
Course Number/Name: HS 280 02: Environment, Consumption & Culture

Semester/Year: Spring 2011

Days/Time/Location: MW 8:00-9:20, MCC 309

Instructor: Rebeca Rivera

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Course Description:

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 and interdisciplinary survey of the study of consumption. At the end of this course you will have an understanding of consumption theory, issues, and practices.

Learning Objectives:

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

Learning Experiences:

Class sessions will be a mixture of large and small group discussions, individual and group activities, short lectures and films.

Critical Democratic Pedagogy: I see myself as a co-learner and facilitator of learning in this course. I believe that learning occurs when we are building on and sharing our experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. In order to learn about the world we need to understand our own biases as well as the perspectives and situations of other students and readings in this class. This class takes a critical approach to understanding the role of consumption in a sustainable society through the development of critical reading thinking and respectful dialogue. I value following student interests and needs as much as possible. This means that if you have a question or are interested in some aspect of the course content we may focus on your question or interest. I expect you to be open to and respectful of other experiences and perspectives, but most importantly to be critically reflective of your own perspectives and opinions. I do not expect you to agree with all the voices put forth in this class, but I ask that you will seek gain an understanding of other perspectives, ideas, and ways of thinking about the world.

Experiential Learning: I believe that learning also comes from direct hands-on experience and not just through reading about something. I incorporate experiential learning through the course project as well as through some in-class activities.

Required Texts and Materials:

Readings may be found online. I will give you the website and login instructions in class.

Assignments and Demonstration of Learning and Evaluation:

<u>Assignment/Activity</u>	<u>Points</u>
Reading Assignments	108
Other Assignments	31
Contribution	50
Student facilitations	100
Ethnography	66
Presentation	46
Total	400

Late Policy:

Assignments should be turned in on time. I will not accept hand written assignments. Missed reading responses may not be made up. For other assignments I will deduct 5% from your score per day until your assignment is turned in. If you know ahead of time you will have difficulty meeting a deadline please come and talk with me before you miss a deadline. You should also come and talk to me if you are having any problems keeping up with assignments or attending class—the earlier you talk to me the greater the likelihood I can work with you.

Ecological Footprint Quiz

You will need to complete an ecological footprint quiz (really a survey), worth 11 points. You will need to take this quiz at <http://myfootprint.org/>, print out your results and turn them in on January 31st..

Consumption Diary

During week 6 you will keep a consumption diary, worth 20 points, where you will keep track of all you consume. Using the course materials for weeks 7-11 you will be analyzing and discussing the consumption diaries in class. You will receive more information on the consumption diary in week 5.

Contribution

A big portion of this class will be based on discussions, activities, and group projects. I have labeled this category as contribution instead of participation because we will be learning from each other in this course and you are needed to contribute your ideas, thoughts, questions, perspectives, and experiences to the class. It is essential that you be present in both body and mind to create a positive learning environment for everyone. You will be evaluated on your contribution through occasional in-class assignments and by demonstrating your engagement with the readings, thoughtful questions, and willingness to engage respectfully with others.

Please keep in mind that because this class relies heavily on student contributions and group work you will be missed when absent. Your experience and the overall course will be better if you are an active participant and to be an active participant you need to be present.

Reading Responses:

For readings due weeks 2-14 you will need to write a 300-500 word response to the assigned readings. You should include at least one short paragraph for each reading. Your task is not to write summaries of the readings. In your responses I would like to you reflect critically on the readings. A critically reading is not looking negatively at the text, rather a critical reading seeks to understand both at what the author is saying (the content or the 'facts' they are giving) but also seeking to understand why and how the author is writing. A critical reading is not accepting the text at face value. For example, in your response you may reflect on the author's style, argument, theoretical framework, methods, assumptions, perspective, imagery, use of examples, and/or tone. However, in order to read critically you also need to be aware of your own bias and perspective. When we read something it is difficult not to color what the author is saying with our own 'baggage' so to speak. Your task is to go beyond your own perspective and analyze the text on its own merit. You may 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 differences between the readings for the week?

Responses are worth 8 points per week. To receive full points your response should 1) demonstrate that you have read the material closely and critically, 2) equally discuss each reading, 3) be clear and concisely written, 4) focus on the author and their work not on your experience and perspective (although you may focus on a part of the reading that you find most interesting or problematic). Your responses for each week's readings are due every Monday in class. Late responses will not be accepted without a doctor's note or prior approval from me. In the event you are absent from class you may e-mail me your assignment before 8am, however, you are limited to using e-mail in the case of an absence to three times. In the event of a snow day your assignment will still be due the next class period.

Update: Reading responses may also be turned in via a folder in Google Docs. Reading responses must be uploaded by 7:59.

Student Facilitation:

Each student is required to facilitate two small group discussions on the readings for the week. Between two and three students will sign up to facilitate during the same week. On the day of the facilitation we will divide up the class based on how many facilitators there are. So, if there are three facilitators there will be three small(ish) discussion groups. While each facilitator will lead their own small group discussion, facilitators for the same week are expected to use the same discussion question. In class we will discuss the roles of a facilitator and strategies used by effective facilitators.

As a facilitator you are expected to work with the other facilitators in order to a) develop discussion questions on the readings and to b) give a 10 minute introduction to the discussion. At the end of the small group discussion period, facilitators should be prepared to give a summary or highlights of what their group talked about.

Your group of facilitators needs to develop discussion questions collectively. This means that you are not just dividing the work. Rather, you should all do the readings ahead of time and meet to develop questions and/or each develop questions for all the readings individually and then share, revise, delete or merge the questions as a group. Discussion questions should be open ended (no 'right answer' or yes/no answer), be based on the readings, and encourage and facilitate critical thinking, and give the context or rationale behind the question. A question and discussion that encourages critically thinking reflects on the ideas/concepts/theories/arguments by examining the evidence and arguments carefully, being open to a variety of perspectives, and resisting immediate judgments based on our own bias and perspectives. You will be facilitating a discussion of a topic and not 'looking for an answer' per se. Rather, you will be exploring an idea/concept/theory/problem in greater detail together based on your shared knowledge. Your group should be ready to e-mail discussion questions to me at least 48 hours before your facilitation in order to receive feedback from me. You will need to bring at least one hard copy per facilitator and one copy for me. You will have about 40-50 minutes to lead the discussion. In class we will discuss the roles of a facilitator and strategies used by effective facilitators.

Facilitators will design an introduction to the discussion session by presenting summaries of the readings, a short '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).

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 on the Wednesday of weeks 5 and 10.

At the end of the semester you must turn in a 10 page ethnography (report of your research) and give a presentation during week. The presentation may be an academic presentation of your research or may be an artistic-analytic representation of their research including a film, play, work of art, exhibit, or dance.

Weekly Course Schedule*:

**This schedule is subject to change due to interest and need of the class or instructor and/or unforeseen obstacles, complications, or opportunities. You will be given a week's notice for changes in assignments including due dates and readings.*

Week	Day and Date	Topic and Readings	Assignments
1	January 19	Introduction and Overview	Volunteer: Student Facilitators for Jan 26 th .
2	Jan. 24 & 26	Introduction Beavan, Colin. (2009) Two: Day One and the Whole Thing Is a Big Mistake. <u>No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal Who Attempts to Save the Planet and Discoveries He Makes About Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process.</u> New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 19-33. Schor, J. B. (2000). Towards a New Politics of Consumption. <u>Do Americans Shop Too Much?</u> . J. Cohen and J. Rogers eds. Boston, Beacon Press: 3-33.	Due: Reading response (on Beavan and Schor on the 24 th . Sign-up: For Student Facilitations on Jan 26 th .
3	Jan 31& Feb. 2	Ecological Footprints Rees, W. (2000). Ecological Footprints and the Pathology of Consumption. <u>Fatal Consumption: Rethinking Sustainable Development.</u> R. F. Woollard and A. S. Ostry. Vancouver, UBC Press: 21-51. Pearce, Fred. (2008). Footprints: Me and My Stuff. <u>Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking Down the Sources of My Stuff.</u> Boston, Beacon Press:3-9	Due: EF Quiz on the 31st. Due: Reading response (on Rees and Pearce) on the 31 st .

4	Feb. 7 & 9	<p>Consumption and the Global Economy</p> <p>Kissinger, M. and W. Rees. (2010) Exporting Natural Capital: the Foreign Eco-Footprint on Costa Rica and Implications for Sustainability. <u>Environment, Development and Sustainability</u>. 12(4): 457-560.</p> <p>Pearce, Fred. (2008). White Gold: My T-Shirt, Slave Labor, and the Death of the Aral Sea. <u>Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking Down the Sources of My Stuff</u>. Boston, Beacon Press: 109-114.</p> <p>Optional: Tucker, Richard. (2002). Environmentally Damaging Consumption: The Impact of American Markets on Tropical Ecosystems in the Twentieth Century. <u>Confronting Consumption</u>. T. Princen, M. Maniates and K. Conca. Cambridge, MIT Press: 177-195.</p>	Due: Reading Response on Feb. 14 th .
5	Feb. 14 & 16	<p>Consumption and Justice</p> <p>Gedicks, Al. (2005) Resource Wars against Native Peoples. In <u>The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution</u>. Robert D. Bullard ed. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. Pages 168-187.</p>	<p>Due: Reading Response on Feb. 23rd.</p> <p>Assignment: Consumption Diary Handed out on Feb. 14th also available online.</p>
6	Feb. 21 & 23	<p>President's Day NO CLASS</p> <p>Consumption and Justice</p> <p>Rees, William E and Westra, Laura. (2003). When Consumption Does Violence: Can There be Sustainability and Environmental Justice in a Resource-limited World?. <u>In Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World</u>. J. Agyeman, R.D. Bullard and B. Evans eds. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.</p>	<p>Due: Reading Response on Feb. 23rd.</p> <p>Assignment: Consumption Dairy (ongoing).</p>

7	Feb. 28 & March 2	<p>Consumption as a Social Act</p> <p>Bourdieu, Pierre. (1984) The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction. <u>Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</u>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pages: 56-62.</p> <p>Wilk, Richard R. (1997) A Critique of Desire: Distaste and Dislike in Consumer Behavior. <i>Consumption, Markets and culture</i>. 1 (2): 180-187.</p> <p>Optional: Veblen, Thorstein. (2008/1899).Chapter Four: Conspicuous Consumption. <u>The Theory of the Leisure Class</u>. Produced by David Reed and David Widger: Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/8/3/833/833-h/833-h.htm#2HCH0004</p>	<p>Due: Reading Response on Feb. 28th.</p> <p>Due: Consumption Diary on Feb. 28th</p> <p>Due (NEW): Ethnography Update on March 2nd</p>
8	March 7 & 9	<p>Consumption as a Social Act</p> <p>Miller, Daniel. (2010). 1: Why Clothing is Not Superficial. <u>Stuff</u>. Cambridge, Polity Press:12-41.</p> <p>Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. (1992) Chapter 3: What We Say, What We Do. In <u>Rubbish!: The Archeology of Garbage</u>. HarperPerennial: 53-78</p> <p>Mid Term Evaluations</p>	Due: Reading Response on March 7 th .
9	March 14 & 16	Spring Break NO CLASS	
10	March 21& 23	<p>Consumption and the Structure of Choices</p> <p>Baudrillard, Jean. (1996) Advertising. <u>Jean Baudrillard: The System of Objects</u>. New York: Verso. Pages: 178-215.</p>	<p>Due: Reading Response on March 21st</p> <p>Due: Ethnography update on March 23rd.</p>
11	March 28 & 30	<p>Consumption and the Structure of Choices</p> <p>Spaargaren, G. 2003. "Sustainable Consumption: A Theoretical and Environmental Policy Perspective." <u>Society and Natural Resources</u> 16: 687-701.</p>	Due Reading Response on March 28 th .

12	April 4 & 6	Consumption and Capitalism Robbins, Richard. (2005). Constructing the Consumer. <i>Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism</i> . Boston: Allyn and Bacon: 13-38. Robbins, Richard. (2005). The consumer, the laborer, the capitalist, and the nation-state in the society of perpetual growth: Introduction. <i>Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism</i> . Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1-12.	Due: Reading Response on April 4 th
13	April 11 & 13	Reaching Sustainability Maniates, Michael. (2001). "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?," <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 1 (3): 31-52. Beavan, Colin. (2009) Seven: Conspicuous Nonconsumption. <u>No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal Who Attempts to Save the Planet and Discoveries He Makes About Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process</u> . New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 141-182.	Due: Reading Response on April 11 th
14	April 18 & 20	Reaching Sustainability Carr, M. 2000. Social Capital, Civil Society, and Social Transformation. <u>Fatal: Consumption: Rethinking Sustainable Development</u> . R. F. Woollard and A. S. Ostry. UBC Press, Vancouver: 69-97. Leanard, Annie. (2010). Epilogue: Writing the New Story. <u>The Story of Stuff: How Our Obsession with Stuff is Trashing the Planet, Our Communities, and Our Health—And a Vision for Change</u> . New York: Free Press: 237-252	Due: Reading Response on April 18 th
15	April 25 & 27	Class Presentations	Due: Final Paper (your ethnography) on April 25 th Due: Presentation of your research April 25 th or 27 th .
16	May 2 & 4	Final Exam Week No Class	

Department Practice and Policy:

Academic Etiquette:

- Arrive on time
- Cell phones off
- No headphone use during class time
- No checking e-mail, text messaging or surfing the web during class
- Respectful participation and discussion is expected

Attendance:

The learning experience cannot be duplicated outside of class and depends on the participation of all classroom community members. Attendance is required for all Humanities and Sciences courses. To pass Integrated Studies, students may not exceed 9 hours of absence. In all other Humanities and Sciences courses, students are permitted three absences before having their grade affected. In all courses, these permitted absences *include* absence due to personal matters or illness, and absences due to departmental commitments, such as rehearsals, performances, or show installation. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the student to alert his or her instructor of a pending absence and to make arrangements to complete all coursework in a timely manner. To minimize absences, students should take care to register for courses that fit their schedules and that do not conflict with other courses or internships. If students miss class for any reason, they are still responsible for turning in their work on time and for any material or assignments covered during the class meeting.

Academic Honesty :

The College demands a high level of artistic integrity and academic honesty on the part of students. No form of academic dishonesty (for example, cheating and plagiarism) will be tolerated. If an instructor demonstrates to the Department Chair that a student is guilty of academic dishonesty, the student will be assigned a failing grade for the entire course. All cases of academic dishonesty are reviewed by the Academic Standards Committee. Disciplinary action may be determined by the Academic Standards Committee depending on the circumstances of the particular case. Further disciplinary actions may include warning, probation, suspension, and expulsion.

Support Services:

Student Affairs:

Student Affairs is dedicated to enhancing and complementing students' educational experience through programs, services and opportunities that aid in their personal development. Student Affairs is committed to community building, co-curricular learning, and student support. If you are a student with a documented disability and you need accommodations, please make an appointment with the staff in Student Affairs, located in **room 301** at the Main Campus Center. You can call **206-726-5098** to reach them.

Counseling:

The mission of the Counseling Offices at Cornish College of the Arts is to assist students with their academic and artistic pursuits by providing supportive counseling, referrals and outreach programs that promote students' mental health and emotional well being. To schedule an appointment, call a Counselor at **206-726-5027** or **206-726-5047**. If they are not available, please leave a message on their voicemail and they will return your call as soon as possible. The Counseling Offices are located in rooms **308 A & B** in the **Main Campus Center**.

Library:

The Library's mission is to support and enhance the college curriculum, to play an integral role in academic life at Cornish College of the Arts and to do so in a manner that promotes information literacy and encourages lifelong learning. In addition to books, periodicals, and media available on site, the library website has online resources that may be accessed from home with your last name and Cornish ID number. Databases include many full-text resources and digital images. If you need assistance finding information, Librarians are available at the reference desk during business hours. **The library is located on the 2nd floor of the Main Campus Center in Room 205.** Also, feel free to call (206)726-5145, or e-mail the library libraryref@cornish.edu. To learn about these services and more, please visit the Cornish Library homepage: http://www.cornish.edu/cornish_library/.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free resource for all Cornish students, faculty and staff who are interested in developing their writing and reading. Located in **room 311** of the **Main Campus Center**, the Writing Center is a place where students come to work on their writing and receive individual guidance at any phase of the writing process, regardless of their level of development. Drop-ins are welcome during posted hours. Contact Amanda Hill at ahill@cornish.edu or **206-315-5806** for appointments and information.

General Safety:

Please inform yourself of safety procedures for this room, including emergency evacuation routes and the location of the closest first aid kits and fire extinguishers. Consult the [Health & Safety Procedures](#) booklet posted near doors and eyewash stations. Detailed information is also provided in the College student handbook.

Student Contact Information: In order to connect with your co-facilitators.

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