Spring 2009  
History 211  
The Social History of European Consumerism  
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:00-4:15  
King 239

Ms. Diana Shull  
Rice Hall 315  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:15-5:30; Thursdays, 12:30-2:30; also by appointment.  
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Course Overview:

This course examines the history of consumers and consumption in Europe from the perspectives of cultural and social history. The readings introduce the historiographical controversies over the rise of a consumer society and consumerism’s impact on Europe as a whole. Students will explore how people ascribed meaning to the goods and services they bought and how these attitudes changed over time. In addition to tea, textiles, and other commodities, the course will also cover consumption of culture in the form of print media, exhibitions and world’s fairs, and changing notions of taste.

Required Reading:

Texts available at the bookstore:  
Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*.  
Victoria de Grazia, ed., *The Sex of Things*.

For each class meeting you will also be responsible for reading a selection of articles, primary sources, and/or chapters from larger works. The assignments for each class are listed on the detailed reading schedules handed out periodically throughout the semester. Class participation is essential in this course. The questions on the syllabus will help you analyze each set of readings. Be prepared to discuss the readings in class either in small groups or in whole-class discussions.

Course Requirements and Policies:

Class Discussion: You **must** read the assigned primary sources and secondary sources before coming to class and participate actively in class discussions. Your participation grade is primarily based on your willingness to engage in class discussion in a constructive and consistent manner.

Attendance: You cannot participate in class discussion if you do not attend class! Class meetings are mandatory. You may miss two meetings for any reason (I do not need to know the reason). Any further failure to attend will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

Extensions and Late Assignments: I do not give extensions except in case of an emergency. If you
If you turn in an assignment late, your grade will drop by a third of a letter grade (for example from a ‘B’ to a ‘B-’) for every 24-hour period for which it is late. You must submit a hard copy of your late work.

Honor Code: All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments. You must write and sign the honor code pledge at the end of each assignment. You can review the honor code here: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html.

Accommodations: If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

Assignments and Grading:
You will receive more information about these assignments in handouts later in the course.

*Class Participation (25%)

*Two Short Papers (15% each): Due 26 February and 30 April

*Primary Source Analysis (15%): Due 19 March

*Consumption Project (30%): Finished project due Friday, 15 May, 7pm
  Personal Inventory (10%)
  Consumption Journal (10%)
  Analysis (10%)

Schedule of Topics:
I will hand out detailed reading schedules periodically throughout the semester.

I. The History of the History of Consumption
   Introduction to Course, Definitions, and Theoretical Background
   3 February
   5 February – No Class
   10 February

II. Rise of Consumption: the Renaissance and the Early Modern Era
   12 February
   17 February
   19 February
   24 February

III. Commodities
   26 February – First Short Paper Due
   3 March
   5 March
   10 March

IV. The Industrial Revolution, Victorianism, and the Long Nineteenth Century
   12 March
   17 March
   19 March – Primary Source Analysis Due
   23-27 March Spring Break
   31 March
   2 April
   7 April
   9 April

V. World Wars and Consumption
   14 April
   16 April
   21 April
   23 April

VI. Mass Production and Mass Consumption: Where do we go from here?
   28 April
   30 April – Second Short Paper Due
   5 May
   7 May

   Final Consumption Project Due Friday, 15 May, 7pm in my office, Rice 315