

# SO240-15 Commercial Cultures in Global Capitalism

24/25

**Department**

Sociology

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Lynne Pettinger

**Credit value**

15

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

“Life is not complete without shopping” (Chua, 2003). This module investigates globalised commercial cultures and explores the production of consumption by looking at processes of ‘cultural intermediation’. The will provide an in-depth critical understanding of the sociology of consumption as it explores the operations of global capitalism by understanding how commodified goods, services and experiences are produced. We will look at practices of humdrum and spectacular consumption, at the growth of brand cultures and at how marketing and advertising try to generate feelings in consumers. We will study consumer cultures in developed and emerging economies to critically consider the promises and seductions of the world of goods, services and experiences. Some questions we will consider include: is a globalised commercial culture homogenising? Is ethical consumption possible? Does a good commercial worker have to be an active consumer? Are we always ‘working’ as consumers to generate value in capitalism?

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

This module provides students with in-depth critical understanding of the sociology of consumption, exploring the operations of global capitalism through understanding how commodified goods,

services and experiences and produced. It explores sociological research into the operations of branding, marketing and advertising and considers how consumers relate to the world of goods. Students will study the nature of consumer culture in developed and emerging economies.

## 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.

- Global Capitalism and the interconnections of production and consumption
2. Customers, consumers and consumption
3. Advertising as cultural intermediation
4. Design as cultural intermediation
5. Brands and fakes
6. reading week
7. Marketing and market devices
8. Service work and the production of consumption
9. Consumer work and the co-creation of value
10. Fairtrade and the ethics of consumption

## Learning outcomes

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

- Critical understanding of global consumer capitalism and its implications for social life.
- Understand the processes through which global capitalism operates with particular attention to how end consumption is generated; understand, the implications for social life of a market society.
- Compare the operation of global capitalism in developed and emerging economies; demonstrate in-depth critical understanding of a specific region.
- Understand and articulate sociological arguments as to how consumption is affected by a complex, global culture industry and be able to build arguments as to the implications of this for understanding of subjectivity

## Indicative reading list

Appadurai, Arjun. (1996), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Araujo, L. (2007). Markets, market-making and marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 7(3), 211-226.

Amidsson, A. (2006). Brands: Meaning and value in media culture. Psychology Press.

Arvidsson, A. (2007). Creative Class or Administrative Class? On Advertising and the "Underground." *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, 7(1), 8-23.

Arvidsson, A. (2008). The Ethical Economy of Customer Coproduction. *Journal of Macromarketing*,

28(4), 326-338. doi:10.1177/0276146708326077

Banks, M. (2006). Moral Economy and Cultural Work. *Sociology*, 40(3), 455-472.

- BOhme, G. (2003). Contribution to the critique of the aesthetic economy. *Thesis Eleven*, 73(1), 71-82.
- Chua, B. H. (ed.) (2000) *Consumption in Asia: lifestyles and identities*. London: Routledge.
- Cochoy, Franck. (2010). "HOW TO BUILD DISPLAYS THAT SELL." *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 299-315. doi:10.1080/17530350.2010.494380
- Du Gay P (2004) *Devices and dispositions: Promoting consumption*. *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 7(2): 99-105.
- Entwistle, J. (2006). *The Cultural Economy of Fashion Buying*. *Current Sociology*, 54(5), 704-724.
- Gamble, J. (2011). *Multinational Retailers and Consumers in China*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hanser, A. (2007). Is the customer always right? Class, service and the production of distinction in Chinese department stores. *Theory and Society*, 36(5), 415-435. doi:10.1007/s11186-007-9042-0
- Hesmondhalgh D (2002) *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage.
- Julier G and Moor L (2009) Conclusion: Counting creativi'4. In: *Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice*. Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 256-272.
- Kong, Lily (2005) The sociality of cultural industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*; March 2005, Vol. 11 Issue: Number 1 p61-76, 16p
- Maguire, Jennifer Smith, & Matthews, J. (2010). Cultural Intermediaries and the Media: Cultural Intermediaries. *Sociology Compass*, 4(7), 405-416. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00285.x
- Moeran, B. (2007). a Dedicated Storytelling Organization: advertising talk in Japan. *Human Organization*, 66(2), 160-170.
- Molloy M and Lerner W (2010) Who needs cultural intermediaries indeed? Gendered networks in the designer fashion industry. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3(3): 361-377.
- Moor, L. (2008) *The Rise of the Brands*.
- Moor L (2008) Branding consultants as cultural intermediaries. *Sociological Review* 56(3): 408--428.
- Schor, J. B., Slater, D., Zukin, S., & Zelizer, V. A. (2010). Critical and Moral Stances in Consumer Studies. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10(2), 274-291. doi:10.1177/1469540510365688
- Schulz, S. (2008). Our Lady Hates Viscose: The Role of the Customer Image in High Street Fashion Production. *Cultural Sociology*, 2(3), 385-405. doi:10.1177/1749975508095618
- Schroeder, J. E. (2013) *Conversations on Consumption*. Routledge.
- Sennett, Richard. (2006). *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Ytlicice, George. (2003). *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Zwick D and Cayla J (eds) *Inside Ma-keting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zukin S and Kosta E (2004) Bourdieu off-Broadway: Managing distinction on a shopping block in the Last Village. *City and Community* 3(2): 101-114.

## Subject specific skills

Knowledge and understanding of how consumerism is made possible, with what effects.

Understanding of how global capitalism works

## Transferable skills

Written communication skills

Analytic skills

Independent thinking

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (50%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (50%)
Total	18 hours

### Private study description

Reading and other preparation for seminars.

Preparation and writing of formative work

Preparation and writing of summative work

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
3000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)

### Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided on all on assignments

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
  - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 2 of L304 Sociology with Specialism in Research Methods
- Year 2 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
- Year 2 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
  - Year 2 of L303 Sociology with Specialism in Gender Studies
  - Year 2 of L302 Sociology with Specialism in Social Policy
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list G for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics