

## Syllabus

### History 3364 History of Consumer Culture in the United States

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**Course Description** Beginning with the industrious and industrial revolutions, which introduced abundance to a world previously characterized by economic scarcity, this course explores the history of consumer culture in the United States. It focuses in particular on “institutions of abundance”—department stores, mail-order catalogue, and advertising agencies—that taught Americans that they were a people of plenty.

**Course Objectives** 1) To detail the historical origins of consumer culture in the U.S.; 2) To improve writing skills and historical thinking; 3) To foster analytical skills

**Assigned Reading** The following books are available for purchase from the SMU bookstore & from on-line booksellers.

- Susan Strasser Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market
- John Kasson Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century

**Evaluation** Final grades will be based upon student performance in class discussion, on several in-class assignments, and on a final exam (which students can take in class, take home, or take as an oral exam). Students are expected to come to class prepared. The class schedule on the syllabus indicates what students are expected to study for each class under the heading “prep.” The use of electronic devices is prohibited during class meetings. This ban includes all types of cell phones, readers, MP3 players, and computers.

**Attendance** is required – each missed session will result in the docking of the final grade. So, if a student earned a B- in the course but missed one session, her grade would be docked to a C+. If she missed two sessions, her grade would be docked to a C; if she missed three sessions, her grade would be docked to a C-. There are no provisions for making up for absences. Please note that the University’s policies do not excuse absences due to illness, travel, family or other personal reasons. **Please do not come to class late.**

**Disability Accommodations** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability should contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (8-4557) to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then email the instructor to make appropriate arrangements. (University Policy No. 2.4.)

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\* **Excused Absences due to Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.) **Excused Absences for University**

**Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

## Course Schedule

### **M 1/7 Abundance Rising**

Prep: Hume “Of Commerce”  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch4s3.html> [please read before the first day of class]  
Morning: Trade, the Industrious Revolution and Industrial Revolutions  
Afternoon: The American Revolution

### **T 1/8 The United States becomes a Land of Plenty**

Prep: Strasser, Satisfaction Guaranteed chapters 1-2  
Morning: The Industrialization of the U.S.  
Afternoon: Henry Ford and the Moving Assembly Line

### **W 1/9 Facing the Problem of Distribution**

Prep: Strasser, Satisfaction Guaranteed, chapter 3-4  
Morning: Fragmented Chains of Distribution  
Afternoon: From Customers to Consumers

### **Th 1/10 Institutions of Abundance: Advertising Agencies and Department Stores**

Prep: Strasser, Satisfaction Guaranteed, chapters 5-6  
Morning: Branding Strategies  
Afternoon: The Department Store

### **F 1/11 Institutions of Abundance: Mail-Order Catalogues and Chain Stores**

Prep: Strasser, Satisfaction Guaranteed, chapters 7-8  
Morning: The Mail-Order Catalogue: Wards and Sears  
Afternoon: Chain Stores: Woolworth’s, the A & P, & Wal-Mart

### **M 1/14 Mass Culture, Leisure and Tourism**

Prep: Kasson Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century  
Morning: Mass Culture: Baseball, Amusements Parks and the Movies  
Afternoon: Tourism: From Travelers to Tourists

### **T 1/15 Iconic American Advertisements**

Prep: Duke University Library’s Advertising History Collections  
<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/hartman/>  
Morning: Patent Medicine Advertising in the Nineteenth-Century  
Afternoon: Radio and Television Advertising

### **W 1/16 Consumer Culture Today**

Morning: The High Cost of Low Prices: Wal-Mart, Society and the Environment  
Afternoon: Examination (written or oral). Students have option to do a take-home examination, which will be due Friday 1/18. The prompt will be given on the last day of class.