Course Description
This course offers students the opportunity to engage with theories of communication and culture through the context of consumption and contemporary consumer society. Our focus will be on the role of commodities and consumer practices in everyday life and in culture at large. We will give particular attention to consumption's role in the construction of social and cultural identities. Students will consider critical responses to consumer culture, including the resistance and refusal of consumption as well as the attempted mobilization of consumption toward social change.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will be well equipped to:

- Define consumption as it relates to culture and individual/group/national identity
- Summarize key debates on the economic, political and spatial effects of consumer culture
- Classify consumption with regard to lifestyle, consumer subjectivity, meaning-making and resistance, keeping in mind that identity (race, class, gender, intersectionality, etc.) plays a role in determining the former.
- Analyze refusal, ethical consumption and anti-consumption practices and how counteract mainstream media and cultural tendency to consume.

Upon completion of the course, students will be well equipped to critically evaluate messages about consumption as well as to thoughtfully participate in social, political, and economic discourses of consumption as they move into careers in the communication field.

Required Texts

- All additional readings will be provided as PDFs.

Course Grade Calculation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Tumblr posts</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation + write-up</td>
<td>125 pts</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>225 pts</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research question + outline</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed proposal</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>125 pts</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multimedia curation</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Final grades, based on total points earned, out of 500:

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<td>D</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

A  = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B  = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C  = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D  = 60-64
F  = 0-59

Assignments
Tumblr posts
Over the course of the semester you will be responsible for adding four posts to the class tumblr. Your posts must be up at least 48 hours before the class period they pertain to (to give the rest of us plenty of time to read them and think about them before class time).

Reading posts should be brief provocations based on the week's readings. In at least 500 words, you should identify what you find to be the most interesting (or contentious, troublesome, confusing, etc.) point(s) from that week's reading. Your provocation should serve as a jumping off point for rich further discussion when we meet together as a class. You will sign up to do 2 reading posts over the course of the semester.

Example posts should include an example from your own observation (that you find in real life or on the web) that you feel usefully illustrates something you read about in the week's reading, or that further illuminates a concept we discussed in previous weeks. Your post must include a visual of some kind (a still image or a video clip) and at least 250 words in which you explain how the example relates to a concept from the class/readings. You are especially encouraged to take field trips to spaces of consumption, especially those related to specific identities (e.g. ethnic grocery stores, street markets in distinctive neighborhoods, gay bars if you're of age), suburban shopping malls, etc., and write about what you observe and experience there. You will sign up to do 2 example posts over the course of the semester.

Student-led presentations
In groups of 3, you will decide on a topic and I will work with your group to decide on a reading that the whole class will read along with the assigned reading on the syllabus. You must decide on a reading and make it available to the class at least 1 week in advance. Your group will lead the first half of the class session – it's up to you how you structure the discussion. Each person will also turn in an individual 750-1000 word write up that summarizes your reading and presentation as well as explains how your reading and presentation related to the other material covered that week.

Term Project
You will choose an identity that interests you and write a research paper of at least 2500 words (not inclusive of bibliography) that explains how this identity is constructed, performed, and/or experienced vis a vis consumption. At minimum, your paper must include a review and synthesis of the relevant existing literature. You have the option of incorporating your own original research if appropriate (we can discuss this on a case by case basis).

To accompany your paper you will curate a set of multimedia artifacts (these may be images, videos, or other artifacts) that augment the written content. You're encouraged to start collecting things as soon as possible and build up an archive over the course of the semester, which you will then curate into a finished collection to accompany the submission of your term project. Overall, your project should pose a research question related to consumption, culture, and identity, and then provide an answer based on textual and visual evidence and analysis.
Course Policies

Late assignments will not generally be accepted, as it places extra burden on me to keep track of your assignments above and beyond what I do for the other students in the class. It is also unfair to the other students, who are each making their own sacrifices and commitments in order to complete work on time. If you have a true hardship in completing an assignment on time, you must seek written approval from me, in advance of the due date, to extend the due date for a reduced grade. If you fail to turn in an assignment by the time it is due, and have not contacted and received approval from me for an extension, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Email: I will make every attempt to answer emails promptly (within 24 hours). I encourage you to consult this syllabus and any documents distributed in class before posing redundant questions (particularly if you have been absent from class). You are much more likely to receive a response when your correspondence is professional and courteous.

Attendance/Participation: You are allowed 2 absences, no questions asked, including both excused and unexcused absences. Any more absences will result in a 2% reduction in your course grade per absence. Being late to class at the start, or returning late from break is frowned upon. Our class sessions will be very discussion-based, so I’ll generally try to wait for everyone to arrive before we start. Please don’t waste your classmates’ time by delaying the start of class. If an unfortunate circumstance will prevent you from attending class or from being on time, please make an effort to contact me or someone else from the class so we can begin without you. Your participation grade is assessed above and beyond your attendance; just showing up to class will not earn any participation points. Spending class time on your laptop or cell phone engaged in non-class activities will negatively affect your participation grade. You may think I don’t notice, but I do. Your classmates do too, and it’s distracting!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM
I take academic integrity extremely seriously. When you turn in work that is not your own, you communicate to me that you are not serious about this course. It will also reflect badly on your online reputation, since much of the work in this course will be posted publicly. If I suspect that you have submitted dishonest work, you will receive a zero for the assignment. You may also fail the course and the case may be forwarded to department and university administrators. If you have any doubts as to whether work you plan to submit violates the standards of academic integrity, please ask me in advance. It is better to have an honest question cleared up before the fact than to risk failure and disciplinary action. The NYU Steinhardt School definition of plagiarism and policy on academic integrity is in effect in this course, and all students are expected to be familiar with it. The NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity is available at: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.
Accommodations for students with disabilities: Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.


The Writing Center
http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html
411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10003
212 998-8866
mailto:writingcenter@nyu.edu
Writingcenter@nyu.edu

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm; Friday, 11 am to 4 pm

The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with his or her writing. The Writing Center is a part of NYU's Expository Writing Program in the College of Arts and Science. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur, as students work closely with professional consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams.

NYU Wellness Exchange
http://www.nyu.edu/999
212-443-9999

The Wellness Exchange is the constellation of the University's expanded and enhanced programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of our students. Students can access this service through a private hotline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which will put them in touch with professionals who can help them address both day-to-day challenges as well as any other crises they may encounter, including depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections, and eating disorders. The Wellness Exchange is also available for students who just need to talk or to call about a friend.
Course Schedule
(in addition to the readings listed here, there may also be short, topical readings that will be added as they come up)

Week 1 (9/4): Introductions
Logistics and set-up

Week 2 (9/11): Defining Consumption (and its relationship to culture and identity)
Lury, "Introduction: What Is Consumer Culture?" (1-8)
Lury, "Chapter 1: Material Culture and Consumer Culture" (9-31)
Leiss, et al, "Goods as Communicators and Satisfiers"
De Certeau, "General Introduction" to The Practice of Everyday Life
Zukin, "Attention, Shoppers: Your Dreams in Aisle 3"

Week 3 (9/18): The Economics, Politics, and Spaces of Consumer Culture
Lury, "Chapter 2: Exchanging Things: The Economy and Culture" (32-55 – skim whole chapter, but focus especially on pp. 37-40)
Lury, "Chapter 4: Capital, Class, and Consumer Culture" (only 80-90, and 102-107)
Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" (319-329)
Storper, "Lived Effects of the Contemporary Economy: Globalization, Inequality, and Consumer Society"

Week 4 (9/25): Taste and Lifestyle
Lury, "Chapter 4: Capital, Class, and Consumer Culture" (only 90-102)
Veblen, excerpts from The Theory of the Leisure Class
Bourdieu, Introduction to Distinction (1-7)
Featherstone, "Lifestyle and Consumer Culture"
Grief, "The Hipster in the Mirror"

(Weeks 5-12 will also include readings assigned by your presentation groups)

Week 5 (10/2): Branding
Lury, "Chapter 6: Brands: Markets, Media, and Movement" (137-164)
Muniz & O'Guinn, "Brand Community"
Alison Hearn, "Meat, Mask, Burden: Probing the Contours of the Branded 'Self'"

Week 6 (10/9): Gender + Consumer Subjectivity
Lury, "Chapter 5: Circuits of Culture and Economy: Gender, Race and Reflexivity" (122-136)
Banet-Weiser, "'Free Self-Esteem Tools?': Brand Culture, Gender, and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign"
Dobson, "Femininities as Commodities"

Week 7 (10/16): No Class (fall break)
Research question and rough outline due by Tuesday 10/16 at 2pm
Week 8 (10/23): Race + Class
Lury, "Chapter 5: Circuits of Culture and Economy: Gender, Race and Reflexivity" (108-122)
Jackson, "Birthdays, Basketball, and Breaking Bread: Negotiating with Class in Contemporary Black America"
Grzanka & Maher, "Different, Like Everyone Else: Stuff White People Like and the Marketplace of Diversity"

Week 9 (10/30): Nation, Religion + Meaning Making
Garcia Canclini, "Identities as a Multimedia Spectacle"
Campbell, "Chicano Lite: Mexican-American Consumer Culture on the Border"
Rheingold, "Look Who's Talking"

Week 10 (11/6): Food + Distinction
Sassatelli and Davolio, "Consumption, Pleasure, and Politics: Slow Food and the Politico-Aesthetic Problematization of Food"
Johnston, Szabo, and Rodney, "Good food good people"

Detailed Proposal + Timeline Due

Week 11 (11/13): Subcultures + Resistance
Thornton, "The Distinctions of Cultures without Distinction"
O'Hara, "Why Punk" and "Environmentalism and Ecological Concerns" (same file)
Portwood-Stacer, "Anti-Consumption as Tactical Resistance"
Sweetman, "Tourists and Travelers? 'Subcultures,' Reflexive Identities and Neo-tribal Sociality"

Week 12 (11/20): Ethical Consumption + Environmentalism
Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, and Malpass, "Consuming Ethics: Articulating the Subjects and Spaces of Ethical Consumption"
Littler, "Cosmopolitan Caring: Globalization, Charity, and the Activist-Consumer"
Connolly and Prothero, "Green Consumption: Life-Politics, Risk and Contradictions"

Week 13 (11/27): Refusal + Anti-Consumption Strategies
Schor, "Holiday Shopping: Just Don't"
Glock, "Back to Basics: Living with "Voluntary Simplicity"
Kozinets and Handelman, "Adversaries of Consumption: Consumer Movements, Activism, and Ideology"
Dee, "Reverend Billy’s Unholy War"

Week 14 (12/4): Refusal + Anti-Consumption, continued
Green, "The Year Without Toilet Paper"

Week 15 (12/11): Final presentations
Term project due by start of class