

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Course Profile

Course Number : HSS 332	Course Title : Anthropology of Consumption
Required / Elective : Elective	Pre / Co-requisites : -
Catalog Description: Introduction to the anthropology of consumption and the ethnographic study of objects. Material culture, gifts, value and exchange, consumption, commoditization, technology and design ethnography.	Textbook / Required Material :
Course Structure / Schedule : (3+0+0) 3 / 5 ECTS	
<p>Extended Description : In this course we will explore our relationships to things: the things we own, want to possess, want to buy or find objectionable. We will explore approaches in anthropology to material culture and consumption. We will look at the way in which things such as clothing, cell phones, souvenirs become meaningful through rituals, practices, and social relations. Our material possessions carry and communicate social meanings, and buying, giving or receiving objects or things take place through particular relationships. We will look at a selection of readings from the anthropology of consumption as well as literature in consumer behavior with an anthropological perspective. We will read from the classics of anthropology as well as look at ethnographies (cultural descriptions) of places like shopping malls and technological belongings like the home computer. Assignments will emphasize critical reading and analysis, and include out-of-class observation. Classes will consist of lectures and discussion.</p>	
Design content : none	Computer usage: No special usage required
<p><u>Course Outcomes:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarize the importance of central concepts in the anthropological study of consumption (8). 2. Explain how the anthropological approach to consumption is different from the approaches in other fields (8). 3. Summarize the historical stages in the emergence of consumer culture (6, 10). 4. Summarize an ethnographic case study of consumption (14). 5. Employ course concepts in a short ethnographic exercise on consumption and/or material culture (7, 12, 14). 6. Analyze how modes of thought are shaped by socio-cultural, historical, political, and economic variables. 7. Apply discipline-relevant methods to HSS research projects. 8. Summarize and assess current developments in subject areas. 10. Synthesize complex ideas in clear, concise ways. 12. Recognize relevance of coursework to personal experiences. 	

14. Demonstrate and ability to communicate effectively with written, oral, and visual means.

Recommended reading

James G. Carrier. 1996. Consumption. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, eds. *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. 128-129.

James G. Carrier. 1995. *Gifts and commodities : exchange and western capitalism since 1700*. London ; New York : Routledge.

Mauss, Marcel. 1967 [1927]. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by Ian Cunnison. Norton and Co.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1996[1922]. The principle of give and take. from *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*. Reprinted in Aafke E Komter. *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*.

Grant McCracken. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Indiana University Press.

Teaching methods

Lecture, discussion, movies

Assessment methods

Midterm

Final

Ethnographic Exercise

Student workload:

Preparatory reading	40 hrs
Lectures and discussion	45 hrs
Ethnographic observation	15 hrs
Paper	25 hrs
TOTAL	125 hrs

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