What do amusement parks, nail salons, and shopping malls have in common? They are all spaces where people buy and sell emotion. This course explores those “emotion transactions” in the context of American consumerism. We explore the history and driving forces of consumer society and the role of emotions in its development, as consumers found new opportunities to express envy, attachment, and happiness by purchasing goods. We also study the selling and buying of American consumers’ feelings in various commercial settings, as more and more of our free time is spent in malls and theme parks, today’s cathedrals of consumption, where individuals are participating in the construction of this “emotion economy” as workers and consumers.

The first three weeks lay the groundwork for understanding emotions in consumer society. We introduce the history of emotions and consumer society as well as the key sociological concepts and theoretical discussions on how emotions are intertwined with today's consumerism. The rest of the semester (weeks 4-14), we explore the ways in which emotions feature at work and in consumption. We will discuss, for example, emotions in advertising, commercialization of pleasure and intimate relationships, consumption, social class and identities, and consumerism in the lives of children. The course schedule involves both local and out-of-state field trips to observe in action what we have studied. We will wrap up the semester with a consideration of questions about the sustainability of our current consumption habits.

**Required Reading**
- John Kasson: *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*
- Assigned articles on Canvas (see class schedule)
- Handouts given in class

**Emergency Instructions**
In the event of an emergency such as a snowstorm, we will use Canvas to augment or replace class sessions.

**Class Objectives and Learning Outcomes**
After taking this course, students will be able to:
1. Describe (both orally and writing) the origins and historical evolution of the American consumer society and culture and how it functions today
2. Explain the role of emotions in consumerism historically and today from the perspective of advertisers, consumers, and employees
3. Apply concepts of globalization and sustainability to understand how the local purchases have global and environmental ramifications
4. Understand the types of evidence and methods that historians and sociologists employ to make scholarly arguments.
5. Understand how economics has helped shaped psychological needs, both past and present.

Note on Special Needs
Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Disability Services, located in the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary. For more information: [http://www.weber.edu/disabilityservices/default.html](http://www.weber.edu/disabilityservices/default.html)

Course Format
The course consists of assigned readings from the text and the reader, classroom discussions, lectures, films, and written and oral assignments (both in and out of class). We teach this course in seminar style, which means that we expect everyone to contribute to class discussion. This means that you must have completed all assigned readings and written assignments before class to be able to participate in the discussion.

A note about class discussion: In these divisive times, it is necessary to remind everyone that classroom discussion will be open and everyone’s views respected. A class is a learning community, and we do not all have to agree to learn from each other. As WSU President Chuck Wight reminds us, “Our institution is a marketplace of ideas, in which we do our best to foster respectful viewpoints. Messages that simply exude hate and bigotry shut down that marketplace.” The key is to listen and contribute to the discussion respectfully. Our goal is to consider different viewpoints without offending anyone.

Evaluation
Quizzes 10%
Before class, we will give a short quiz on the readings for the day to get a discussion going. These will be unannounced and, if you miss a quiz, it cannot be made up; however, missing one will not affect your grade very much. The quiz will help you think about the readings in advance of class discussion.

Observation papers 3 x 15% = 45%
During the semester, there will be three observation papers that integrate either historical or sociological perspectives—or both—on emotions and consumerism. We will provide detailed guidelines for each paper. Please refer to the class schedule for due dates.

Final paper 35%
The final paper will be driven by a student’s interest and its goal is to integrate historical and sociological viewpoints.
Class participation 10%
The class participation includes both attendance and participation in class discussion and field trips. For policy on class absences, please refer to the Class Policy below.

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<th>Grading scale for course performance:</th>
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<td>A</td>
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**Class Policy**

1. **Attendance**
   Attendance is integral to your performance. However, we understand that there are occasions where students must miss class. Therefore, we allow five (5) absences during the semester, which should cover minor illnesses and occasional time conflicts. Please inform your professors when you have to miss class. *After five absences, each additional absence will reduce your final grade by a half a letter grade (A→ A-, B+, B, etc.). This is non-negotiable.*

2. **Late assignments**
   Exams and Assignments must be submitted on time. Late work receives a lower grade; a half a letter grade reduction per day late, including weekends.

3. **Extra credit**
   There is no scheduled extra credit in this class.

4. **Professionalism and soft skills**
   Taking this course comes with a set of expectations for the students and the professor:
   - **Timeliness** – Class will start and end on time. Students are expected to come to class and stay the entire 75 minutes.
   - **Technology** – **Laptops should be put away.** Researchers finds that notes taken by hand will improve your understanding and recollection of the course material. Check out the recent research findings on note-taking [here](#) and [here](#).
   - **Cell phones and earphones do not belong in class.** You will be asked to put them away or leave the room.
5. **WSU Student Code**

Students are expected to be familiar with the WSU Student Code and abide by it. The Code may be reviewed online at [http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html](http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html). All necessary steps will be taken to enforce the Student Code to guarantee fairness to all students.

6. **Plagiarism**

As you write your exam essays, make sure you cite other people's work appropriately. Plagiarism (i.e., using someone else's work, ideas, or wording as your own without citing) is considered cheating at Weber State (see student code, section IV.D.2b) and will result, at minimum, in failing your assignment. This also includes getting ideas from your classmates, working on exams together, and copying from the Internet. We will review in class some basic rules of using citations and writing essay exams before the midterm.

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**CLASS SCHEDULE**

The first section of the course familiarizes students with the historical origins of the American consumers society. We explore the ways in which consumerism has shaped American culture and the built landscape as department stores and amusement parks provided people opportunities for new, consumption oriented leisure activities.

**Week 1: Introduction to the course**

T 1/9   Introductions and discussion of course expectations; study away plans

H 1/11  Emotions and consumerism in history and sociology

Read:

**Week 2: The Origins and Continuity of Consumer Society in America**

T 1/16  Consumer motivations in early America

Read:

H 1/18  Emerging consumerism: People as products

Read:
  ● Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (Canvas)
  ● Rudrappa, Sharmila and Caitlyn Collins. 2015. “Altruistic Agencies and Compassionate Consumers: Moral Framing of Transnational Surrogacy” (Canvas)
Week 3: New Consumer Institutions: Department Stores, Catalogs, Advertising, and Amusements

T 1/23  Institutionalizing consumerism: Continuity and change
Read:
- John Kasson: *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*
- George Ritzer. 2010. “A Tour of the New Means of Consumption,” in *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*

H 1/25  Key Moments of Transformation
- Daniel Boorstin, “Consumption Communities” in *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (Canvas)

The next section of the course examines the relationship between emotions and consumerism from the 19th to the early 21st Century

Week 4: Buying Feeling: Envy

T 1/30  “Keeping up” and the power of social comparison
Read:
- Matt, “City Women and the Quest for Status” (Canvas)

H 2/1  Viable new consumers: Women, care, and consumerism
Read:

- **Paper 1: Historical paper due**

Week 5: Buying feeling: Love as a commodity

T 2/6  The rise of Victorian dating sites; the Rise of Dating
Read:
- Pam Epstein, *Selling Love: The Commercialization of Intimacy in America* (Canvas)
- Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Backseat* (Canvas)

H 2/8  Can intimate relationships be commodified?
Read:
Week 6: The buying feeling: Desire
T 2/13 The commercialization of pleasure
Read:
● Elaine Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-thieving* (history of kleptomania) (Canvas)

H 2/15 Buying and feeling: Producing--and consuming--the spectacle
Read:
● George Ritzer. 2010. “Reenchantment: Creating Spectacle Through Implosion, Time, and Space,” in *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption* (Canvas)
● John Van Maanen: “The Smile Factory: Work at Disneyland” (Canvas)

**Excursion to Farmington Station**

Week 7: The Rise of Modern Advertisements and the Use of Emotion
T 2/20 The emotional appeal
Read:
● Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Canvas)
● Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (Canvas)

H 2/22 Advertising and the creation of needs
Read:
● Baudrillard, *The Ideological Genesis of Needs*” (Canvas)
● Bordo, “Hunger as Ideology” (Canvas)

Week 8: Selling Emotion: Emotions at Work
T 2/27 Emotional labor at work
Read:
● Arlie Hochschild. 2013. “Can Emotional Labor Be Fun?” (Canvas)
● “Wal-Mart Greeter” in *GIG: Americans Talk about Their Jobs* (Canvas)

**Paper 2: Analytical paper due**

H 3/1 Working for a feeling
Read:
● Terkel, *Working* (Canvas)
● Christina Kotchemidova, “‘Drive-by Smiling’: A Social History of Cheerfulness,” *Journal of Social History*, 39(1): 5-37. (Canvas)
● Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Canvas)
● Adia Harvey Wingfield. 2010. “Are Some Emotions Marked ‘Whites Only’? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces” (Canvas)
March 5-9 Spring Break Field trip to Las Vegas or Disneyland
Read during the break:

- Barbara Brents and Chrystal Jackson. 2013. “Gender, Emotional Labor, and Interactive Body Work: Negotiating Flesh and Fantasy in Sex Workers’ Labour Practices” (Canvas)

Week 9: Emotions and consumerism in children’s lives over a century
T 3/13  Born to Buy?
Read:

- Gary Cross, *Kids’ Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Canvas)

H 3/15  Consuming Kids
No reading

Week 10: Emotional landscapes of distinction: Consumption and social class
T 3/20  Consumption and cultural capital
Read:

- Pierre Bourdieu. 1979. “The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction” (Canvas)
- Joshua Freedman and Dan Jurafsky, “Authenticity in America: Class Distinctions in Potato Chip Advertising,” *Gastronomica* (Canvas)

H 3/22  Class and Social Signalling
Read:

- John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* (Canvas)

- **Paper 3 due: Field trip observations**

Week 11: The overworked and overspent American
T 3/27  The work-spend cycle
Read:

- John De Graaf et al., *Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic* (Canvas)
- Juliet Schor, “The Insidious Cycle of Work and Spend” (Canvas)

H 3/29  The Overspent American
No reading

Week 12: Emotional appeals to consume
T 4/3  Consuming for good? Commercial philanthropy
Read:
Jennifer Le Zotte, "Not Charity, but a Chance": Philanthropic Capitalism and the Rise of American Thrift Stores, 1894-1930 (Canvas)


H 4/5  “Bright-siding” and “Pinkwashing” -- Emotions and consumption for health

Read:
- Ehrenreich, Bright-Sided (Canvas)

Week 13: Globalization of emotion: The emergence of the care economy

T 4/10  American love in the global market

Read:
- New Yorker article https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/04/11/the-sacrifices-of-an-immigrant-caregiver

H 4/12  Estrangement and the market

Read:
- Hochschild, “Emotional Life on the Market Frontier” (Canvas)

Week 14: Is our consumer culture emotionally, politically, and environmentally sustainable?

T 4/17  The real limits of consumption

Read:
- Gary Cross, Consumed Nostalgia (Canvas)
- Carl Pope, “The Devil’s in the Retail,” Sierra (Canvas)
- Robert Wengronowitz, “Sustainable Pleasure and Pleasurable Sustainability at Chicago’s Experimental Station” (Canvas)

H 4/19  Semester wrap up and reflection
No reading

- Final paper due: Thursday, 4/26