UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
ANT 3420  CONSUMER CULTURE

Instructor Information
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Course Information Fall 2015
Course meets T 3 in Tur 2305
Office: B338 Turlington
Office Phone: 352-294-7595
Office Hours: T 10:30-11:30a, W 1-3p, & by appt.
Prerequisite: sophomore standing
Section Number: 1E59  Credit hours: 3
TA Office & phone: TBA
TA Office hours: TBA

“Consumer Culture” answers the question, “Why do we have so much stuff?” In this course anthropological theories and concepts are introduced to investigate the close relationships that link people and the made things they live with—their “material culture”—especially relationships that drive consumption beyond basic needs. Categories of material culture given special focus are costume, household furnishings, and techno-gear. We examine how these goods circulate in our modern society through studies of gifting, shopping, advertising, the “rituals” of product use, heirlooming, and the ecology and politics of recycling and trashing. Specific topics include how things are drawn into our identities, how we extend our bodies and our selves through the things (real and virtual) we manipulate, how we create relationships to other people via things, how things come to have meanings and “social lives,” the sensuality and authenticity of things, and the practices and consequences of object discard and reuse. This course focuses on the “sociality” of goods; not economics or sustainability of consumption.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Identify the major concepts and theorists relevant to material culture studies and apply those concepts to familiar or researched real-world examples. Utilize these concepts and developing skills in fundamental social science methods to observe and analyze cultural patterns in contemporary Euro-American society and individual consumptive practices. Apply them in active learning scenarios and reflective essays and blog posts to demonstrate how ideas about oneself and social others as well as everyday practices are shaped by larger cultural forces, to thereby demonstrate greater self-awareness and senses of personal agency. Recognize anthropological perspectives on the sustainability of current lifestyles and the possibilities of making better informed choices of object acquisition and disposition. Assess in different contexts the three “enduring knowledge statements” for this course: 1) the things we acquire, use, and discard are active social agents; 2) the things we make, make us as social beings; and 3) living with things has social, political, material, and historical consequences.

E-learning - Canvas
This course is managed by Canvas (http://lss.at.ufl.edu). The Files tool has most of the required readings; e-journal articles can be downloaded through the library (see urls). Files are kept in folders by numbered week. The Assignments tool manages short homework “blog posts” and other writing assignments. Check the Announcements tool regularly to keep up-to-date with course announcements. Some—but not all—grades are posted in the Grades tool. Canvas does not keep an accurate and complete tally of all of your grade components.
**Required Textbook and Other Required Readings:**


**NOTE:** We read only some chapters of this book. Save money by renting the book, reading the copy on reserve in Library West, or share the purchase price among a group.

Most required readings are drawn from book chapters and journal articles dealing with material culture and anthropological consumer studies, as well as blogs, newspaper items, and magazine articles.

**Important:** Readings should be completed **before the class period** for which they are assigned (this is the “flipped classroom”). We use class meeting times to discuss the readings and apply the concepts they introduce, so you must be prepared to participate. Extra credit might be earned for students who discuss the readings in an informed way. For Thursday’s double period, readings are listed separately for each period, but obviously they must be completed **before the first period**.

**Strategies for Success**

- Attend class–be on time and be prepared. Many activities begin at the start of class. Take careful notes in class. Keep up with all the readings each week. Create a glossary of the major concepts that are discussed (a list is provided). Ask questions in class or by email if you have any difficulty understanding the material. Meet with the instructor or TA. You are asked to think, be imaginative, look for patterns, apply concepts, and make interpretations—not just memorize material.

**Acceptance of Course Requirements**

By remaining registered in this class, you agree to accept the course requirements and expectations as stated in this syllabus. These are in addition to other general University requirements and codes of conduct as stated in official documents and listed at the end of this syllabus.

**Grade Evaluation and Methods**

- **3 exams**  45% of grade (135 points)
  
  The exams will be administered in class and will consist primarily of 45 multiple-choice questions to assess comprehension of the major concepts and their applications to real life. Each exam is worth 15% of the grade; the third exam is non-comprehensive.

- **12 short written homework assignments**  20% of grade (60 points)
  
  To evaluate how you are applying knowledge and engaging in self-reflection, and to facilitate class discussion exercises, for specific lectures you are asked to write brief essays within a limited time frame. Suggested length is 400-500 words; specific instructions are given with each assignment. Each assignment is worth ~1.5% of the grade. The first homework essay is required of everyone as a hard-copy, but for the numbered “blog post” assignments, choose 11 to do out of the 18 total possible. Students may earn extra credit by turning in a 12th blog post.

- **participation in in-class activities**  20% of grade (60 points)
  
  Virtually every lecture period will include a class discussion, small group discussion, or a class activity. Everyone is expected to be prepared for and to participate in these activities. They account for approximately 1.3% of the grade (4 points) for each regular class week. Students seated in the “observer” rows in the classroom do not participate and do not receive this credit.

- **photo essay project**  15% of grade (45 points)
  
  In week 4 you will be introduced to a research project, to “follow a thing” through its social life, biography, or itinerary. This project will result in a photo essay to be uploaded on Canvas. Detailed instructions will be provided to complete the project. There are specific deadlines for the photo essay topic, a brief description with starter bibliography, and the final paper. This project is your opportunity to apply the knowledge gained throughout the semester.  
  
  Total: 100% (300 points)
Critical dates for exams or other work
Exam 1: Tuesday, September 29
Exam 2: Tuesday, November 3
Exam 3: Tuesday, December 8
Photo Essay Project: topic deadline: Thursday, October 15 (5 points)
project description with starter bibliography: Tuesday, November 10 (10 points)
final photo essay due Saturday, December 12 (30 points)

Class Demeanor Expected by the Professor and Reserved Seating
Students are expected to be in their seats at the start of class. Cell phones should be silenced and out of sight, except when used in class activities. Laptop computers and tablets are allowed ONLY to access electronic readings, for note-taking, and on certain days to facilitate class activities. Newspapers and other reading materials not relevant to the class should be put away when class begins.

The back row(s) of the classrooms are reserved for “observers” and used for exam periods. Active class participants are expected to sit towards the front of the classroom. Students who cannot avoid using their electronic devices for other than class purposes are asked to sit in the observer rows.

Policy Related to Class Attendance, Late Assignments, Missed Exams, and Plagiarism
Attendance Policy: Although daily attendance per se is not taken, participation in in-class activities is recorded and is worth 20% of the final grade; an activity may be worth more than 1 point. Missing lectures will prove detrimental to your understanding of the course material and to your final grade. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the lecture notes from a classmate.

Make-up Exam Policy: Students may take an exam within one week after the due date with no penalty by asking the professor for permission ahead of time to take a make-up. The make-up exam will be different from the original exam. Please make every effort to take the exam with the class.

Late homework policy: Because you have a choice of “blog post” assignments, there is no allowance for a missed due date. If you miss the due date for a post, choose a later one to take its place.

Late submission of other assignments: Except for university-allowed excused absences, other assignments should be turned in by the due date. They lose 25% of their value for every day late.

For university policy see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

Copying and plagiarism: Penalty is complete loss of points for any copied or plagiarized assignment. A second occurrence will result in a report of cheating to the Dean of Students office.

UF Grading policy and Course Grading Requirements
For information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

Every graded activity in this course earns points. Letter grades are based on a total of 300 points; see grading scale below. Ignore the percentage calculations in Canvas—they are meaningless! Total your points! If a minimum grade of C is required to fulfill certain graduation requirements, C- does not fulfill those requirements. GPA points for each letter grade are provided in the bottom line of the chart.

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
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<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
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The gradebook is “closed” on the date of the university-scheduled final exam. Any excused overdue assignments must be received by that date and time. All grade adjustments must be made by then.
Tentative Topics, Readings, and Assignments – subject to change!

McCracken = textbook; other readings available directly as pdf files or can be downloaded from library (see urls)
Required readings are to be completed by the class meeting date; note the required pages of a chapter or article.
Double-lectures on Thursday are listed separately and have their own reading assignments.
Reading and Homework assignments are tentative, and any changes will be announced well in advance on Canvas.

Week 1

Part I: Why Do We Have So Much Stuff?

Tues Aug 25 Attitudes towards Modern Consumption

Thurs Aug 27-1 Consumption, Capitalism, and Modernity

Thurs Aug 27-2 Hyper-Modernity and Hyper-Consumption

Week 2

Tues Sep 1 The Anthropology of Consumption

Homework: (required) Essay on a “focal object” (see Woodward reading for Thursday), due Thursday

Thurs Sep 3-1 Material Culture and Materiality


Thurs Sep 3-2 Individual and Society; Singular and Common
no reading assignment

Week 3

Part II: How Does the Stuff I Have Impact Me Personally?

Tues Sep 8 My Stuff and Me: Person and Authenticity


Homework: Blog Post #1: count and rank your possessions in importance, due Thursday before class
Thurs Sep 10-1  **Who Am I? Who Decides? Ego- and Socio-Centered Self and Persona**


Thurs Sep 10-2  **The Extended Person and the Megaphone Effect**


Homework: Post# 2: the Extended Person and Cultural Capital, due Tuesday before class

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**Week 4**

**Part III: How Do We Create Social Relationships with Things?**

**Tues Sep 15**  **The Gift: Inalienable Possessions**


Homework: Post #3: report on an inalienable gift, due Thursday before class

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**Thurs Sep 17-1**  **Social Lives of Things: Object Biographies**


**Thurs Sep 17-2**  **Object Itineraries: Following Things and Their Traces**  [method for your photo essay!]


**PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT IS INTRODUCED IN THIS LECTURE - DON’T MISS IT!**

Homework: Post #4: The Gift Revisited, due Tuesday before class

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**Week 5**

**Tues Sep 22**  **Shopping as Love: Creating a Desiring Subject**


Homework: Post #5: report on a special thing shopped for and given to someone else, due Thursday

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**Thurs Sep 24-1**  **Things Gather: Human-Thing Entanglements**


Homework: Post #6: Post on a focal object that has “gathered” other things, due next Thursday. This is a practice for your photo essay project and is highly recommended.

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**Thurs Sep 24-2**  **Things are Social Agents, too**


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**Tues Sep 29**  **EXAM I**

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**Week 6**  **Part IV: How Do Things and People Intersect?**

**Thurs Oct 1-1**  **My Body as Me?**

Lucas, Gavin (2002) Disposability and Dispossession in the Twentieth Century. *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1):5-22. Read pages 5-12 only on “the moral system of hygiene” and the rise of “disposability” [http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5](http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5)

**Thurs Oct 1-2**  **The Extended Body-The Extended Self**


Homework: Post #7: childhood memory of learning to ride a bike, due Tuesday

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**Week 7**

**Tues Oct 6**  **Ergonomics and Body Techniques**

Thurs Oct 8-1  **Bodily Skill and Praxeology**


Thurs Oct 8-2  **Meditations on Skill**  *please bring a pair of scissors if you have one.*

Homework: Post #8: Riding a Bike, Revisited, due Tuesday

**Week 8**

**Tues Oct 13  **Hexit: The Enculturated Body**

Read Chapter 6 “Eat”, pp. 188-202 and pp. 64-69 on the “overbite”

focus on the first 2 pages of the online version, or the 4 pages of the pdf provided

Homework: Post #9:  Body Hexis (3 options), due Thursday

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**Part V: How Can Things Have Meaning?**

**Thurs Oct 15-1  **How do Objects Mean?**


Thurs Oct 15-2  **Semiotic Networks activity**

*PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT TOPIC DUE TODAY*

Homework: Post #10: the iconicity of cell phone apps; due Tuesday
Read: Phone Polaroids: A Semiotics Primer  http://hyperallergic.com/7175/iphone-polaroids/

**Week 9**

**Tues Oct 20  **Meaning Movement (or, How Advertising Works)**

McCracken (textbook) Ch. 5 “Meaning Manufacture and Movement in the World of Goods”

Homework: research TV commercials on youtube or web-video advertisements for consumer products  
pick 3-4 and record the urls for an activity on Thursday

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**Thurs Oct 22-1  **Buying Authenticity**

Thurs Oct 22-2 Metaphors and Metonyms in Advertising –bring laptop or tablet for internet activity

Homework: Post #11: “knock-offs” and inauthenticity, due Tuesday

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**Week 10**

**Tues Oct 27**  **Making Things - Making Meaning**


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Thurs Oct 29 (both hours) **Ensembles: Diderot Unities and Effects**


**Read and bring to class:** *Diderot Unities Game* (pdf handout on e-learning); bring laptop computers

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**Tues Nov 3**  **Exam II**

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**Week 11**  **Part VI Creating a Desiring Subject**

**Thurs Nov 5-1**  **Sensuality and Emotions: the Effects of Things on People**


Homework: Post #12 Post an informed comment on the Soda Wars, due Tuesday

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**Thurs Nov 5-2**  **The Technology of Enchantment and Enchantment of Technology**


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**Week 12**

**Tues Nov 10**  **Consuming Experience: Tourism as a Rite of Passage**

Assignment: watch youtube videos and be prepared to discuss them; see list of urls posted on e-learning

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PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT BRIEF DESCRIPTION/BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Homework: Post #13: comment on a remembered consumed experience, due Thursday

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Thurs Nov 12-1  **Modes of Touristic Experiences**

[http://soc.sagepub.com/content/13/2/179.full.pdf+html](http://soc.sagepub.com/content/13/2/179.full.pdf+html)

Thurs Nov 12-2  **Consuming Authenticity**


[http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0160738399000109/1-s2.0-S0160738399000109-main.pdf?_tid=19225310-a7c0-11e3-8107-0000ab80f26c&acdnat=1394393104_19a0233fb184eba774f767d8e05f7317](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0160738399000109/1-s2.0-S0160738399000109-main.pdf?_tid=19225310-a7c0-11e3-8107-0000ab80f26c&acdnat=1394393104_19a0233fb184eba774f767d8e05f7317)

Homework: Post #14: comment on an internet “virtual reality” tourism site, due Tuesday

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**Week 13**  
**Part VII: Where Does the Stuff Go?**

**Tues Nov 17**  **Divesting Oneself of Things**


[http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/6/2/213](http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/6/2/213)

Homework: Post #15: comment on divesting a specific possession, due Thursday

**Thurs Nov 19-1**  **Consumer Resistance: Hoarding and Anti-Consumption**


**Thurs Nov 19-2**  **Rubbish: Order and Process**

Lucas, Gavin (2002) Disposability and Dispossession in the Twentieth Century. *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1):5-22.  Read pages 12 (bottom) to 19. [we read the first part of this article earlier]  
[http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5](http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5)

Homework: Post #16: My Trash, due Tuesday

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**Week 14**

**Tues Nov 24**  **Trash or Treasure: Alternative Afterlives of Things**

Homework: Post #17: comment on “afterlives” of trash (2 options), due Tuesday after Thanksgiving

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**Week 15**

**Tues Dec 1**  **The Politics of Waste and the Taphonomy of Disaster**


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**Thurs Dec 3-1**  **Ruins: Modernity and Decay**


Homework: Post #18: Ruins in modernity, due Wednesday at noon [this is the last blog assignment]

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**Thurs Dec 3-2**  **Consumption and Modernity? The Semester in Review**

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**Week 16**

**Tues Dec 8**  **Exam III in class** (not a cumulative exam)

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**Saturday Dec. 12 Photo Essay Due**

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The following information is provided in conformance with University Policy:

1. **Policy related to class attendance, make-up exams, and other work**

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies; see [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx).

The UF Twelve-Day Rule ([https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences)) states that students who participate in athletic or scholastic teams are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic (regular class) days per semester without penalty. Students seeking this exemption must provide documentation to the instructor. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

2. **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Professor when requesting accommodation. Upon receipt of documentation, the Professor will grant the accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow these procedures as early as possible in the semester.
3. Online course evaluation process
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results

4. Religious Observances
Students seeking modification of due dates for class participation, assignments, and exams for religious reasons (e.g., holiday observances) should contact the Professor in advance and request this modification; it will then be granted.

5. Academic Honesty
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs assigned to this class. Instances of dishonesty include conducting unauthorized research on the internet and failing to cite sources of information on any work submitted, as well as unauthorized collaborating with students or others to determine the answers on assignments and exams.

6. Counseling and Emergency Services
– the University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575
  http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx
– Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
– Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601
– Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
– University Police Department 392-1111 (non-emergency); call 9-1-1 for emergencies

7. Electronic Course Reserves
The electronic course reserve service is offered by the George A. Smathers Libraries. Under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities have the right to equal access, use and benefit of the course materials that have been placed on reserve in the Libraries.

Students who have registered with the University of Florida Disability Resource Center should initiate their request for assistance and accommodation in accessing these materials. The Center will work with the Libraries Course Reserve Unit to provide accessible course materials. All information submitted by the student to the Libraries in fulfilling the request for accommodation will be kept confidential. For more information on services for students with disabilities, contact the UF Disability Resource Center at 352-392-8565 or at accessuf@dso.ufl.edu. For general information on course reserves, please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email at eres@uflib.ufl.edu.

It is best to use the UF VPN client when accessing electronic materials course reserve materials as well as e-books, on-line journals, databases, etc. offered by the library. The VPN client is easily installed and configured, and provides easy access to electronic materials using off-campus computers. For more information on using the VPN client, go to http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html

8. Software Regulations
All faculty, staff and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

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