

# IP205-30 Consuming cultures

**24/25**

**Department**

Liberal Arts

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Kirsten Harris

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

22 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

This is the core module in the second year of the the BA in Liberal Arts degree.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

This module critically examines the role that consumption plays in contemporary society, analysing different theorisations of processes of consumption and cultural works which engage with issues of consumption. Using an interdisciplinary Problem-Based learning approach, this module will encourage students to interrogate problems at the intersection of the arts, humanities and social sciences.

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

#### Term 1

1. Introduction to consumption

2. Commodification and value
3. Conspicuous consumption: status and distinction
4. The C19 consumer society: The House of Mirth
5. Branding and advertising
6. Academic skills for honours-level assessment
7. Global consumer cultures
8. The culture industry (I): Perspectives from the left
9. The good life? Perspectives from the right
10. Consumer culture and the media
  - Term 2
11. "I buy, therefore I am"
12. Inconspicuous consumption: Eating, drinking and everyday practices
13. Altered states: Intoxication
14. The C20 consumer society: American Psycho
15. "Eating the Other": Consuming cultures
16. The culture industry (II): Collection and curation
17. Landscapes of consumption
18. The C21 consumer society: UK grime
19. Review: Consumptive futures?
20. Presentations
  - Term 3
21. Research project guidance and peer review
22. Research project guidance

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of historical, sociological and cultural theorisations of consumption, and critically assess a range of frameworks and methodologies.
- Analyse the language of consumption, and representations and interventions in literature, visual culture and music.
- Critically consider notions of use, value, waste and decay in relation to consumption.
- Explore problems and generate well-informed responses to a wide range of issues relating to consumption.
- Demonstrate advanced cognitive skills such as critical analysis, source-text analysis, a range of research methods, and oral and written communication skills.
- Demonstrate meta-cognitive skills such as: planning how to approach a learning task and identifying the appropriate strategies to solve a problem.
- Demonstrate the ability to use methodologies and perspectives from a range of disciplines, such as sociology, visual cultures, history, English studies, space studies, celebrity studies and cultural studies to analyse a range of sources in cultural and historical perspective.

## Research element

Seminar preparation includes guided independent research.  
All assessments are research-focused.

The final assessment (research project) asks students to think holistically about the research process and make decisions about content, methodology and output; this acts as "light-touch" preparation for the final-year dissertation.

Support for the final assessment (research project) includes a guided peer review session, in which students present their work-in-progress to the group and offer/receive constructive feedback.

## **Interdisciplinary**

This is a core module on the BA in Liberal Arts degree programme, which offers a unique trans- and interdisciplinary learning experience for breadth and depth of knowledge.

This module is not subject-specific. Instead, it is issue-focused and draws from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including (but not limited to): space studies, cultural geography, sociology, politics, psychology, marketing, literary studies, cultural studies and history.

## **International**

The module includes one week that focuses specifically on global consumer cultures.

Other weeks include examples and case studies from different global regions.

Assessment 1 (text-response paper) includes source options from different global regions.

As students are co-producers of knowledge (i.e. some seminar preparation time is dedicated to mandatory independent research), they may choose to explore scholarship, ideas and examples from different global regions.

## **Subject specific skills**

Primary source analysis: e.g. through the analysis of literary texts, film, music, statistics, advertisements connected to the theme of consumption

Secondary source analysis: e.g. through criticism, scholarship and theoretical frameworks for consumption studies

Understanding of evolving field of interdisciplinary consumption studies

Range of qualitative research methods, potentially including (but not limited to) archival methodologies, interview methodologies, surveys, and text responses

## **Transferable skills**

Independent research; through seminar preparation and assessments

Communication of knowledge and teaching skills; through weekly problem-based learning group activity

Argument development; through weekly problem-based learning group activity and assessments

Interdisciplinary knowledge-production and synthesis of knowledge; through weekly problem-based learning group activity and assessments

Development of an argument; through weekly problem-based learning group activity and assessments

Presentation skills; through weekly problem-based learning group activity and assessments

Oral and written communication skills; through weekly problem-based learning group activity and assessments

Problem-solving skills; through independent research and weekly problem-based learning group activity

Project management skills; through final assessment (research project)

---

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required	Optional
Seminars	20 sessions of 2 hours (13%)	
Project supervision	2 sessions of 2 hours (1%)	
Practical classes	(0%)	
External visits	(0%)	1 session of 6 hours
Private study	70 hours (23%)	
Assessment	186 hours (62%)	
Total	300 hours	

### Private study description

Reading, research, preparation for seminars

## Costs

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
Books and learning materials	Depending on current streaming and availability, students may need to rent the film American Psycho. The Library has a copy on DVD but most students no longer own technology for viewing DVDs.	Student	
Field trips, placements and study abroad	Field visit in Week 16 to the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford. The visit itself is free, but if students are able to afford it they asked to cover the cost of public transport. However, department funding is available for any student who feels that they can't afford it (no questions asked). Cost of rail fare in academic year 2021/22 was £13.50 with student railcard and £20.80 without.	Student	

---

## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

## Assessment group A4

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Text response (1500 words) Students critically analyse a primary source (e.g. an advertisement, a brand, a commodity, or a creative text)	20%	33 hours
Site analysis (1500 words) Students critically analyse a site/landscape of cultural or heritage consumption	20%	33 hours
Media production (20 min, group project) Media production (e.g. video essay/podcast) responding to, evaluating and analysing one theoretical framework encountered on the module	15%	46 hours
Research Project (3000 words or equivalent output) Mini research project on an aspect of consumption; students must make decisions about content, methodology and output	45%	74 hours

## Feedback on assessment

Feedback for all components will be provided in writing through Tabula. Students will be encouraged to make use of advice and feedback hours to discuss and reflect on feedback received.

---

## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts