Course Title: Consumerism in America
Course ID: IN251-01 U.S. Structures
Classroom Location: Moodle – Completely Online and Self-Paced
Professor: Elizabeth Lahey
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Telephone: 708-764-2266
Email: elahey@millikin.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Required Text(s):

There are also a series of PowerPoint lectures on Moodle.

Course Objectives: Consumerism is the way members of American society express their individualism. Much of American purchase decision-making is based upon internal and external influences that impact them on a daily basis. Internally, memory, perception, and values define consumer desires. Externally, friends and family have a say in what is purchased. The level of involvement determines the time and research needed to make the purchase. This course will explore these influences and more, focusing heavily on differences in ethnic (African-American and Hispanic) and religious (Christian) subcultures and their impact on consumerism.

Department Objectives:
Reflection, writing, and ethical reasoning will guide your studies. Through the integration of reflection throughout the University Studies curriculum, you will explore and discover ways for developing a life of meaning and value. As you practice and polish your ethical reasoning skills, you will come to understand what it means to be a democratic citizen in a global environment. By asking you to write across the University Studies curriculum, we foster confidence in your ability to write for professional success. All Millikin students take a sequence of university studies courses designed to provide a challenging development through the first three years of study at Millikin. The sequential courses—IN140, IN150, IN151, IN250, IN251 and IN350—form a common learning experience for undergraduate students at Millikin. Three learning threads are introduced and developed through the sequential requirements: (1) ethical reasoning, (2) reflection, and (3) intensive writing. The first year courses emphasize ethical reasoning and academic inquiry along with related skills necessary for academic success, including critical writing, reading, research, reflection, and communication. In the second year all Millikin students take IN250 United States Cultural Studies and IN251 United States Structural Studies. Taught by faculty from across the disciplines, all students engage in ethical reasoning, writing, and reflection skills as they relate to the study of the diversity of cultures, institutions, and social structures in the United States. In the third year, we challenge all Millikin students to examine, reason, reflect, and write about global issues through IN350, which is taught by faculty from across the disciplines. The sequential university studies requirements deliberately challenge students to prepare for academic success, to understand our own country’s multicultural realities and to make connections to the international global society of the contemporary world. The
sequence introduces and reinforces key skills necessary for success and provide students with various models for ways of knowing and for inquiry into broader and more important questions that may arise within or beyond the major’s area of expertise. All along the way, students are asked to perform their learning through engagement in activities characteristic of democratic citizens in a global environment. Such performance provides the foundation necessary for students to actively engage in civic duties now and beyond.

IN251 U.S. Structures Learning Goals

1. Analyze social structures within the United States through the use of discipline-appropriate sources.
2. Use ethical reasoning to make a judgment about some aspect of the structure of the United States.
3. Reflect on your responsibilities as a democratic citizen in the United States.

**Student Objectives:** To develop an understanding of consumerism in America. Specifically, students will:

- Participate in online discussions on issues of consumerism presented in the textbook, completing a final exam at the end of class
- Prepare a paper comparing and contrasting purchase behavior at differing levels of involvement
- Prepare commercials for the same product to two different subcultures of the student’s choice
- Analyze and make an ethical argument about the issue of advertising to children
- Proactively complete an activity of the student’s choice to raise awareness as a democratic citizen in the United States as to the above issue

**Course Organization:** The content and amount of material required in this course cannot be reduced because of its accelerated format. Students must be prepared, thus, students should plan to spend an average of 10-20 hours of time on each course per week outside of scheduled classroom time, which means online courses require 14 – 24 hours per week.

**Late Assignments:** This course is self-paced so due dates are flexible. NOTHING will be accepted for credit after 10pm January 23.

**Academic Integrity Standards:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in the PACE program or at Millikin University. All students are expected to uphold professional standards for academic honesty and integrity in their research, writing, and related performances. Academic honesty is the standard we expect from all students. Read the Student Handbook for further details about offenses involving academic integrity at: [http://www.millikin.edu/handbook](http://www.millikin.edu/handbook). Staley Library also hosts a web site on Preventing Plagiarism, which includes the complete university policy. It is located at: [http://www.millikin.edu/staley/services/instruction/Pages/plagiarism-faculty.aspx](http://www.millikin.edu/staley/services/instruction/Pages/plagiarism-faculty.aspx). Visit and carefully read the Preventing Plagiarism web site.

The faculty has the right and the responsibility to hold students to high ethical standards in conduct and in works performed, as befits a scholar at the university. Faculty members have the responsibility to investigate all suspected breaches of academic integrity that arise in their courses. They will make the determination as to whether the student violated the Academic
Integrity Policy. Should the faculty member determine that the violation was intentional and egregious, he or she will decide the consequences, taking into account the severity and circumstances surrounding the violation, and will inform the student in writing, forwarding a copy of the letter to the Registrar and to the Dean of Student Development.

This letter will be destroyed when the student graduates from the University unless a second breach of integrity occurs, or unless the first instance is of sufficient magnitude to result in failure of the course, with an attendant XF grade recorded in the transcript. If an XF is assigned for the course, the faculty letter of explanation becomes a permanent part of the student’s record. If a second violation occurs subsequent to the first breach of integrity, the Dean of Student Development will begin disciplinary and judicial processes of the University, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

If a student receives an XF for a course due to academic dishonesty, this remains as a permanent grade and cannot be removed from the transcript. However, students may repeat the course for credit toward graduation. Some programs and majors have more explicit ethical standards, which supersede this Policy, and violation of which may result in dismissal from some programs or majors within the University. If you have difficulty with any assignment in this course, please see the instructor rather than consider academic dishonesty.

The following apply specifically to academic misconduct in this course:

- **Plagiarism:** The appropriation, theft, purchase, or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit.
- **Collusion:** Prohibited collaboration with another in preparing work.
- **Fabrication/Falsification:** Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves altering information for use in any academic exercise. Fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.
- **Multiple Submissions:** The submission by the same individual of substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once in the same or another course without authorization.
- **Complicity in academic misconduct:** Helping another to commit an act of academic misconduct.

**Email Communication:** Students are responsible for checking their Millikin University e-mail for schedule changes, assignments, and/or other messages from the professor(s) or university representatives.

**Grading System:**

- A: 92% and above
- A-: 90%-91.9%
- B+: 88%-89.9%
- B: 82%-87.9%
- B-: 80%-81.9%
- C+: 78%-79.9%
- C: 72%-77.9%
- C-: 70%-71.9%
- D+: 68%-69.9%
Summary of Assignments:

Please note that all assignments are available beginning two weeks before class so the student may work at their own pace.

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**Syllabus Quiz (50 points)**

There will be one quiz. It may be found on Moodle. *The instructor strongly suggests the student do this assessment the first day of class so as to better prepare for success in the remainder of the course. As we never meet in person the instructor is unable to clarify syllabus confusion by the student in any other way.* The quiz covers the most important aspects of the syllabus, directing the student to what is expected of them by the instructor. The quiz is not timed. The quiz will consist of a variety of fill-in-the-blank, matching, multiple-choice and/or true-false questions for a total of fifty points.

**Discussion Topics (50 points)**

The instructor has posted five topics on material relevant to the readings. Over the course students must respond to each of the discussion topics once, for 10 points per question.

**Ethical Reasoning Essay (100 points)**

The student will read in Chapter 6 about the issues related to advertising to children. The student will synthesize the information and prepare an ethical position of their own that they will defend in essay format. The student will develop a 1 - 1 1/4 page double spaced essay around an ethical thesis statement that meets the requirements of the U.S. Studies group. Please type only your name in the upper right corner and leave the rest of the page for typing. This paper is to be submitted to the online dropbox in Moodle for both this class and IN251 U.S. Studies. The U.S. Studies group will not grade the student, but simply assess that the class met the ethical reasoning requirement of the curriculum. The instructor will grade the student as follows: 95 points for an excellent essay, 85 points for a good essay, 75 points for an average essay, 65 points for a poor essay, and 0 for anything less.

*Please note that there is a handout on Moodle that further clarifies how to write a proper ethical reasoning essay. It is an example only and not directly relevant to the specific course content.*

**Democratic Citizenship Project (100 points)**

The student must complete some type of democratic citizenship project related to their position in the Ethical Reasoning essay above. *Please note that there is a handout on Moodle that provides examples of acceptable projects. Again, these are examples and are not directly relevant to the specific course content.* These projects include
but are not limited to writing a letter to the editor of the Decatur newspaper, sharing ideas with your contact list on Facebook, or writing to your congressman. Once you complete your chosen project you may 1) upload a copy of the completed project or 2) if it is not in electronic format you may write a short ½ - 1 page essay describing what you chose to do and why. Please type your name somewhere on the project. The project is to be submitted to the online dropbox in Moodle for both this class and IN251 U.S. Studies. The U.S. Studies group will not grade the student, but simply assess that the class met the democratic citizenship requirement of the curriculum. The instructor will grade the student as follows: 95 points for an excellent project, 85 points for a decent project, 75 points for an average project, 65 points for a poor project, and 0 for anything less.

**Subculture Commercial Project (200 points)**

The student will select a well-known existing product and brand such as Cocoa Puffs cereal or Crest toothpaste or Revlon mascara and prepare two new and completely different commercials for the product than what exist today. Therefore, the commercials must not be a spin-off of an existing commercial for the product. Each commercial will be aimed at a different subculture, but for the same product. Subcultures chosen must be from the ethnic or religious categories in the textbook. The student should be specific in their choices. Examples might be Hispanic females, or Christian youth, or even Hispanic Catholics. The goal is for the instructor to be able to recognize through the commercials that the student understands the differences in the subcultures and therefore markets differently to induce each to buy the exact same product.

The commercials should be focused on filling a 30 second television time slot. They may be as creative as the student desires or is capable of producing, but lower technology-based commercials will not be penalized unless they show a lack of effort overall. The commercials may be a series of storyboard slides in PowerPoint, a series of scanned storyboard drawings, a series of storyboard photographs, an actual student produced commercial uploaded to YouTube, and/or any other electronic media the student is comfortable with using to present the commercial. Please be certain that the instructor has the necessary software or URL link to access your commercial if you are not using Microsoft PowerPoint.

The student should upload the commercials to Moodle. The commercials will be graded on the following: 1) the student chose a product and brand to meet the requirements (10%), 2) the two subcultures chosen were clearly identifiable in the commercials (10%), 3) each subculture chosen was distinct from the other (10%), 4) the commercials would appeal appropriately to the target markets (20%), 5) the commercials were not spin-offs of current commercials (10%), and 6) there was obvious creativity and effort put into the commercials (40%).

**Involvement Purchasing Paper (200 points)**

Each student will select three products, one from each identified category, from the list titled Consumer Buying Choices on Moodle. The student will then observe each of the consumer buying decision processes used by purchasers of the chosen products. Each student will complete the consumer buying observations. The observations may begin any time after the student gets the syllabus. Students will then prepare a 300 – 1000 word Microsoft Word formatted (.rtf, .doc, .docx) document that compares and contrasts the buying behavior for their three chosen products. Please upload the Microsoft Word formatted document (.rtf, .doc, or .docx) to Moodle.

Grading will be based upon the following scheme. Paper format, style, organization, grammar, syntax, spelling, etc. will count as 20% of the grade. The introduction, thesis sentence, and conclusion will count for 30% of the grade. Content will count for 50% of the total points and will be determined based upon the suggestions and relevant issues below.
In addition, if the comments on the paper clearly indicate to the instructor that not enough time was spent observing consumer buying behaviors to really grasp the important similarities and differences, the best grade a student can expect to receive is a 75% or a C.

The paper must be written in formal APA style. It must have properly formatted title and references pages, proper headings and a running header, at least one citation from the textbook, and the student may not use first or second person (I, me, my, you, we, etc.) at any point in the paper. Improper APA formatting will create a point deduction of 10% from the final grade.

Each student should be prepared to discuss in their paper any relevant issues from the list below. The student should feel free to discuss any other interesting observations made that furthered their understanding of consumer buying behaviors for their assigned products.

a. How quickly, in general, were the decisions to buy made?

b. Were the typical consumers of this product alone, if not, who was with them?

c. Did sales personnel interact with the consumers? If so, how? How where the sales people dressed? Did they appear to have any special education or training?

d. What, if any, package labels were read? Did they appear to have an influence on the purchase decision?

e. Was more than one brand of the product compared and contrasted? How did that impact the decision to purchase?

f. What internal or external influences (per the textbook) impacted the customers?

g. What situations (per the textbook) impacted the customers?

h. Did the buyers seek information of any type, from whom and/or what? Did any consumers bring materials with them from a magazine, newspaper or the internet?

i. Were the customers exploring alternatives or actually purchasing?

j. Were the issues of returns, delivery, warranty, or old product disposal discussed?

Suggestions:
1) Choose any store that specializes in the assigned product and ask permission to observe the manner in which customers make their purchase decision about the product.
2) Spend at least 30 minutes per product, for a total of 90 minutes, watching how people approach, look at, compare, and make their decision to buy.
3) Do not communicate or interact with the people you are observing as you will change the dynamics of the consumer’s buying process.

Final Exam (300 points)
There will be one comprehensive exam that is found on Moodle. The exam may be downloaded and completed as the student works through the course or left until the bitter end. It is in a variety of formats, but mainly short essays. The exam is due the final day of class by 10pm to Moodle.

Disability Accommodation Policy: Please address any special needs or special accommodations with the instructor at the beginning of the class or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you should submit your documentation to the Office of Student Success at Millikin University, currently located in Staley Library 014.
Course Schedule: The course schedule is merely a guide. The professor reserves the right to alter course content, class assignments, activities, and/or dates as deemed necessary.
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