

Sociology 393H1S
New Topics in Sociology: Consumer Society
Fridays 10-12 am, Winter 2021

Course Syllabus

SCOPE AND AIMS

What makes people buy things? And what are the social effects of their buying patterns? Sociologists have been studying consumer behaviour for over a century, as social critics and as applied (marketing) researchers. In this course, we will examine both bodies of sociological research, pure and applied. We will consider what sociologists have found out about consumer motivation – what we might call the demographics and social psychology of buying behaviour. We will also review what sociologists have written about consumerism (or materialism) as a way of life, a tradition that goes back to Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen.

PREREQUISITE

1.0 SOC at the 200 or higher level. Students without this requirement will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor Lorne Tepperman teaches this course. Office hours are by appointment (see information below). Feel free to contact me at any time; my e-mail address is lorne.tepperman@utoronto.ca

READINGS

The assigned journal articles are available on the course website and in the University of Toronto library system.

EVALUATION

Test 1	30 percent
Test 2	30 percent
Term Paper.....	30 percent
Participation Grade.....	10 percent

Term Tests will be held during class time.

METHOD OF DELIVERY

This course is delivered entirely online. Lectures are **asynchronous** and you may view them any time after they are posted, though you are advised to watch them before our weekly online meeting. Other elements of this course – class discussions, tests, and office hours are **synchronous**. They are held at specific times indicated below. For weekly discussions during class time, and for office hours, we will use **Zoom**.

TECHNICAL AND SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

To see if your remote setup meets requirements, visit <https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/Links> to an external site. If your remote setup does not meet requirements, solutions are offered on the web page just cited.

You will need to access PowerPoint (.ppt), Word (.doc, .docx), and Acrobat (.pdf) files for this course. If you do not have apps that can access these types of files, here are some free options:

For .docx files, try Google Docs (Links to an external site.) or Apple Pages (Links to an external site.). Various documents will be available on the course's Quercus website in .docx format.

For .ppt files, try PowerPoint Viewer (Links to an external site.). During lectures, slides will be displayed. They will summarize major points, present data in graphs and tables, and show video clips. Slides will be available for download in .ppt format. On the course's Quercus website, slides will be stored in the Files-->slides folder.

For .pdf files, try Adobe Acrobat Reader (Links to an external site).

COURSE FORMAT

The course begins January 8 and ends April 2, 2021. Students will receive 60 percent of their course grade before the drop date of March 15.

Lectures. The course instructor will post a recorded lecture in PowerPoint format each week. Every Monday beginning January 4, 2021, click on **Announcements** in the left menu for the web link to the week's lecture. You can view lectures at any time. However, you are urged to view each lecture for the first time as soon as it is posted.

Required readings. You will be assigned a chapter and one or more articles to read every week and these assigned readings are compulsory. You are urged to read them for the first time in the week they are assigned, before the class meeting, and to take notes on them. They are all available in digital format as well as paper format.

Weekly Discussion Questions. Students will be required submit two discussion questions about the week's course readings to the course website by **noon on the Wednesday before that week's class**. I will base our weekly discussion on the best and/or most often asked questions. Late discussion questions will not be accepted for any reason – please make sure to submit the questions before noon on Wednesday.

We will use the assigned meeting time – 10 am-12 on Fridays – to discuss questions you have submitted about the material you have read, including the lectures, the book chapter, and the journal article. As well, all class meetings will feature an in-class participation exercise based on the questions submitted. Ideally, all students complete the exercise during class time (this is optimal for learning the material). To accommodate students in different time zones, however, all students will have up to **24 hours** after each meeting to

respond to the in-class exercise. **All students must respond to each week's in-class participation exercise before noon the next day to receive participation credit.** No later submissions will be accepted.

Your participation grade is based on your submission of weekly discussion questions and your participation in the in-class participation exercises. Each student can use one "free pass" for participation per semester: one opportunity to not submit discussion questions OR participate in the in-class exercise without penalty. In other words, even if you miss one participation opportunity, you can still achieve a perfect participation mark of 10 percent.

E-mail contact. Questions about the course should be sent via email to TA Andrew Cooper. In most cases you will receive a reply within 48 hours. If the TA is unable to answer your question, they will forward your email to Professor Tepperman, who will reply within 48 hours of receiving your query.

Office hours. My office hours are by appointment. This is to ensure students registered for this class get the opportunity for one-on-one consultations. I will hold office hours over Zoom. If you wish to schedule an appointment with me, **please use the appointment slots made available weekly on Quercus.** Click on the "Calendar" in the menu on the left-hand side, then go to "Find Appointments" on the right-hand side. If you find you need to cancel your appointment, please do so at least 24 hours in advance, to allow other students to take your slot. Please attend your scheduled appointment by clicking the Zoom meeting link posted to the course Quercus site. I will admit you to the meeting room when your scheduled appointment time starts. The TA Andrew Cooper will also have a meeting schedule on the Quercus Calendar should you wish to meet with him. His office hours will begin in the second week. He will also have office hours after students receive their marked Term Papers to discuss grades and feedback.

You may use office hours as an opportunity to explore ideas and experiences related to the course material, discuss plans for a career in Sociology, or discuss other course and career-related matters.

ASSESSMENTS

Tests 1 and 2. Two two-hour mid-term tests worth 30 percent of your final grade each are scheduled on class days. Find the mid-term tests by clicking **Quizzes** in the menu on the left of the course's Quercus site. You are free to write the Tests during any 2-hour block of time on the assigned day, between 8am and 8 pm.

Essay Assignment This assignment will be worth 30% of your grade and it is due on the day of the last scheduled class. You have the entire semester to work on this assignment. The instructions for preparing your term paper can be found below.

Instructions for Preparing the Essay Assignment

1. Select one consumer good or service and discuss who buys it and why.

2. The total length of your paper is to be roughly 3000 words (12 pages) plus references. Please correct for spelling and grammar errors before submitting.
3. Use and cite a minimum of 15 **peer-reviewed** journal articles in preparing your paper. Your paper should use ASA (American Sociological Association) referencing. Please see the document posted on Quercus for instructions on how to write a paper using ASA formatting (**ASA format citation guide.pdf**).
4. All references should be from the year 2011 or later; earlier references should be justified (e.g., as a “classic study”).
5. Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks and a specific reference cited. Paraphrases of published material do not require quotation marks but must indicate a reference source.
6. Assignment submitted through Quercus will be scanned by Turnitin. Assignments flagged for plagiarism through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0%) **unless a student instead provides, along with their paper**, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

Go to <http://www.turnitin.com> to submit your paper online. For access, enter the **class ID** and **enrolment password** (you will receive these before your paper is due). Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to *Turnitin.com* for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the *Turnitin.com* service are described on the *Turnitin.com* web site.

Students will have the option of submitting a **Project Proposal** midway through the semester. In this proposal, students can list 10-15 potential resources and write 1-2 paragraphs describing the project idea. This proposal will not be marked, but it will allow students an opportunity to receive feedback on their ideas before submitting the term paper. The Project Proposal is optional and is not required to complete the course.

This assignment is due at the beginning of our last scheduled class. There will be no extensions except for documented medical reasons. Penalties of **10% per day of lateness** will be applied for papers handed in after the deadline.

IF YOU MISS EITHER OF THE MIDTERMS

If you miss a mid-term test due to **illness, injury or technical issues**, you must immediately email Professor Tepperman **and** declare your absence on ACORN. If you miss a mid-term test due to **a family emergency or other personal reason**, you must immediately contact your College Registrar, who will inform Professor Tepperman.

Makeup tests will be held one week after the original test, at the same day of the week and time. If for any reason you miss a mid-term test and the makeup test, then its value will be added to the value of the final paper. The essay assignment, normally worth 30 percent of your final grade, will then be worth 60 percent. A second missed test will be counted as a zero.

DETERRING COLLABORATION ON ASSESSMENTS

The midterm tests will (1) be held only during designated time slots, (2) take place within strict time limits, (3) present questions to each student in random order (each student will see questions in a different order) and (4) not allow students to change their answers to questions. These procedures have been tested and shown to reduce opportunities for student collaboration.

PLAGIARISM

Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact the professor or TA’s. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from us, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please seek the advice of your college registrar.

Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to **Turnitin.com** for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the **Turnitin.com** reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the **Turnitin.com** service are described on the **Turnitin.com** web site.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

If you have accessibility concerns, please visit <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/Links> to an external site. as soon as possible. If you require accommodation for writing quizzes, the midterm test or the final examination you MUST register with Accommodated Testing Services as soon as possible at <https://www.ace.utoronto.ca/ats/Links>. Make sure to submit the required paperwork to Professor Tepperman BEFORE assignment due dates and test dates.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

Please contact TA Andrew Cooper if you have questions about your grade or any other aspect of the course. Expect a reply within 48 hours. If Mr. Cooper can't answer your question, he will forward it to Professor Tepperman, in which case you may have to wait as much as 48 hours for a reply. Various documents will be available on the course's Quercus website in .pdf format.

HELP FROM YOUR TEACHING ASSISTANT

Your TA will hold scheduled office hours and respond to your emails. Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are brief and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the course outline to see if an answer is already available. Emails should not be seen as an alternative to doing the reading or attending the lectures. Expect to receive a response from your T.A. within three working days. For more in-depth discussions of the lectures, readings, tests and position papers, please make use of your T.A.'s office hours.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments, by date

- Jan 15 introduction to consumer society cs 1
Lastovicka, J. L., & Sirianni, N. J. (2011). Truly, Madly, Deeply: Consumers in the Throes of Material Possession of Love. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38, pp. 323-342.
- 22 the culture of consumption cs 2, 3
Featherstone, M. (1987). Lifestyle and consumer culture. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 4(1), 55-70.
- 29 families and schools cs 4,5
Johnstone, M. L., & Todd, S. (2012). Servicescapes: The role that place plays in stay-at-home mothers' lives. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 11(6), 443-453.
- Feb 5 advertising and branding cs 6,7
Freeman, M. (2015). Branding consumerism: Cross-media characters and story-worlds at the turn of the 20th century. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(6), 629-644.
- Feb 12 rich and poor people cs 8,9
Chaplin, L. N., Hill, R. P., & John, D. R. (2014). Poverty and materialism: A look at impoverished versus affluent children. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 33(1), 78-

92.

19 **No class – reading week**

Schneider, H., Schoenenberg, I., & Ferie, F. (2013). The distribution of influence in purchase decisions by male homosexual couples. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12(5), 345-357.

Feb 26 Test #1 Any two-hour block between 8am and 8pm

Mar 5 **Optional Project Proposal Due** men and women cs 10, 11

Rozin, P., Hormes, J., Faith, M. & Wansink, B. (2012). Is Meat Male? A Quantitative Multimethod Framework to Establish Metaphoric Relationships. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39, pp. 629-643.

Mar 12 immigrants and foreign buyers cs 12,13

Sutton-Brady, C., Davis, T., & Jung, M. (2010). Perceived cultural spaces and cultural in-betweens: Consumption among Korean Australians. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 9(5), 349-363.

19 young people and old people cs 14,15

Roper, S., & La Niece, C. (2009). The importance of brands in the lunch-box choices of low-income British school children. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(2-3), 84-99.

March 26 Test #2 Any two-hour block between 8am and 8pm

Apr 2 bending and breaking rules cs 16, 17

Sandikci, Ö., & Ger, G. (2009). Veiling in style: How does a stigmatized practice become fashionable? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(1), 15-36.

Apr 9 **ESSAY DUE/** The future of consumer behaviour cs 18

Einwohner, R. L. (1999). Practices, opportunity, and protest effectiveness: Illustrations from four animal rights campaigns. *Social Problems*, 46(2), 169-186.

Assigned reading:

Lorne Tepperman and Nicole Meredith, THE CONSUMER SOCIETY (cs), Rocks Mills Press, 2020

+ assigned articles