Course Description

Consumption is an essential aspect of modern culture. Through the consumption of food, clothing, technology, entertainment and more, people satisfy basic needs, show what groups they belong to, express their personality, and make ideological statements.

In this course, we study consumption in Latin America as a historical experience that went beyond the mere economic act of purchasing to include what Latin Americans did with what they bought, that is, their experience of using and transforming consumer goods. From a historical and transnational perspective, this course explores the role of consumption in the construction of gender, class, national, racial, and ethnic identities; the transformation of shopping and advertising over time; and the roles of men, women and children in purchasing and using consumer goods. Equally important, this course analyzes the historical role of Latin America as a producer and consumer in the global economy and the relation between consumption and politics. By focusing on the history of consumer culture in Latin America, this course teaches students several tasks of professional historians including writing book reviews, doing research in primary and secondary sources, making bibliographies, writing summaries, analyzing written and visual documents, etc.

Learning Objectives

1. Reflect on the historical transformation of production, consumption, shopping, and advertising in Latin America
2. Deepen conceptual and historical understanding of gender, race, and class in relation to consumer culture
3. Analyze the historical roots of contemporary issues, especially globalization, tourism, fair trade, and different expressions of popular culture including cinema and the popular media
4. Familiarize students with diverse aspects of the craft of historians: research, writing, and primary source analysis
Course Grading and Assignments

Class attendance and participation: 300 points
Fifteen (15) short assignments [20 points each]: 300 points
Take-home midterm exam: 200 points
Take-home final exam: 200 points

Total: 1000 points

a- Six (6) Short Papers: The professor will post a short question for each paper on Blackboard. Readings that require a 1-page paper are marked SP. Papers MUST NOT EXCEED one (1) page. Use single line spacing if necessary. Students must turn in printed papers at the beginning of class on days marked SP. No late papers will be accepted. Papers sent by email will not be accepted.

b- Two (2) Summaries: summary of an article. Hand in a printed version on the due date.

c- One (1) Short Bibliography: send the bibliography to my Blackboard email.

d- One (1) Short Research Assignment (sent to my Blackboard email).

e- Two (2) Primary Source Analyses.

f- Three (3) Film Analyses: The professor will give students a list of questions for each film. It is your responsibility to watch the films at home or on campus and bring a printed copy of your answers on days marked FILM. You can use Netflix.com—which has these movies available—check your local video store or Blockbuster, or buy the movies at Amazon.com.

The professor will provide detailed written instructions for assignments b, c, d, and e in class.

See due dates for assignments below (Course Schedule).

Hard copies of all assignments (with the exception of c, d, and g) must be turned in at the beginning of class. Emails will not be accepted. You MUST attend class to hand in your assignment.

Take-home midterm exam: 200
Readings from Week 1 to 7. The midterm is due on March 1, 2012 by 4.00 p.m. Late exams will not be accepted. No exceptions

Take-home final exam: 200
Readings from Week 8 to 15. The final exam is due on Friday April 27, 2012 by 4.00 p.m. Late exams will not be accepted. No exceptions

Questions for the midterm and final exams will be posted on Blackboard ten days in advance.

STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE READINGS BEFORE CLASS to be prepared to engage in informed conversations. Both the quality and quantity of participation is important.

No make-up exams or assignments will be given except in extraordinary cases that can be documented.

ABSOLUTELY NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS WILL BE ACCEPTED.
PLAGIARISM will not be tolerated. For information about plagiarism and UH policy, see: http://www.class.uh.edu/wconline/plagiarism/ http://www.uh.edu/academics/catalog/policies/academ-reg/academic-honesty/index.php

ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to attend class daily and to arrive on time. Students who arrive late—the professor is in the classroom and the class has already started—will lose the attendance points for the day. Since attendance represents 30 percent of the grade, arriving late to [or missing] only three classes will lower your attendance grade from A to B+

Course Requirements

BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM: Students must not engage in any disrupting behavior—talking during lectures, texting, arriving late, leaving early, reading newspapers or unrelated materials, etc. Please turn off all electronic devices before the beginning of class, including cell phones, iPods, pagers, etc. Voice recorders are not allowed. Disruptive students will be asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to drop disruptive students from the course.

Laptop computers are NOT ALLOWED in the classroom.

Texting and phone checking WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Keep your phone in your bag or pocket and leave it there until the end of class. No phones on your desk. I will deduct points to students who do not respect this policy.

BLACKBOARD IS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THIS COURSE: Students must check Blackboard regularly for updates and announcements regarding assignments, readings, and general messages.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE: Since you are communicating with professors and classmates in an academic environment, address professors and students directly by name or title, choose an appropriate greeting, be polite, and sign your emails. The professor will not reply emails that do not meet these conditions.

Students with a disability must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made if necessary.

Readings

Readings are posted online. Check Blackboard: http://www.uh.edu/webct/

PRINT all readings AND BRING them to class!
Course Schedule

Week 1:

1/17: Introduction

1/19: The Myths of Consumption

Week 2:

1/24: Material Culture in the Colonies

1/26: Colonial Goods, European Markets—How to Write a Summary.

Week 3:

1/31: Imports as “Civilizing” Goods

2/2: Global Capitalism and Commodities

Week 4:

2/7: The Household Economy in the Nineteenth-Century

2/9: The First Department Stores
Week 5:

2/14: Using Databases

2/16: Bibliography—Due by 4.00 p.m. Send required documents as an attachment to my Blackboard email.
(No Class)

Week 6:

2/21: Advertising


2/23: Shopping and the Construction of Femininity

Week 7:

2/28: Consumption and Class Identity

3/1: Mid-Term—Due on Blackboard at 4.00 pm (No Class)

Week 8:

3/6: Cinema and Audiences

3/8: Music

Week 9: SPRING BREAK
Week 10:

3/20: American Business in Latin America

FILM 1: Crude, Directed by Joe Berlinger, 2009.

Week 11:

3/27: Tourism

3/29: The Costs of Tourism


Week 12:

4/3: The Life of Things

4/5: Icons and Consumerism

Week 13:

4/10: Food Consumption

4/12: Research Assignment due at 4.00 p.m. Send a Word document as an attachment to my Blackboard email (NO CLASS)
**Week 14:**

**4/17: Poverty and Consumerism**

**4/19: Global Consumers and Identity Construction**

**Week 15:**

**4/24: Waste and Creativity**

**4/26: No Class**

**4/27: Final Exam—Due on Blackboard at 4.00 p.m.**