

# Global Consumer Culture

Fall 2006

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Anthropology E618

Fridays 12:20-2:50

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Class Website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/e618.htm>

**Is the whole world drinking Coke®?**

**And what makes Coke® different from other Colas?**

Is the world becoming one big McDonalds, dominated by global brands, multinationals, and Hollywood media? Or is there a resurgence of nationalism and fundamentalism that is creating new kinds of local cultures founded in existing traditions? And is consumerism going to eventually destroy the planet's ecology? This course looks at the phenomenon of consumer culture in general, and then asks how that consumer culture has spread around the world, and what effects it is having on all of us. This semester the special topical focus of the course will be the issue of *authenticity*, a concept which plays a crucial role in global consumer culture.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The world is in the grip of unprecedented social and cultural changes, as world trade in consumer goods begins a new phase of expansion. Global communications media and cheap air travel have reduced the costs of cross-cultural connections of all kinds, boosting television, tourism and emigration to new levels. At the same time, following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, capitalism has become more pervasive, less nationally-limited and more powerful all over the world. Global financial integration proceeds at a furious pace, while commodity flows increase, and countries become increasingly dependent on each other for food and basic commodities.

Something important is happening, and we are only beginning to understand what the effects will be on our lives and on the knots of shared identity and practice that anthropologists have always called "cultures." One important dimension of this global change is the dramatic increase in the consumption of goods manufactured, designed and/or marketed by firms based in Europe, North America and Japan. The dramatic global increase in the consumption of "northern" goods has been perceived, in many places, as the greatest threat to the continued existence of local traditions, local cultures and local economic autonomy. At the same time, however, China, India, Brazil and other populous countries are going through their own consumer revolutions – will they follow the same path as the west? Is this ecologically and physically possible?

This course will take a critical look at global consumerism as a practice and at the discourse (both popular and academic) about consumerism. We will also read some current theory from transnational studies, anthropology, sociology, history, and cultural studies that can provide tools for evaluating and understanding consumerism. After we have read about globalization and consumer culture, we will focus for the second half of the semester on the cultural currency of the global marketplace – the quality of goods which gives them cultural meaning grounded in a particular time and place. What is fake and what

is authentic? What kinds of expertise and special knowledge establish authenticity, and what kinds of practices undermine it? We will take a field trip to Nashville, Indiana in order to see different kinds of authenticity at work, and each student will undertake original research on a particular site or mode of authentication.

This is new intellectual territory. There are at present very few good books which focus on authenticity in a sophisticated way. A publisher has asked me to edit a book of essays on the topic, and I am hoping that each of you will write one of the chapters. This means that I expect a very high standard of research and writing for this course.

## Course Structure

This is a graduate reading and discussion seminar. I will often summarize topics at the beginning of the class, and then ask you to take the initiative in discussing the readings for the second half. We will read a selected list of books and articles, and discuss them each week. You are responsible for keeping up with the reading and coming to class meetings where you will participate in the discussions. We will be keeping up a fast pace, so don't fall behind.

Each of you will produce an abstract for your book chapter by the middle of the semester. This will be peer-reviewed, as will be the draft you turn in two weeks before the end of class.

## Grading and Course Requirements

*One quarter* of your grade in the course will be based on my assessment of your class participation, based on how well you keep up with the reading and contribute to class discussion based upon it. I will from time to time ask each of you to take the lead in class discussion, and I will grade you on your performance.

*The other three quarters* of your grade will be based on your book project, your abstract, and on the quality of the peer reviews you provide when you read other students' papers.

**Required Texts:** (Available in IU bookstores and TIS.)

Course articles on electronic reserve in the Geography Library at  
<http://ereserves.indiana.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=instr>

Slater, D. 1997 **Consumer Culture and Modernity**. Polity. 0745603041

Beynon, John and David Dunkerley 2000 **Globalization: The Reader**. Routledge. 0415929229

Schrift, Melissa 2001 **Biography of a Chairman Mao Badge**. Rutgers. 0813529739

Wilk, Richard 2006 **Home Cooking in the Global Village**. Berg. 1845203607

Princen, Tom 2002 **Confronting Consumption**. MIT. 0262661284

Baudrillard, Jean 1994 **Simulacra and Simulation**. Michigan. 0472065211

Phillips, Ruth and Christopher Steiner 1999 **Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds**. California. 0520207971

Bigenho, Michelle 2002 **Sounding Indigenous: Authenticity in Bolivian Music Performance**. Palgrave. 0312240155

Salamandra, Christa 2004 **A New Old Damascus: Authenticity and Distinction In Urban Syria**.

Indiana. 0253217229

Spencer, Ronald 2004 **The Expert versus the Object : Judging Fakes and False Attribution**. Oxford. 0195147359

MacGillivray, Alex 2006 **A brief History of Globalization**. Carroll & Graff. 0786717106

Fjellman, Stephen 1992 **Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America**. Westview. 081331472

In past years I have used different books in this class – I like to keep up with the latest work, but this does not mean that older books are not important and useful. You are not required to read these books, but you will find them all rewarding.

Burke, T. 1997 **Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women**. Duke. 0822317621

Miller, D. 1998 **A Theory of Shopping**. Polity. 0745619460

Horowitz, D. 1992 **The Morality of Spending**. Elephant. 0929587774

Durning, A. 1992 **How Much Is Enough?** Norton. 039330891

Dominguez, J. V. Robin, J. Dominguez 1999. **Your Money or Your Life**. Penguin 0140286780

Ryan, J., A. Durning. 1997 **Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things**.

Northwest Environment Watch. 1886093040

Tobin, J. (ed.) 1992 **Re-Made in Japan**. Yale.

Featherstone, M. (ed.) 1990 **Global Culture**. Sage.

Walvin, J. 1997 **Fruits of Empire**. NYU.

Miller, D. 1995 (ed.) **Acknowledging Consumption**. Routledge.

Miller, D. 1997 **Capitalism: An Ethnographic Approach**. Oxford.

Miller, D. 1994 **Modernity: An Ethnographic Approach**. Berg.

Taussig, M. **The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America**. North Carolina.

Basch, L. et al. 1993 **Nations Unbound**. Harwood.

Fiske, J. 1989 **Understanding Popular Culture**. Routledge.

McCracken, G. 1988 **Culture and Consumption**. Indiana.

O'Barr, W. 1994 **Culture and the Ad**. Westview.

Andrae, G & B. Beckman 1985 **The Wheat Trap**. Zed.

Korten, D. 1995 **When Corporations Rule the World**. Kumarian. 1887208011

Chin, E. 2001 **Purchasing Power**. Minnesota. 0816635110

Schor, J. and D. Holt 2001 **The Consumer Society Reader**. New Press. 1565845986

Waters, M. 1995 **Globalization**. Routledge. 0415105765

Hansen, K. 2000 **Salaula**. Chicago. 0226315819

Miller, D. 2001 **Car Cultures**. Berg. 185973412X

Klein, N. 1999 **No Logo**. Picador. 0312271921

### **Disclaimers, stylistic guidelines, legal advisories, etc:**

You are responsible for keeping up with the readings and for attending class regularly. Late assignments will be accepted, but grades will be reduced. Incompletes are only given with good reason, and if I am notified two weeks before the final exam date. You are not allowed to copyright any of my class handouts or other materials, nor can you publish them or use them in public presentations without my permission.

You are encouraged to discuss with classmates and colleagues, and to collaborate in studying, reading, digesting, and synthesizing class materials. I encourage you to form **study groups** and/or **reading discussion circles**. **BUT**, all written work you turn in must be your own individual work, unless you make arrangements with me in advance for a co-authorship. Co-authored work gets one grade which is shared by all authors.

Plagiarism is a serious breach of academic ethics. Use full footnotes and references for all quoted or attributed materials. Since we will be publishing class work on the web, we need to pay careful attention to copyright restrictions on fair use. We also need to use a uniform style for text and references:

- American Anthropologist reference and bibliography style is required for all class materials. This means in-line citations. Check out a recent issue.
- All materials should be in Times New Roman font, 12 point type with 1-inch margins all around.
- Any files submitted must be in either Microsoft Word or WordPerfect Windows or DOS formats, or in HTML. Turn off all hyphenation. Try to use as little italic and bold or underline style as possible, and avoid table formats unless required. Spell check and virus check everything.

I am always available for consultation and discussion in my office. **Please** don't wait until the last minute to discuss problems, readings, or issues with me! I am always very busy, but I will always make time to talk about something.

Email is often the best way to ask me brief questions, to check on assignments, or make short comments. If you miss class, contact me by email to find out if you have been assigned some discussion for the next week. Most assignments and communications will be sent to the class through Oncourse – so please set your oncourse mail so it will automatically forward to your regular mailbox. You are responsible for checking oncourse every week, and keeping up with your oncourse mail.

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