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Both critics and adherents have described the modern era in the United States as a “culture of consumption.” Beginning with the advent of mass production, advertising, and branding, this course will examine the development of modern consumer culture, from its foundations in the 1870’s through the present. Topics will include the introduction of the department store and the mail order catalog, magazines, and advertising at the beginning of the twentieth century, the postwar boom in consumption, and the contemporary globalized market. This course also has a strong visual component; alongside the academic readings, we will be looking at novels, films and other media artifacts that communicate the narratives and aesthetics of consumption.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will become familiar with major issues in the cultural history of the twentieth century as well as explore the guiding themes and methodologies of the discipline of American Studies. Themes from this class will help contextual material in AP and regular US History courses. In addition, students will develop skills in reading and writing that can be applied to a variety of disciplines on both advanced high school and college levels. Finally, students will learn to perform close readings of evidence in the form of film, television and other media.

READINGS:

All readings available digitally through the course **Canvas** site. As we will be referring to readings throughout class meetings, you are expected to bring all readings to class in hard copy or in electronic form.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will be responsible for careful completion of and thoughtful engagement with daily reading assignments as well as daily attendance and participation in discussion. In addition, students will write a short (2-3 pages, standard font and size) response papers for each of the course units, synthesizing and responding to the readings and viewings for the unit. Assignments are not graded but will be given extensive oral and written feedback meant to help the student achieve college level analytical and writing skills. **Please title your assignment “yourname.assignment#” and email to me prior to the beginning of class on the due date.**

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to attend each class meeting and come promptly and prepared, having completed the assigned reading and ready with insights, observations and questions. This is a seminar and not a lecture, so a large portion of the success of the class depends on your willingness to engage the material and each other.

I expect students to treat each other and me with civility and mutual respect. Disrespect, harassment, or disruptions of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to: whispering, passing notes, arriving to class late, interrupting me or your classmates. Please silence all cell phones and disable wireless connection for the duration of class. I allow the use of laptops for note-taking, but reserve the right to change this policy if it is abused. Cell phone use of any kind (texting, playing games, listening to music) is not allowed and will result in penalties for repeat offenders.

UNIT 1: THE COMING OF CONSUMPTION

The advent of industrialization, the rise of the department store, branding, and the mail order catalog, immigration and “pink collar” work

MONDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JUNE 29 TH	N/A	Introduction: What is consumer culture? Why is it important? What were the necessary preconditions for the coming of consumption? Watch <i>Mill Times</i> (2006)

TUESDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JUNE 30 TH	Michael Schudson, “Historical Roots of Consumer Culture,” from <i>Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society</i> . New York: Basic Books, 1984, 147-177	Read and discuss Kate Chopin, “A Pair of Silk Stockings” (1897) Watch <i>Paul’s Case</i> (1982)

****UNIT 1 RESPONSE DUE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 1ST**

UNIT 2: ADVERTISING AND DESIRE

The rise of the mass media, the professionalization of the advertising industry, wartime consumption.

WEDNESDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JULY 1 ST	Gary Cross, “Setting the Course: 1900-1930,” in <i>An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, 17-65	Watch <i>It</i> (1927)

THURSDAY JULY 2 ND	READING	IN CLASS
	Roland Marchand, "The Great Parables," in <i>Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920 -1940</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 206-33	Watch <i>Modern Times</i> (1936) Advertising Activity

****UNIT 2 RESPONSE DUE: MONDAY, JULY 6TH**

FRIDAY JULY 3RD : NO CLASS

UNIT 3: CONSUMING POSTWAR	<i>Prosperity, postwar suburbanization, the 'age of consensus,' the advent of television, screen culture, introduction to gender and consumption</i>
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MONDAY JULY 6 TH	READING	IN CLASS
	Lizabeth Cohen, "Commerce: Reconfiguring Community Marketplaces," in <i>A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America</i> . New York: Vintage Books, 2003, 257-290 Lynn Spigel, "Television in the Family Circle," in <i>Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 11-35	Watch Kitchen Debates, <i>Atomic Cafe</i> , selection of 1950s domestic sitcoms

TUESDAY JULY 7 TH	READING	IN CLASS
	Thomas Frank "The Varieties of Hip Advertisements of the 1960s" in <i>The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 132-167 plus Appendix	Watch <i>MadMen</i> (2006) <i>Berkeley in the 60s</i>

WEDNESDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JULY 8 TH	Lizbeth Cohen, "Culture: Segmenting the Mass," in <i>A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America</i> . New York: Vintage Books, 2003, 292-344	

****UNIT 3 RESPONSE DUE: THURSDAY, JULY 9TH**

UNIT 4: BUYING NOW *Market Segmentation, social movements of the 1960s, 1970s as the 'age of limits', Globalization, new technologies, culture jamming and activism.*

THURSDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JULY 9 TH	Arlene Davila, "Selling Marginality: The Business of Culture," in <i>Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 216-240	Watch <i>Color Adjustment</i> (1992)

FRIDAY	READING	IN CLASS
JULY 10 TH	<p>Naomi Klein, "The Brand Expands," in <i>No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies</i>. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.</p> <p>Rob Horning, "The Accidental Bricoleurs," <i>n + 1</i>, June 3, 2011: https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/the-accidental-bricoleurs/</p>	Watch <i>Gossip Girl</i> (2007)

****UNIT 4 RESPONSE DUE: FRIDAY, JULY 10TH**