

Women's Studies 98T: Ethical Consumerism in the United States Critical Perspectives on Shopping Our Way to Better World

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Course Description:

What does it mean to buy something in hopes of doing social good? This class explores this phenomenon, known as ethical consumerism. Debates on ethical consumerism tend to be sharply divided between those who promote capitalist trade as the best means for creating social change and those who identify capitalist trade as harmful and the source of social and environmental problems. In this course, students are encouraged to think in-between the gaps of these polarized views to develop new theories about ethical consumerism. Given that American consumers are inundated with advertisements for products claiming to make the world a better place, what can we learn about ourselves through a critical analysis of these social marketing campaigns? Whether the item is a t-shirt to help African women and children affected by HIV-AIDS, or a cup of fair trade coffee to support indigenous Peruvian farmers, the consumers of these products are encouraged to think of themselves as more “ethical” than those who don’t buy these products. In this seminar, we will seek to untangle the roots of these debates by analyzing the history of advertising and marketing campaigns, from the first fair trade coffees sold in 1946 through large-scale contemporary projects like Product (Red)[™] and Diet Coke’s “Red Dress/The Heart Truth” campaign.

This class is interdisciplinary in nature—our discussions will include perspectives from the fields of critical development studies, economics, political ecology, geography and cultural studies. We will utilize the theoretical tools offered to us by feminist, indigenous, and critical race theorists. We will raise questions such as: In what ways are gender, race, sexuality and other categories of identity mobilized to sell ethical products? What makes a product “ethical”? How do advertisements present ethical consumerism as a moral and political act and what are the implications? We will also explore such topics as: ways ethical consumerism obscures other forms of social activism, and identify the visual artifacts, discursive tools and symbols utilized to mark ethical products as “better”. Finally, we will ask what this tells us about ourselves: what the marketing of ethical products tells us about the consumers, and what this additionally implies about the character of those who do not purchase ethical products.

Course Objectives

- Understand key theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of ethical consumerism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon.
- Utilize interdisciplinary modes of learning and research, particularly those from feminist, critical race, and queer theories and methodologies.

- Develop critical media literacy and the tools to become active consumers of advertising and popular media.
- Successfully navigate the scholarly research process (defining a problem, writing a literature review, finding scholarly sources, etc)
- Identify and practice elements of critical scholarly engagement, including the process of peer review and revision of one's own writing.

Course Requirements:

- Scholarly Engagement with Peers and Instructor: 40%
- Class Participation and Weekly Preparedness: 15%
- Critical Analyses: 10%
- Peer Review Activities: 15%

Final Research Paper: 60% (Total)

- Research Proposal: 5%
- Annotated Bibliography: 15%
- First Draft: 10%
- Final Paper: 30%

Weekly Preparedness Assessment

Each student is expected to come to class with the assigned readings for that day read and considered carefully. Bring the reading assignments with you to every class along with your notes. I encourage you to annotate the texts as you read, to underline or star important passages, and to mark passages that stump you with question marks in the margins. Be prepared to discuss the author's argument, main points, evidence, terminology, and any questions you may have.

Participation Assessment

Your thoughtful engagement in class discussions is key to achieving high performance. In order to earn full participation credit for each week, you must come prepared to class each week with your readings, notes, and questions, and actively participate in discussion. If you are shy or have language or other barriers, please let me know and we will make arrangements for you to demonstrate participation in other ways. Merely talking in class does not constitute active participation: I am expecting you to attempt to make connections between the readings, my lectures and your peers' in-class and discussion board comments, as well as to media and advertising you see outside of class. This is a learned skill that requires practice, and you are not expected to do this perfectly from the beginning, but rather to do your best to improve over the course of ten weeks.

A Note on Attendance

In order for you to fully participate in class activities it is essential that you arrive to class on time and stay for the entirety of the class. If you are late for class or leave early for any reason, it is your responsibility to make sure I have not recorded you as absent. Please note that while attendance is not a formal component of your final grade, you are expected to attend every session and to participate actively in seminar discussion. We

will meet once per week for three hours. Your thoughtful engagement in class discussions is key to achieving high performance. Absences will only be excused in extreme cases. If you miss more than two seminars, you will automatically fail the course.

Practice Techno-Mindfulness

Consider this class a temporary break in your day from email, Skype, IM, chat, Facebook, Twitter, texting, gaming, surfing the internet, talking on the phone, or any other form of electronic entertainment or communication that is not expressly provided or permitted by your instructor. Should you find yourself unable to ignore your email/cell phone/social media sites during our class sessions, you will be marked as “absent” for that day’s class, and you will not receive participation points for the day.

Critical Analyses/Discussion Board Postings

Each student will post a critical analysis of approximately 1 typed, double-spaced page on the class discussion board each week. Critical analyses will respond to a specific prompt, and should actively engage the week’s readings and media, posing questions to the rest of the class and drawing connections across the course materials. Hopefully, these postings will serve as a warm up for classroom discussion and help generate lively debate. I recommend that you keep a notebook tracking the points you find most compelling, important, or questionable from the assigned readings. Please provide your own thoughts on the issues discussed. This is also a space where you are welcome to note your insights on current events that are related to ethical consumerism. Expect to write a minimum of two hand-written pages, or one typed, double-spaced page each week that clearly correspond to the material covered in our sessions. Please date your entries. You will use your notes when writing your critical analyses. Critical Analyses are due by 4 p.m. the day before our seminar meeting.

Peer Review

You will have the opportunity to develop your reading and writing skills through in-class and online peer review. Early in the quarter, you will be assigned a peer buddy where you will become familiar with one another’s research ideas and writing styles. You will regularly read one another’s writing in class and online, and will give written and oral feedback on one another’s writing and scholarly ideas. Students will also be encouraged to read and critique the work of students who are not assigned peer buddies. The purpose of this is to help generate ideas for your final papers, to learn how to become better writers and thinkers, to gain confidence in giving positive critical feedback and to become comfortable with the process of review and revision.

Final Paper

Lastly, each student will produce a 15-20 page research paper on a topic related to the course. A research proposal will be required Week Three, an annotated bibliography is due Week Six, the first paper draft is due Week Eight and the final paper is due Finals Week, date TBA. You will have the opportunity for written and oral feedback on all aspects of your research paper from both the instructor and your peers. Further instructions on each component will be given as the quarter progresses.

Course Materials:

Required texts for this class are available at the Campus Bookstore. They can also be easily acquired from online retailers. All articles are available as downloadable files on the course website. I will also make available one copy of all required texts and online articles, accessible in the Main Office of the Women's Studies Department during their open hours only.

Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development : The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. (ED)

Littler, Jo. *Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture*. New York: Open University Press, 2009. (RadCon)
Online Reader, (OR)

Course Media:

Films will be available on the course website if you are expected to watch them outside of class—you will need to be connected to the UCLA network and logged on to the course website in order to view them. They are also available for viewing at the Media Lab in Powell Library. Please come see me if you have any questions about how to access the media for this class.

Useful Websites:

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

Academic integrity policy: The UCLA Student Conduct Code, and Student Guide to Academic Integrity, and other documented policies of the department, college, and university related to academic integrity will be enforced. For more details on UCLA policies, please refer to The Office of the Dean of Students and the handout on Academic Integrity posted on the course website.

Copyright Notice: All lectures and lecture materials are the intellectual property of the instructor. No recording or distribution of these materials may be done without the expressed consent of the instructor.

Changes to Syllabus: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus

Weekly Schedule

***Readings must be completed before class the week they are listed ***

Week 1: Shopping Our Way to a Better World? Introduction to Ethical Consumerism

Introductions and Course Overview

Presentation by the instructor: “Shopping Our Way to a Better World” (45 minute interactive lecture with powerpoint slides, key terms, 3 short media clips, discussion, q & a), as well as discussion and analysis of Product (Red)TM and Café Femenino advertisements

~Assignment #1: write a 3-5 page (typed, double-spaced) narrative essay about an experience you have had with ethical consumerism. Post essay on appropriate discussion board and bring one copy to class for Week Two.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis—see discussion board for topics

Week 2: Who are the Needy Ones? Un-packing Third World Development

Escobar, Arturo. Chapters 1 and 2. (ED)

Gaard, Greta. “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” (OR)

Enloe, Cynthia. “The Globe Trotting Sneaker” (OR)

Sen, Amartya. Chapter 4 of Development as Freedom (OR)

Media: Garbage Dreams (documentary)

Discussion of this week’s readings, and analysis of portions of the documentary “Garbage Dreams.” One class hour devoted to peer writing group (read and respond to narrative essays.)

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

~Assignment #2: Research topic. Describe a research problem and how you will answer it. One page, double spaced. Post to appropriate discussion board for peer review.

Week 3: Creating the Deserving Ones: Analyzing Advertising & News Media

Escobar, Arturo. Chapter 5 “Power & Visibility: Tales of Women, Peasants and the Environment” (ED)

Durham & Kellner. “Introduction” to Gender, Race, Class in Media (OR)

LaDuke, Winona. Selections from All Our Relations. (OR)

Melamed, Jodi. “The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism” (OR)

Media: Clips from The Colbert Report, The Heart Truth, CNN, Café Femenino

30 minute lecture with handouts on critical media literacy. 45 minutes devoted to discussion of this week’s topic and media analysis. 45 minutes introduction to research methods with Diana (Women’s Studies librarian), 45 minutes devoted to peer review of research topics, with 15 minutes of instruction on how to do effective peer reviews.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 4: Caffeinated Charity: Coffee and the Birth of Fair Trade

Goodman, Michael K. "Reading Fair Trade: Political Ecological Imaginary and the Moral Economy of Fair Trade Foods." *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 891-915.

Jaffee, Daniel. Introduction to *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability and Survival*. (OR)

Littler, Jo. Ch 2 "Cosmopolitan Caring: globalization, charity and the activist-consumer" (RadCon)

Parrish, Bradley D., Luzadis, Valerie A., Bentley, William R. "What Tanzania's Coffee Farmers Can Teach the World: A Performance-Based Look at the Fair Trade-Free Trade Debate." (OR)

Media: Coffee Kids print advertisements, Religious pamphlets promoting fair trade coffee, clips from *Black Gold* (documentary)

Research topics returned to students with instructor comments. 45 minute lecture on the history of fair trade, including those elements not evident in the readings: religious affiliations, differences in FT in Africa, Latin America and Asia, why coffee was the first fairly traded product. Remaining hours devoted to discussion of readings and media
~Assignment (ongoing): Begin researching/collecting articles for annotated bibliography.

~Assignment (ongoing): Post weekly response to class discussion board.

Week 5: Backlash Against Big Business and the Bottom Line—Critiques of Neoliberalism & Globalization

Klein, Naomi. Selections from: *No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, No Logo*. (OR)

Gore, Charles. "The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries". (OR)

Chang, Grace. "From the Third World to the 'Third World Within': Asian Women Fighting Globalization" (OR)

Littler, Jo. Ch 4 "Interior Economies: anti-consumer activism and the limits of reflexivity" (RadCon)

Media: Clips from *WTO Seattle Protests 1999*, *High Cost of Low Price* (documentary)

Three hours devoted to discussion of readings and media. Hours divided into 1 hour of discussion of readings, 1 hour of viewing documentary, 30 mins of small group analysis of media (with guided handouts) and 30 mins of whole-class analysis of media.

~Assignment #3: Annotated Bibliography. Handout and instructions distributed in-class. Type and bring three copies to class during Week Six.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 6: Regulating Ethics, Certifying Saintliness: Power Regimes in Ethical Consumerism.

Low, William, Davenport, Eileen. "Postcards from the Edge: Maintaining the 'Alternative' Character of Fair Trade." (OR)

Smith, Sally, and Barrientos, Stephanie. "Fair Trade and Ethical Trade: Are There Moves Towards Convergence?" (OR)

Renard, Marie-Christine. "Quality Certification, Regulation and Power in Fair Trade." (OR)

Taylor, Peter Leigh, Murray, Douglas L., and Reynolds, Laura T. "Keeping Fair Trade Fair: Governance Challenges in the Fair Trade Coffee Initiative." (OR)

Giovannucci, Daniele, Stefano Ponte. "Standards as a New Form of Social Contract? Sustainability Initiatives in the Coffee Industry." (OR)

Media: Gleaners & I (documentary)

30 minute lecture on certification regimes. 1.5 hours devoted to discussion of readings and media clips. One hour devoted to peer review of annotated bibliographies.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 7: A New Twist on Ethical Products: Marketing The Fresh Face of Fair Trade

Golding, Kristy, Peattie, Ken. "In Search of Golden Blend: Perspectives on the Marketing of Fair Trade Coffee." (OR)

Frank, Thomas. Introduction to The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism. (OR)

Doherty, Bob, Tranchell, Sophi. "New Thinking in International Trade? A Case Study of the Day Chocolate Company." (OR)

Hughes, Alex. "Geographies of Exchange and Circulation: Alternative Trading Spaces." (OR)

Media: The Story of Stuff (website), clips from Project Runway, American Idol Charity Episode

Annotated bibliographies returned to students with instructor comments. 30 minute lecture on marketing. 1.5 hours of discussion of readings, 20 minutes to view media, 40 minutes for discussion of media in relation to the readings and over-arching course themes.

~Assignment #4 First paper draft. Students should prepare a typed 7-10 page draft of their research and post to appropriate discussion board during Week Eight.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 8: Who's Buying It? Ethical Consumers & Shopping Cart Activism

Barnett, Clive, and Paul Cloke, Nick Clarke, and Alice Malpass. "Consuming Ethics: Articulating Spaces of Ethical Consumption." (OR)

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte. 2008. "Better (Red)TM than Dead? Celebrities, consumption and international aid." Third World Quarterly, 29.4.(OR)

Chow, Rey. Introduction to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. (CR)
Canclini, Néstor García. Ch 2 of Consumers and Citizens : Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts, Cultural Studies of the Americas. (CR)
Media: Clips from The Goode Family, Whole Planet product advertisements, Good Deed Foundation Website

1.5 hours devoted to discussion of readings and media. 1.5 hours devoted to reading, discussing and giving critical feedback on paper drafts in peer review groups.

~Assignment (one-time): Bring a print ad, printed-out web ad, website (pick 1 or two pages only) or commercial (please have digital copy or bookmark website for viewing) for an ethical product, with intention of presenting to the class for analysis. Prepare questions and reasons why you found this advertisement/website/commercial interesting.

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 9: Making Us Want It: Erotics, Semiotics and the Rise of Ethical Consumerism

Harrison, Rob. Selections from The Ethical Consumer. (OR)
News Clippings about celebrity involvement with Product (Red)TM, The Heart Truth TM other ethical consumerism campaigns (OR)
Derrida, Jacques. Chapter 4 from Specters of Marx : The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International. (OR)
hooks, bell. Chapter 2: Where We Stand : Class Matters. (OR)
Fromartz, Samuel. Introduction to Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew (OR)
Media: Opening Scene from The Devil Wears Prada, Students' Choice

Paper drafts returned to students with comments by instructor. 30 minute lecture to clarify Derrida, erotics and semiotics. 1 hour devoted to discussion of readings. 1.5 hours to view student's chosen media (advertisements, websites, commercials) and analyze/discuss in relation to overarching course themes.

~Assignment (ongoing): Continue working on paper drafts. Prepare for final class meeting: How would you define ethical consumption? What topics or themes could we have addressed that we neglected?

~Assignment (ongoing): Critical Analysis.

Week 10: Ethical Consumption versus Consuming Ethically: Can We Shop Our Way to a Better World?

Gibson-Graham, J.K. Selections from A Post-Capitalist Politics. (OR)
Shiva, Vandana. Selections from Earth Democracy (OR)
Littler, Jo. Selections from Radical Consumption (RadCon)
Media: Wall*E

Final class meeting devoted to discussion of readings, linking together overarching course themes, discussion of students definitions of ethical consumption, new directions, and viewing/discussion media.

~Assignment #5 FINAL PAPER: Due one week after last class.

Proposed Reading List for Ethical Consumerism in the US

Barnett, Clive, and Paul Cloke, Nick Clarke, and Alice Malpass. "Consuming Ethics: Articulating Spaces of Ethical Consumption." *Antipode*. 37.1 (2005): 23-45

Beneria, Lourdes. *Gender, Development & Globalization: Economics as If All People Mattered*. New York & London: Routledge, 2003. (recommended)

Canclini, Néstor García. *Consumers and Citizens : Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts, Cultural Studies of the Americas ;*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Chang, Grace. "From the Third World to the 'Third World Within': Asian Women Fighting Globalization." 462-473.

Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx : The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Doherty, Bob, Sophi Tranchell. "New Thinking in International Trade? A Case Study of the Day Chocolate Company." *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 166-76.

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi, and Douglas Kellner. *Media and Cultural Studies : Keywords*. Rev. ed, *Keywords in Cultural Studies ;*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Enloe, Cynthia. "The Globe Trotting Sneaker." 458-461

Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development : The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Frank, Thomas. *The Conquest of Cool : Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Fromartz, Samuel. *Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew*. 1st ed. Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

- Giovannucci, Daniele, Stefano Ponte. "Standards as a New Form of Social Contract? Sustainability Initiatives in the Coffee Industry." *Food Policy* 30 (2005): 284-301.
- Golding, Kristy, Peattie, Ken. "In Search of Golden Blend: Perspectives on the Marketing of Fair Trade Coffee." *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 154-65.
- Goodman, Michael K. "Reading Fair Trade: Political Ecological Imaginary and the Moral Economy of Fair Trade Foods." *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 891-915.
- Gore, Charles. "The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries." *World Development* 28, no. 5 (2000): 789-804.
- Hooks, Bell. *Where We Stand : Class Matters*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Hughes, Alex. "Geographies of Exchange and Circulation: Alternative Trading Spaces." *Progress in Human Geography* 29, no. 4 (2005): 496-504.
- Jaffee, Daniel. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability and Survival*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Klein, Naomi. *No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, No Logo*. New York: Picador : Distributed by Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2002.
- LaDuke, Winona. *All Our Relations : Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge, MA, Minneapolis, MN: South End Press ; Honor the Earth, 1999.
- Low, William, Davenport, Eileen. "Postcards from the Edge: Maintaining the 'Alternative' Character of Fair Trade." *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 143-53.
- Martinez-Torres, Maria Elena. *Organic Coffee: Sustainable Development by Mayan Farmers*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006. (recommended)
- Melamed, Jodi. "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: FROM RACIAL LIBERALISM TO NEOLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM." *Social Text*. 24.4 (2006): 1.
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. "Once More, With Feeling: Reflections on Racial Formation." *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. 123.5 (2008): 1565.
- Parrish, Bradley D., Luzadis, Valerie A., Bentley, William R. "What Tanzania's Coffee Farmers Can Teach the World: A Performance-Based Look at the Fair Trade-Free Trade Debate." *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 177-89.
- Renard, Marie-Christine. "Quality Certification, Regulation and Power in Fair Trade." *Journal of Rural Studies* 21 (2005): 419-31.

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte. 2008. "Better (Red)TM than Dead? Celebrities, consumption and international aid." *Third World Quarterly*, 29.4.

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books, 1999.

Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy : Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005.

Smith, Sally, and Barrientos, Stephanie. "Fair Trade and Ethical Trade: Are There Moves Towards Convergence?" *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 190-98.

Taylor, Peter Leigh, Murray, Douglas L., and Reynolds, Laura T. "Keeping Fair Trade Fair: Governance Challenges in the Fair Trade Coffee Initiative." (2005).

Films & Media Clips:

American Idol (Charity Episodes)

Black Gold

Colbert Report

Garbage Dreams

High Cost of Low Price

Product (Red)TM web and television commercials

Project Runway (Trash Episodes)

The Devil Wears Prada

The Gleaners & I

The Goode Family

The Story of Stuff (webisode)

Wall*E