DHA 5123 – FALL 2009
LIVING IN A CONSUMER SOCIETY

Instructor: Hye-Young Kim, Ph.D.
Office: 368A McNeal Hall
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Course dates: September 8 – December 16, 2009
Course Time: Tuesday: 6:15 – 9:15 p.m.
Place: McNeal 395
Office hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Materialist consumerism has become one of the defining characteristics of American society. Consumption and the purchase of material possessions are central aspects of who we are, who we dream of being, how we interact with each other, and how we affect the larger environment. The purpose of this course is to provide exposure to a number of selected topics surrounding contemporary consumer society. Students will also have the opportunity to extend their thinking regarding shopping behavior to retail merchandising applications. A parallel objective interwoven throughout the course is that students will be provided with the chance to participate in a number of professional career activities including literature integration, scholarly dialogue, and seminar leadership.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To encourage the development of an integrated, structural perspective on consumer society
- To gain an appreciation for past and present contributions to theories of consumption and shopping behavior
- To hone critical thinking, reasoning, analytical reading, and writing skills
- To practice the analysis and interpretation of scholarly research

ORIENTATION AND ORGANIZATION

This course will employ various teaching strategies (i.e., lecture, videos, discussion, and student leadership). In addition, certain scholarly values will be expected. These include thorough and thoughtful reading of the assigned material, active contribution of ideas and insights, professional respect of others’ contributions, and a striving towards academic rigor in all course related activities.

COURSE WEBSITE

The course website will be located on WebVista. The easiest way to log in to the course site is to log into the myU portal (http://myU.umn.edu), and locate the link for DHA 5123. Through this
site, you will be able to access readings, online discussion forums, exams, your grades, and other useful information. Use your University of Minnesota Internet ID and password to log in. You are responsible for monitoring the course site frequently.

COURSE ACTIVITIES

Assigned Readings: Required readings will be provided a week prior to topic discussion.

Reading Reflections: Students will be asked periodically to provide a brief summary of the readings and their reaction.

Take-Home Exams: Students will take two take-home essay exams assessing understanding and application of material in the course.

Opportunities to Lead Class: Students will be divided into pairs. Each pair of students will work to prepare for and lead the seminar discussion once during the semester. A schedule will be drawn up at the beginning of the course.

GRADING

Grades will be based on a combination of active participation in class discussion (10%), course leadership (10%), reading reflections (10%), midterm (35%) and final (35%) take-home exams (approximate weightings).

Your grade is based on the following scale:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>90-92%</td>
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<td>87-89%</td>
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<td>83-86%</td>
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<td>80-82%</td>
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<td>73-76%</td>
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<td>less than 60%</td>
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ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct is defined as any act that violates the rights of another student with respect to academic work or involves misrepresentation of a student’s own work. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to: cheating on assignments or exams, checking answers from someone else’s work during an exam, plagiarizing pieces of work, depriving others of necessary coursework, and sabotaging another’s work. Discovery of academic misconduct is grounds for an “F” for the course and may be grounds for expulsion from the University.
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/8): Introduction to the Course

Week 2 (9/15): Introduction to Consumer Society: Materialism and Happiness (Part I)

Week 3 (9/22): Introduction to Consumer Society: Materialism and Happiness (Part II)

Week 4 (9/29): The Role of Advertising in Enhancing Consumer Society

Week 5 (10/6): The Persuasion Industry (Online Discussion)

Week 6 (10/13): Consumption and the Reproduction of Class Inequality

Week 7 (10/20): Conspicuous Consumption

Week 8 (10/27): Mid-Term Take-Home Exam

Week 9 (11/3): Luxury Consumption

Week 10 (11/10): Hedonic Consumption (Part I)

Week 11 (11/17): Hedonic Consumption (Part II)

Week 12 (11/24): The Dark Side of Consumer Behavior

Week 13 (12/1): Vulnerable Consumers & Consumer Protectionism (Online Discussion)

Week 14 (12/8): Corporate Social Responsibility & Green Marketing

Week 15 (12/15): Final Take-Home Exam