In this course we study why we desire the things we do and how consumption affects the identities and the inequalities among persons, places, and things. What are the social origins and orientations of consumption? The roots of one’s taste for hip-hop or baroque violin, the Vespa or the Hummer, beer or wine, Black Barbie and white Barbie are socially influenced rather than exclusively dependent on the individual. Students will explore such questions as: What does it mean to sell sex or to market ethnicity? Is fair trade possible in a materially unequal world? Why do some objects, serving the same function and made of the same materials, sell less well than others? Is it “simply” a matter of taste? If so, from where does taste come? What are the processes that generate equalities and differences in our tastes? If taste is not inborn but generated, what happens to the authenticity of local cultures and local practices in global markets? This course counts toward the Economy, Business, and Society sub-concentration. Though there are no formal pre-requisites, one introductory course in sociology, psychology, or anthropology is advisable. (25 percent of the course will be dedicated to case studies on culture, branding, and consumption in Southeast Asia.)

The class will meet twice a week. The class will begin with a lecture in its first half, followed by discussion. Therefore, students should read the assigned readings before coming to class.

Requirements: An advisory pre-requisite is that the student has taken one introductory course in either sociology or anthropology. The course requirements include attendance and participation (10%); three reaction papers (not to exceed five pages, double-spaced per paper) (45%); one in-class midterm examination (20%); and a final exam (take-home), distributed the last day of class (25%). More than two unexcused absences will lower the student’s final grade.

Readings: The course outline indicates the required readings for the course. Students can find the readings either in the assigned books or online in CTools. The books assigned for this course:


The assigned books will be on reserve at the library, but I highly recommend its purchase.
Week 1: Introduction and overview
Wednesday, September 8: There is no reading assignment for the first day of class.

Week 2A: What is Consumption?
Monday, September 13: Read the following before coming to class:


Week 2B: How Culture Affects Consumption?
Wednesday, September 15: Read the following before coming to class:


Week 3A: How is Culture Sometimes Produced or Reproduced?
Monday, September 20: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 3B: Making Distinctions
Wednesday, September 22: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 4A: Making Distinctions (continued)
Monday, September 27: Read the following before coming to class:

Distribute Assignment 1 in Class, Due Thursday, October 7 at 4PM in my mailbox.

Week 4B: Making Distinctions (continued)
Wednesday, September 29: Read the following before coming to class:
Week 5A: Different Kinds of Money for Different Kinds of Consumer Purchases
Monday, October 4: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 5B: Different Calculations for Different Purchasing Contexts
Wednesday, October 6: Read the following before coming to class:

Submit assignment #1 tomorrow (Thursday) by 4PM in my mailbox in the sociology department (3rd floor of the LSA building)

Week 6A: Networks and Consumption
Monday, October 11: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 6B: What Money Does to Intimate Relationships
Wednesday, October 13: Read the following before coming to class:


Week 7A: FALL STUDY BREAK
Monday, October 18: Classes will not be held

Week 7: Pulling It Together
Wednesday, October 20: Come to class with questions about the reading materials/lectures. We will review for the mid-term.

Monday, October 25: In-class Midterm Examination

International Case Studies

Week 8: Culture and Consumption in Thailand
Wednesday, October 27: Read the following before coming to class:

**Week 9: Sex Tourism and Place Branding**

**Monday, November 1:** Read the following before coming to class:


**Wednesday, November 3:** Read the following before coming to class:


**Assignment #2 distributed in class.** The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 22.

**Week 10A: Managing Identity in Tourism**

**Monday, November 8:** Read the following before coming to class:


The appendix to the article (see the section on coding and boundary work)

**Week 10B: Authenticity in the Age of Globalization**

**Wednesday, November 10:** Read the following before coming to class:


**Week 11A: Authenticity (continued)**

**Monday, November 15:** Read the following before coming to class:


Week 11B: Gender, Sales, and Consumption

Wednesday, November 17: Read the following before coming to class:


Domestic Applications

Week 12: The Social Organization of Retail Space

Monday, November 22: Submit your assignment and read the following:

Your second paper assignment is due at the beginning of class (November 22)


Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 13: Inequality on the Retail Floor

Monday, November 29: Read the following before coming to class:

Assignment #3 distributed in class (due December 13)

Wednesday, December 1: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 14A: Identity on the Shopping Floor

Monday, December 6: Read the following before coming to class:

Week 14B: Race, Consumption, and Boundary Work

Wednesday, December 8: Read the following before coming to class:


**Week 15: Understanding Fair Trade**
Monday, December 13: Read the following **before** coming to class:

Submit assignment #3 at the beginning of class


Your Final Exam: I will distribute the take-home final examination. You may turn it in to my mailbox at any time before 12:30 PM on Wednesday, December 15, 2010. I will **not accept** email attachments.