in class contributions are essential to the course. You will be expected to contribute during class discussions, student facilitated discussions, group break-out sessions, and lectures. Your class contribution will be worth 10 points or 10% of your grade.

**Student facilitation**

Each student is required to facilitate a small group discussion on the readings for the week.  The facilitators for any given week are expected to work together in order to develop discussion questions on the readings (at least 2 questions per reading) and to give a 10 minute introduction to the discussion.  For the introduction the facilitators will jointly present summaries of the readings, an 'ice breaker', and their discussion questions.  The ice breaker may be in the form of a very short video, an image, a quote, or may take some other form your group deems appropriate and relevant to the topic(s). In total, you will need to collectively generate discussion questions, collectively prepare a short presentation on the readings, e-mail me your discussion questions 24 hours before class, give a short presentation, facilitate a small group discussion, and write a one to two page reflection on your facilitation experience including what went well and what you could have done differently. A sign-up sheet will be passed around during the first week of class for students to sign-up for a discussion session.

**Ethnography**

You will conduct a small ethnographic study of consumption practices. You will need to develop a research question and select a population of people that you wish to study. This group may be a family, a peer group, or members of an organization. You will turn in project updates in weeks 4 and 7.

At the end of the quarter you must turn in a 10 page ethnography (report of your research) and give a power point presentation during week 9.

**Policy Regarding Plagiarism and Cheating**

Students in this class are expected to adhere to the University’s policy on plagiarism and other forms of cheating.  One of the most common forms of cheating is *plagiarism*; that is, taking the ideas, writings, or inventions of another and representing them as your own.  The guidelines that define plagiarism also apply to information secured on internet websites. Another common form of cheating involves exams. Copying from someone else's paper, using notes (unless expressly allowed by the teacher), altering an exam for re-grading, getting an advance copy of the examination, or hiring a surrogate test-taker are all flagrant violations of University policy.

These definitions are taken directly from the policy developed by the Committee on Academic Conduct in the College of Arts and Sciences.  For more information go to the University's Faculty Resource on Grading web page at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#plagiarism>.

Any student caught plagiarizing or cheating will be disciplined according to the University's Student Conduct Code (WAC 478-120).  For more information go to: <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html#010>.

**Class Schedule**

Week 1: Intro to Sustainable Consumption Studies

Tuesday, June 22nd:

A Map of Course Content / Review of Syllabus

Introductions

Film: Affluenza

*Readings:*

Hunn, Eugene. (1999). The Value of Subsistence for the Future of the World. In Ethnoecology: Situated Knowledge/Located Lives. Virginia D. Nazarea ed. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Schor, J. B. (2000). Towards a New Politics of Consumption. Do Americans Shop Too Much?. J. Cohen and J. Rogers eds. Boston: Beacon Press**:** 3-33.

Princen, T. (2002). Consumption and Its Externalities: Where Economy Meets Ecology. Confronting Consumption. T. Princen, M. Maniates and K. Conca. Cambridge, MIT Press**:** 23-42.

*Optional Readings:*

Guha, Ramachandra. (2006). How much should a person consume? How much should a person consume?: Environmentalism in India and the United States. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 220-250.

Thursday, June 24th:

Consensus exercise on Consumption and Sustainability

Video: The story of stuff

Lecture and Discussion of Ethnographic Projects and Ethnographic Methods

**Student sign-up for student facilitation**

Week 2: Consumption and the Environment

Tuesday, June 29th :

**Due: Ecological Footprint Quiz**

**Due: Reading assignments for week 2 due**

Lecture and Discussion: Environmental Impacts of Consumption (part I)

*Required Readings:*

Rees, W. (2000). Ecological Footprints and the Pathology of Consumption. Fatal Consumption: Rethinking Sustainable Development. R. F. Woollard and A. S. Ostry. Vancouver, UBC Press**:** 21-51. (BB)

Vanderheiden, Steve. (2008) Two Conceptions of Sustainability. *Political Studies*. Vol 56, Issue 2, pages 435-455.

*Optional Readings:*

Altieri, Miguel A. (2000). Ecological Impacts of Industrial Agriculture and the Possibilities for Truly Sustainable Farming. F. Magdoff, J.B. Foster, F.H. Buttel. New York, Monthly Review Press**:** 77-92. (BB)

Talberth, John, et.al. (2006). The Ecological Fishprint of Nations: Measuring Humanity’s Impact on Marine Ecosystems. Oakland: Redefining Progress. (BB)

Venetoulis, Jason and Talberth, John. (2005). Ecological Footprint of Nations: 2005 Update. Oakland: Redefining Progress. (BB)

Thursday, July 1st:

Due: Ethnographic project topic and group

Lecture: Environmental Impacts of Consumption

**Student Facilitated Discussion**

Discussion

Week 3: Consumption and the Global Economy

Tuesday, July 6th:

**Reading assignments for week 3 due**

Short Lecture: Introduction to the Global Economy

Film: Life and Debt. 2003. Tuff Gong Pictures.

Discussion

*Required Readings:*

Conca, K. (2001). Consumption and Environment in a Global Economy *Global Environmental Politics* 1 (3): 53-71 (BB)

Mintz. Sydney. (1985). Introduction and Chapter 2: Production. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York: Penguin Books: xv – xxx, 19-73. (ER)

Tucker, Richard. (2002). Environmentally Damaging Consumption: The Impact of American Markets on Tropical Ecosystems in the Twentieth Century. Confronting Consumption. T. Princen, M. Maniates and K. Conca. Cambridge, MIT Press**:** 177-195. (ER)

Thursday, July 8th:

**Student Facilitated discussion**

Lecture: Consumption and the Global Economy

Hand Out: Consumption Diary Assignment

Week 4: Consumption and Justice

Tues. July 13th:

**Due: Reading assignments for week 4 due**

Short Lecture: Environmental Justice

Film: The Road from Rio. 2003. Bullfrog Films.

Discussion

*Required Readings:*

Gedicks, Al. (2005) Resource Wars against Native Peoples. In The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution. Robert D. Bullard ed. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. Pages 168-187. (ER)

Rees, William E and Westra, Laura.  (2003).  When Consumption Does Violence: Can There be Sustainability and Environmental Justice in a Resource-limited World?.  *In* Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World. J. Agyeman, R.D. Bullard and B. Evans eds. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd. (BB)

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (1992). Agenda 21: Chapter 4. (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter4.htm>) (BB)

*Optional Readings:*

People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. 1991. Principles of Environmental Justice. http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/princej.html

Thurs. July 15th:

**Ethnographic Project Update Due**

**Student Facilitated discussion**

Lecture: Consumption and Justice

Discussion: Material to date

Week 5: Consumption as a social act

Tuesday, July 20th:

**Due: Reading assignments for week 5 due**

Lecture: The study of consumption in the social sciences

Lecture: Consumption as a social act

**Due: Consumption Journal Due**

*Required Readings:*

Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. (1979). Why People Want Goods and The Uses of Goods. The World of Goods. New York: Rutledge. Pages: 3-10 and 36-47.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1984) The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction. Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pages: 56-62.

Wilk, Richard R. (1997) A Critique of Desire: Distaste and Dislike in Consumer Behavior. *Consumption, Markets and culture*. 1 (2): 97-196.

*Optional Readings:*

Veblen, Thorstein. 1960. Conspicuous Consumption. The Theory of the Leisure Class. New York: Mentor Book. Pages: 60-80

Wilk, Richard. (2006). The Ecology of Global Consumer Culture. In The Environment in Anthropology: a reader in ecology, culture, and sustainable living. Lora Haenn and Richard Wilk eds. New York: New York University Press. Pages: 418-429

Thursday, July 22nd:

Activity: Analysis of the social aspects of your consumption

**Student Facilitated Discussion**

Discussion: Material to date

Week 6: Consumption and the structure of choices

Tuesday, July 27th:

**Due: Reading assignments for week 6 due**

Lecture: Structure vs. Agency

Film: Czech Dream

*Required Readings:*

Baudrillard, Jean. (1996) Advertising. Jean Baudrillard: The System of Objects. New York: Verso. Pages: 178-215. (ER)

Robbins, Paul. (2007). Chapter 1: Explaining Lawn People. In *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Pages: 1-17 (ER)

Schor, Juliet. (2004) Dissecting the Child Consumer: The New Intrusive Research. Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture. New York: Scribner. Pages: 99-117. (ER)

Spaargaren, G. 2003. "Sustainable Consumption: A Theoretical and Environmental Policy Perspective." Society and Natural Resources **16**: 687-701. (BB)

Thursday, July 29th:

Lecture: The structure of choices

Activity: Analysis of the social aspects of your consumption

**Student Facilitated Discussion**

Discussion: Material to date

Week 7: Consumption and capitalism

Tuesday, August 3rd:

**Due: Reading assignments for week 7 due**

Lecture: Consumption and Capitalism

*Required Readings:*

Marx, Karl. (1978). Part I. Commodities and Money of Capital, Volume One. *The Marx-Engles Reader.* R. Tucker ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company: 302-329. (ER)

Robbins, Richard. (2005). Constructing the Consumer. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon: 13-38. (ER)

Robbins, Richard. (2005). The consumer, the laborer, the capitalist, and the nation-state in the society of perpetual growth: Introduction. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1-12. (ER)

*Optional Readings:*

Galbraith, John Kenneth. (1956). American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Pages 10-31 and 187-201.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. (1974). The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century. New York: Academic Press. (For a summary see: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/wallerstein.html)

Thursday, Aug. 4th:

**Ethnographic Project Update Due**

Lecture: Consumption and Capitalism

**Student Facilitated Discussion**

Discussion: Material to date

Week 8: Combining the Social and Ecological & Reaching Sustainability

Tuesday, Aug 10th:

**Due: Reading assignments for week 8 due**

Lecture: Cultural Capital and Natural Capital

Lecture: Alternative Practices

*Required Readings:*

Carr, M. 2000. Social Capital, Civil Society, and Social Transformation. Fatal: Consumption: Rethinking Sustainable Development. R. F. Woollard and A. S. Ostry. UBC Press, Vancouver**:** 69-97. (ER)

Kirby, A. (2003). "Redefining Social and Environmental Relations at the Ecovillage at Ithaca: A Case Study." Journal of Environmental Psychology **23**: 323-332. (BB)

Maniates, Michael. (2001). “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?,” *Global Environmental Politics* 1 (3): 31-52. (BB)

*Optional Readings:*

Berkes, F. and C. Folke (1994). Investing In Cultural Capital for Sustainable Use of Natural Capital. Investing In Natural Capital: The Ecological Economics Approach to Sustainablity. A. Jansson, M. Hammer, C. Folk, R. Costanza and S. Koskoff. Washington, D.C., Island Press**:** 128-168. (BB)

Elgin, Duane. (1981). Voluntary Simplicity and the New Global Challenge. Voluntary Simplicity. HarperCollins Publishers**:** 23-54. (ER)

Folke, Carl; Fikret Berkes and John Colding. 1998. Ecological Practices and Social Mechanisms for building Resilience and Sustainability in *Linking Social and Ecological Systems. In Linking Social and Ecology Systems: Management Practices and Social Mechanisms for Building Resilience*. Berkes, Folke and Colding eds. Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press. Pages 414-436. (ER)

Thursday, August 12th:

**Student Facilitated Discussion**

Lecture and Discussion: The future of consumption studies and practices

Discussion: Where do we go from here?

Week 9: Presentations

Tuesday, August 17th:

Due: Final Papers

Presentations

Thursday, August 19th:

Presentations