

Consumer Culture and the Culture(s) of Consumption

University of Notre Dame · Instructor: Omar Lizardo

Discussion

Description

Course info, except for syllabus, is visible to the public.

Calendar

This course is a romp through the field of study that has come to be known as "Consumer Culture Theory." This is an approach to understand consumers and consumer culture(s) in so-called "consumer societies" that emphasizes the contextual, experiential and culturally mediated ways in which consumers engage with consumption objects and experience in markets. The basic idea is that the cultural meaning of consumption is not reducible to either producer or consumer dynamics but must instead be gleaned from the multi-sited interactions between producers, brand managers, consumers, consumption sites and consumer communities.

People

Library

Syllabus

Syllabus

Syllabus is not visible to the public.

Settings

Class Info

Consumer Culture and the Cultures of Consumption (SOC 33191-01)
Crosslisted as: AMST 30515-01

Place: Pasquerilla Center 102
Time: TR 02:00 PM-03:15 PM

Instructor: Omar Lizardo
Office: 735 Flanner
Phone: 631-1855
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url: <http://www.nd.edu/olizardo>

Objectives

The overall objective of this course is to provide you with an advanced introduction to consumer culture theory and the (interdisciplinary) field of consumer culture studies. By the end of the semester you should able:

- 1) To identify the different ways in which consumption practices are understood in this field.
- 2) Be able to apply (some if not all) of these ideas in order to understand, contextualize and interpret your own (and other people's) consumption practices.
- 3) Be able to formulate both conceptual and empirical questions regarding consumption and consumer culture in contemporary society.

Class Meetings

This is a primary discussion oriented (not lectured based) culture. The nature of the topic and the material essentially dictate that. Rather than being about some esoteric topic, this class is about something that we all are (consumers), an activity that we all engage in (consumption) a social setting that we all belong to (consumer society) and a set of ideas, beliefs, and values that we are all exposed to some degree or another (consumer culture). Thus, I expect you to be an active participant and contributor to the dialogue.

Each class meeting will begin with a short ("diary") writing assignment, followed by class discussion where we go through the readings, address any remaining issues and questions, subject the author's thesis to critical consideration, and take stock of the basic set of concepts that the readings introduce. We close by taking stock of what we learned and deal with any unanswered questions.

Course Readings

There no textbooks or reading packets required for this course. All readings will be available (either as a direct download in pdf format or via a hyperlink to JSTOR) in the "Library" section of the course.

Notes on Assignments

Instructors



Omar Lizardo

Details

University of Notre Dame
Fall 2013

1) If students know that they will have to miss a paper deadline (e.g. due to involvement in a college sporting event or performance, or certain religious holidays not acknowledged by the university), they must inform me before-hand.

2) All written assignments except journals (short papers and final paper drafts) will be due on the course website. Submission via email or under my door or as a hard copy in class does not constitute a formal submission unless you clear it with me first.

3) There is no formal "extra" credit, but doing more than the five required short papers is a way to get it.

Assignments ▲

1) Class Participation (20%):

It's your responsibility to come to class prepared. This means you have (at a minimum):

- a) Done the reading (in its entirety)
- b) Compiled questions if the reading was unclear
- c) Come ready to discuss the reading's concepts and argument
- d) Brought some insight that you are prepared to talk about (an application of the readings ideas, or connection to other parts of class).

You can respond to the reading in one of five ways:

- a) Pose a question you'd like to discuss in response to the reading
- b) Pick a fight with the reading's argument/author
- c) Ask a clarification question if you were confused by something in the reading
- d) Make a link between the day's reading and a previous class discussion
- f) Apply a concept from the reading to a different example.

I'll open up the floor for others to volunteer the topics they want to discuss. My hope is this is a low-impact way to focus discussions around your interests and needs, while also encouraging broad class participation without resorting to the Socratic method.

Success in this class is based on your active participation and discussion of course ideas. These activities are the cornerstone of a good college experience. Reading and thinking will make you a student, but debating ideas in a public forum will make you an intellectual. Therefore, in this class YOU NEED TO TALK. Expressing your ideas with the others in the class is the ideal way to learn (and it is an integral part of your grade).

You also have a role as a listener. Everyone should listen attentively and respectfully when others are talking. Chatting with your classmates (verbally) or with friends outside of class (digitally), or browsing the internet during class time is inappropriate in a university classroom. Please stow your laptops and take notes with pen and paper (unless you have special permission from the designated authorities).

Reading summaries (10%):

These are short (no more than 500 words) summaries on the readings due for that day. They are due every class meeting before 12p. These are not meant to provide any high-level analysis of the readings, but simply a "brain dump" that allows me to check (a) whether you did the reading, and (b) whether you actually got the gist of the readings. If none apply, I will mark you with a zero; if only (a) but not (b) applies, then you will get a score of one; if both (a) and (b) apply you will get a two. These may seem like a pain in the butt at first, but most people end up being appreciative of this assignment when all is said and done.

In-Class Writing (20%):

As already noted, I expect you to complete all the assigned reading and to reflect on it and what we learn in class. To facilitate this, you will have short in-class writing assignments at the beginning and/or end of each class period. This gives everyone something to work off of in discussion. I will provide each student with a notebook that you will write in for these. Although there will be more than 20 opportunities, I will count your 20 highest grades on these assignments. These will be graded from 0 to 5.

Short Papers (25%):

These are relatively short (no more than 2000 words) papers that will be (usually but not invariably) assigned on "seminar" days. They are meant for you to (after being familiar with a theory or set of concepts) to *apply* these concepts for explaining or shedding light on some issue. Check the course calendar for the dates and times at which these papers are due. You are required to do a total of five short papers throughout the semester. These will be graded from 0 to 10. You can get extra-credit by doing more than the required five.

Final Paper (25%):

This will be a standard (3000- 6000 words) research paper. You will write the paper "in stages":

- (a) First you will turn in a short one-paragraph proposal for a paper idea.
- (b) Then you will turn in a short introduction to the paper and a draft bibliography for the subject that you will be writing about.
- (c) Then, you will turn in a 5-7 page preliminary draft of your paper, which will serve as the main foundation for your 10 minute in-class presentation on the last week of the semester.
- (d) Finally, you will turn in a complete 8-12 page final draft on the day of the final.

You will only receive a grade (from 0 to a 100) on the final draft of the research paper. All the preliminary drafts will receive only comments and suggestions for improvement.

Grading Scheme

A : > 95%
 A- : 90-94%
 B+ : 87-89%
 B : 83-86%
 B- : 80-82%
 C+ : 77-79%
 C : 73-76%
 C- : 70-72%
 D : 60-69%
 F : < 60%

Attendance Policy

I will take attendance each day, so be here on time to avoid getting an absence. All absences must be cleared with me first. Furthermore, attendance rates, as an objective measure of student participation, will be used as a deciding factor in the determination of final grades, should a student's point total place her/him "on the line" between letter grades. Students will be allowed to make up work missed due to absences ONLY if they are EXCUSABLE, such as debilitating or highly contagious personal illness, illness of dependents, death in the immediate family, or legal obligations. To be excused for an absence the student must either notify me in advance of the class and receive my approval, OR document the absence in writing (by a doctor's note, letter from the Dean's office, etc.) on the first day the student returns to class. Evidence for excused absences will NOT be accepted at any later date. You only get three (3) excused absences for the semester, after that each additional absence will result in a penalty of half a letter grade on whatever your final grade is.

Course Website

You are in it, Sherlock!

Academic Honesty

This is a writing intensive course. In fact, most of your grade will come from some form of writing. This means that you need to be really familiar with the conventions that govern academic honesty in writing (in particular citation and paraphrasing practices; citations of web documents, etc.) so that you don't end up committing academic dishonesty as a result of ignorance (which is still a violation of the code). For instance, cutting and pasting a block of text (even if it's a sentence or two) without attribution or citation to that web document IS PLAGIARISM and thus an example of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other acts of academic dishonesty will be severely punished. Per the University of Notre Dame Code of Honor (and common good sense) all work handed in must be the student's own work and must use proper citation when referring to the ideas of others. In addition, please hand write and sign the honor pledge for all work handed in:

As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.

Put bluntly, any student who has engaged in academic dishonesty will lose 150% of the value of the assignment off the top of their overall grade. Additionally, if you turn in plagiarized material, cheat on a test, or participate in any other dishonorable act, your activities will be brought to the attention of the Honor Committee. This means the act of dishonesty will appear on your academic record, hindering your chances of admission into advanced degree programs.

Ignorance is no defense or excuse. If you are unsure how to provide proper academic attribution, or what the university considers punishable offenses, please see me in advance of turning in an assignment...better to turn in honest work late than dishonest work on time. Please, contact me if you have any doubts on this issue. For further information about the university's honor code, please refer to Undergraduate Student Academic Code of Honor Handbook:

<http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/docs/handbook.htm>

Office Hours

My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3 to 4p. If these hours do not work for you, you can always send me an email and we can set up a time to meet

In-Class Conduct

Because of the subject matter, we are bound to cover topics that people might look at from different points of view. Discussion is an important aspect of this course. Let people have their say. You will have yours. Please respect the views, experiences, and opinions of others. Treat others as you would like to be treated; trying to avoid destructive criticism and offering constructive criticism instead. Following these guidelines will make this more enjoyable to everyone.

Also, as a sign of respect to your me (first and foremost!) fellow classmates, please avoid walking in late or leaving early. Please turn off cell phones and pagers before class. Please don't read the paper, talk to your friends, or pass notes during class. Not only are those things disrespectful and disruptive to your classmates and to me, but they also limit your ability to participate in class discussions and understand the material. Tardiness is disruptive. It is not professional, nor will it be appreciated. If you are more than 15 minutes late, that will count as an absence.

Professor Profile ▲

I'm an Associate Professor** in the sociology department at the University of Notre Dame. I was born in New York City, spent the better part of the first years of my life in a small coastal city called La Romana (i.e. "The Roman" with feminine inflection) on the Southeast corner of Dominican Republic [1], and moved back to New York City on my 17th birthday. I received my B.A. in Psychology from Brooklyn College [2], but decided that psychology was boring and Sociology was more fun when I took an elective on my senior year. So I decided to take the GRE and apply to grad school in Sociology. I was fortunate enough to earn my PhD in sociology at the University of Arizona [3] under the supervision and mentorship of Ron Breiger [4] and Al Bergesen [5]. My webpage [6] and vita [7] has more detailed information on what my (current and past) research is on.

My areas of research interest are sociological theory, the sociology of culture, sociology of organizations, network theory, microsociology, world-systems analysis and the philosophy of social science. If none of that means anything to you, then that's exactly the way I like it. (Most) of my published papers are available on my webpage as well some teaching materials (old syllabi, etc.). You can reach me at olizardo@nd.edu.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Romana,_La_Romana

[2] <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu>

[3] <http://sociology.arizona.edu>

[4] <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~breiger/Welcome.html>

[5] <http://sociology.arizona.edu/albert>

[6] <http://www3.nd.edu/~olizardo>

[7] <http://www3.nd.edu/~olizardo/papers/vita.pdf>

** Associate Professor does not mean that I associate with Professors (although that's actually descriptive of my social life). It means that I've been promoted from an Assistant Professor with a terminal six-year contract (which did not mean that I assisted any professors either) and now have tenure at Notre Dame. Tenure means that the university has decided to renew my contract forever, until the Provost forces me to retire. Tenure also means that Father Jenkins can't get rid of me unless I do something really, really bad (and by really bad, I mean Anthony Weiner bad; not Manti Te'o bad). That also probably means that I'll be at Notre Dame until they drag my dead body from my office.

Also don't be hating on the lifetime contract thing too much because a tenured faculty in member in Sociology will forever make a fraction of the money that most of you will be making in your first day on your first job. We do it for the love of ideas. The tenure institution is there to help us maintain integrity because that means that I can study whatever I want, write whatever I want, and say whatever I want without having to worry that the University will fire me because somebody doesn't like what I say.

Topics

Consumption, Consumer Theory, Consumer Culture, Consumer Culture Studies