Course overview and objectives

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is an interdisciplinary field that comprises macro, interpretive, and critical approaches to and perspectives of consumer behavior. Its approach refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationship between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings. CCT research is having a growing impact in top publication venues including the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Retailing*, and the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*. The number of social scientists outside of consumer research/marketing domain who conduct CCT research is also large and growing. These researchers publish books in their home disciplines and are starting to find room also in publications of cognate disciplines such the *Journal of Consumer Culture, Consumption, Markets and Culture*, and the *Journal of Material Culture*.

In this course students will familiarize with the most important topics within the field of CCT and will build a knowledge base of discursive streams of academic theories about consumers and consuming. They will learn about the historical evolution of the field, the different theoretical terrains and roots, the disciplines that have contributed to its creation (anthropology, sociology, semiotics, cultural and media studies, etc.). Students will be exposed in a critical way to different theories and methods in order to stimulate the development of skills and intellectual of capabilities necessary to pose proper research questions, and challenge existing theories. Moreover they will be asked to use CCT theoretics in order to generate insights for their own current and future research projects.

Preparation and in-class participation

The classes will be structured on discussing the assigned readings. Students must complete all of the assignments (required readings and articles to be presented) before
class. There is a lot to read, so I suggest them get a head start by reading at least some of the articles in advance.

Each week, each student will lead the discussion for one of the articles labeled “articles to be presented.” Before class, discussion leaders should prepare a document summarizing the article and send this summary to the instructor. At a minimum, the summary should include the following:

- key research questions addressed in the paper
- theoretical positioning
- primary theoretical concepts or frameworks being employed
- methodology
- main findings
- comments on alternative interpretations of the results
- possible extensions and strategies of enrichments of the research
- a potential connection with CB research
- potential links with current research projects (when possible)

In class, the discussion leaders should prepare questions, key ideas, and implications of the paper to discuss with the class. I encourage discussion leaders to create slides to help supplement the discussion, which should last 20 to 30 minutes.

I will assign the papers to be presented to the students before class begins. If there are any papers that you would like to present, send me your requests via email before each class; however, you will likely be the discussion leader for at least one or two papers that you did not request.

For each session I usually identify different kinds of materials:

- required readings: all students need to read them in order to approach the general topic of the session, its roots and main questions
- articles to presented: each student will have to present one of these articles
- related articles: this is a list of additional references on the same topic that students may find useful to to deepen their knowledge.

Note

The ways readings are organized in some cases is purely didactic. As students will understand during the course, several articles cover different topics and theoretical lens and they could be used in multiple sessions.

Evaluation
Class participation (discussion): 15%
Assignments (paper presentations and notes for the class): 35%
Final research paper: 50%

**Research paper**
Each student must write an individual research proposal formatted using the style guidelines from *the Journal of Consumer Research* ([http://ejcr.org/newstylesheet.pdf](http://ejcr.org/newstylesheet.pdf)). The paper should identify a research question within the broad domain of the CCT perspective. The research proposal should be structured like a typical academic article, including an introduction/positioning, literature review, and methodology. The paper will not require an empirical research, but will require a detailed research design. Additional information about the requirements will be provided at the beginning of the course. I will also give a list of exemplary articles that can inspire students on how to frame and structure CCT papers.

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**Pre-course readings: the origin grand tour**

This is a list of readings that are mandatory in order to approach the course and understand the origin of the field. These materials will not be discussed during the sessions but they are really useful as they provide a great review and a point of departure.


**Related readings**


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**Session 1: Consumption, meanings and consumer identity**

**Required readings**


**Articles to be presented**

Schau, Hope Jensen, Mary C. Gilly and Mary Wolfinbarger (2009), “ConsumerIdentity


Related readings


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**Session 2: Consumer practices and experiences**

**Required readings**


**Articles to be presented**


**Related readings**


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**Session 3: Consumers ideologies and negotiation of power relations**

**Required readings**


**Articles to be presented**

Luedicke, Marius, Craig Thompson, and Markus Giesler (2010), “Consumer Identity Work


**Related readings**


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Session 4: Subcultures and communities of consumption

Required readings


Articles to be presented


Related readings


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Session 5: Discourses on gender, class and lifestyle

Required readings

**Articles to be presented**


**Related readings**


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**Session 6: Emotions, embodied experiences**

**Required readings**


**Articles to be presented**


**Related readings**
