The Business of Culture: Marketing and Selling Symbolic Goods
(Syllabus)

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The Business of Culture: Marketing and Selling Symbolic Goods
Mount Holyoke College

Sociology 316-01; Nexus in Global Business;
Program in Entrepreneurship, Organizations and Society

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Course Description: This course investigates the creative economy through a sociological lens. Through case studies of various creative industries, as well as examination of the creative sector as a whole, we will examine how the cultural economy influences, and is influenced by, social phenomena. We will explore issues such as how value is produced in the field of fashion modeling, how music and other creative industries drive urban economies, how local crafts enter global markets, and how e-commerce influences the publishing industry.

Requirements: Assignments for the course include one 5-6 page essay (30% of the course grade); one presentation including a written outline (25% of the course grade); a 12-15 page research paper, including submitting a proposal for the paper (35% of the course grade); 10 reading reflections (5% of the course grade); and, class participation including online posting (5%). Students are expected to attend all sessions and to participate in class discussions. Reading reflections for each week are due by 10:00 am on Thursdays. With the exception of reading reflections and the research proposal, a hard copy of all assignments should be submitted in class and an electronic copy should be submitted to Moodle. For reading reflections and the research proposal, only an electronic copy should be submitted to Moodle.

Required Texts: The required texts are available at the Odyssey Bookshop and on reserve at Williston Library. The Velthuis text is also available through the Mount Holyoke College Library as an e-book.

Elizabeth Currid, The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City

Ashley Mears, Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model

John B. Thompson, Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century

Olav Velthuis, Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art

Frederick F. Wherry, Global Markets and Local Crafts: Thailand and Costa Rica Compared
Week 1 (September 7): Introduction to the Course

Week 2 (September 14): The Cultural Economy (General Principles)
  • Elizabeth Currid, The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City, Chapters 1-4

Week 3 (September 21): The Cultural Economy (General Principles), continued
  • Elizabeth Currid, The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City, Chapters 5-7, Epilogue
  • Cultural Economy Fieldwork

Recommended Texts (The Cultural Economy-General Principles)
  • Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste
  • Mukti Khaire, Culture and Commerce: The Value of Entrepreneurship in Creative Industries
  • Jennifer Smith Maguire and Julian Matthews (Editors), The Cultural Intermediaries Reader

Week 4 (September 28): The Contemporary Art Market
  • Olav Velthuis, Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art, Introduction, Chapters 1-4
  • Online Posting
  • Research Proposal Preparation

Assignment (September 28): Research proposal due on Moodle

Research Proposal Meetings (September 29)

Week 5 (October 5): The Contemporary Art Market, continued
  • Olav Velthuis, Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art, Chapters 4-5, Conclusion

Mid-Semester Break: October 7-10

Week 6 (October 12): The Contemporary Art Market, continued; The Fashion & Beauty Industry
  • Ashley Mears, Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model, Chapters 1-4

Recommended Texts (The Art Market)
  • Amanda Koontz Anthony, “Racialized Authentication: Constructing Representations of the Florida Highwaymen,” The Sociological Quarterly
• Patricia A. Banks, *Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper-Middle Class*
• Patricia A. Banks, “The Rise of Africa in the Contemporary Art Market: Myth or Reality?,” *Poetics* (forthcoming)
• Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*
• Larissa Buchholz and Ulf Wuggenig, “Cultural Globalization between Myth and Reality: The Case of the Contemporary Visual Arts,” *ART-e-FACT*
• Arlene Dávila, “Through Commerce, For Community: Miguel Luciano’s Nuyorican Interventions,” *Culture Works: Space, Value and Mobility Across the Neoliberal Americas*
• Gary Alan Fine, *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*
• Alison Gerber, *The Work of Art: Value in Creative Careers*
• Raymonde Moulin, *The French Art Market: A Sociological View*
• Olav Velthuis and Stefano Baia Curioni (Editors), *Cosmopolitan Canvases: The Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art*

**Week 7 (October 19): The Fashion & Beauty Industry, continued**
• Ashley Mears, *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*, Chapters 5-7

Assignment (October 19): 5-6 page essay due in class and on Moodle

**Week 8 (October 26): Fashion and Identity Presentations**

**Week 9 (November 2): Fashion and Identity Presentations**

**Recommended Texts (The Fashion & Beauty Industry)**
• Kristen Barber, *Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men’s Grooming Industry*
• Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*

**Week 10 (November 9): The Publishing Business**
• John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*, Introduction, Chapters 1-7
Week 11 (November 16): The Publishing Business, continued
• John B. Thompson, Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century, Chapters 8-10, conclusion

Recommended Texts (The Publishing Business)
• Clayton Childress, Under the Cover: The Creation, Production, and Reception of a Novel
• Roanna Gonsalves, “The Survival of the Friendliest: Contemporary Indian Publishing in English at the Frankfurt Book Fair,” Cultural Sociology
• Wendy Griswold and Hannah Wohl, “Evangelists of Culture: One Book Programs and the Agents who Define Literature, Shape Tastes, and Reproduce Regionalism,” Poetics
• Wendy Griswold, Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria
• Kathy Liddle, “Distribution Matters: Feminist Bookstores as Cultural Interaction Spaces,” Cultural Sociology
• Paul Lopes, Demanding Respect: The Evolution of the American Comic Books
• Laura J. Miller, Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption

Thanksgiving Recess (November 22-November 26)

Week 12 (November 30: Craft in the Global Market
• Frederick F. Wherry, Global Markets and Local Crafts: Thailand and Costa Rica Compared, Chapters 1-3

Week 13 (December 7): Craft in the Global Market, continued
• Frederick F. Wherry, Global Markets and Local Crafts: Thailand and Costa Rica Compared, Chapters 4-6

Recommended Texts (Craft Markets)
• Aisalkyn Botoeva and Regine A. Spector, “Sewing to Satisfaction: Craft-Based Entrepreneurs in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan,” Central Asian Survey

Assignment (December 7): Research paper due in class and on Moodle