

## **IDS 285/SOC 289: Sustainable Consumption**

Spring 2017

M/W 10-11:15 AM  
Classroom: Tarbutton Hall 218  
Emory University

**Instructor:** Dr. Alice Reznickova  
Tarbutton 208  
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Tuesday 1-3 PM

**Office:**  
**Office Hours:**

“Our personal consumer choices have ecological, social, and spiritual consequences. It is time to re-examine some of our deeply held notions that underlie our lifestyles.”

*David Suzuki*

“We share this planet, our home, with millions of species. Justice and sustainability both demand that we do not use more resources than we need.”

*Vandana Shiva*

### **Course Description**

Have you ever wondered about the life history of your shirt? Your deodorant? Your cell phone? Everyday objects have pasts and futures; from being simple parts in the ground they come to our hands only to be eventually discarded and forgotten. We will follow these stories through history and critically assess their impact through the lens of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in the local and global contexts. Touching on topics such as climate change, resource depletion, and human health, we will examine how consumerism and materialism can lead to the degradation of the environment and human bodies, but also explore strategies leading to global sustainability.

### **Course Objectives**

- Understand how government policies & producer/consumer choices affect environmental, economic and social sustainability
- Be able to find information about products/services and assess their sustainability
- Make links between our political, social, and economic context throughout history and our consumption choices
- Research different issues related to sustainable consumption locally (on campus, in Atlanta), nationally and globally
- Understand different sides of sustainability dilemmas

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- Design solutions for a more sustainable future

### **Course Outline**

Sustainable consumption encompasses many different topics across disciplines – it would be impossible to cover them all in one semester. Similarly, it is impossible for the instructor to be familiar with all facets of all topics and all disciplines. For these reasons, this class is an overview of sustainable consumption based on collaborative learning. Given the often sensitive/political nature of some of the topics, it is absolutely essential that we work together to create a space that is challenging but collaborative and respectful.

Rather than a firm plan, the course schedule serves as a map that will guide us throughout the semester. In the first part of the course, we will focus on defining sustainability and consumption behaviors. In the middle of the semester, we will focus on (un)sustainability of specific products and services. At the end of the semester, we will conclude with discussion of both individual and structural solutions.

Please, note that the schedule and reading list are not finalized; I reserve the right to make changes throughout the semester based on student interest, my research and/or interesting news. Any changes in topics or readings will be announced one week ahead both in class and on Canvas.

### **Assessment**

Your final grade will be a combination of participation and assignments. *Participation* loosely refers to class preparation and will serve to aid you in discussions. Points are given for the preparation itself (to be submitted online before class) rather than for the discussion itself; however, you are fully expected to attend class and participate. *Assignments* are formal papers and presentation; all of them require in-depth literature research and proper citations/bibliography. Detailed information about each assignment & grading can be found on Canvas.

#### ***Participation - 40%***

Four exercises (4 x 3%): complete an assigned exercise with a reflection

Memos (4 x 3%): a reflection for one of the assigned sources

Debate (2 x 5%): bullet points for an in-class debate

3x5 presentation (6%): sustainable consumption news in three minutes/five slides

**Assignments - 60%**

Short mid-term paper (15%): 4-5 pages; address a sustainability dilemma

Sustainable conference presentation (20%): group presentation for a plan on a sustainable society

Final paper (25%): 6-8 pages; explore a sustainable consumption topic of choice

**Expectations for Attendance/Participation**

Respect for one another is a guiding principle in this class: as I prepare to teach every class, you should be prepared to attend (and be on time) and actively participate in every class. While I do not forbid use of technology, I would like to ask you to use it only when you absolutely must.

Because life can sometimes surprise us, you have two free passes for the semester to either be late or not attend class. After the two free passes, 2% will be subtracted from your final grade for each class you miss and 0.5% for each class you come late to.

**Communication**

Please, do not hesitate to contact me – my primary role is to help you learn and learn from you. I am excited to work with you all this semester! I usually (NOT guaranteed) respond to e-mails within 24 hours; I do not respond after 6 PM and only sparsely during the weekend/holidays. I hold regular office hours, but feel free to schedule additional meetings or simply drop-by. If you have any questions about an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact me well before the assignment is due.

**The class will use CANVAS for the syllabus, schedule, more detailed versions of all assignments, and all course readings (except the required book). You will also use it to upload your assignments. I will post grades there and share any course-relevant messages usually 2-3 times a week. It is up to you to check CANVAS often and keep up with all the deadlines.**

**Special Accommodations**

If you need specific accommodations, please contact me early in the semester.

**Academic Integrity**

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Please, do not engage in any behavior that violates the University Honor Code; if you have any questions, contact me. All work must be completed individually and on your own (with the exception of the group presentation); all sources must be properly cited. You can further review the Emory Honor Code here: <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.

**Due Dates and Late Assignments**

All participation assignments are due online at 8 AM on the day of class as specified in the course schedule; the mid-term and final papers are due on Friday before Spring break and during our final (also in the syllabus). Please, let me know if there are any circumstances preventing you from finishing your work prior to the deadline. If we are not in communication about it, late assignments will be marked down by half a letter grade (e.g. A to A-, A- to B+ etc.) every 24 hours after due date and not accepted after 72 hours.

**Academic Help**

Emory College has numerous programs to support students academically, including academic coaching and the writing center (which also offers ESL support). More information can be found here:  
<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/>.

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Date	Topic	Readings	A
Jan 9	WINTER BREAK - NO CLASS		
Jan 11	Introductions, expectations, motivation; Defining sustainable consumption		
Jan 16	MLK DAY - NO CLASS		
Jan 18	Sustainability: Definitions, measurements	*Wilk (2009) Morelli (2011)	
Jan 23	Why consume I: Needs, Wants, Rights	Bell Chapter 2 (pp. 41-46) *Declaration of Human Rights	Exercise consumption
Jan 25	Why consume II: The Consumer Society	Bell Chapter 2 (46 till the end) <i>Shop 'til You Drop (in class)</i>	
Jan 30	Why consume III: The consumer society cont.	READ ONE: Friedan (1963) Holt (1996) Kotlowitz (1999)	A
Feb 1	Why consume IV: Neoliberalism, treadmills, technology	Bell Chapter 3 *Neoliberalism (The Guardian)	B
Feb 6	Resources I: Energy & Climate change	Green washing: 7, 8, 9 Oreskes & Conway (2013)	Exercise your power
Feb 8	Resources II: Water, Metals & Minerals	<i>Tapped</i> TBD	C
Feb 13	Chemistry I: Personal care products & Knowledge	Green washing: 3 *TedX by Van Jones Bullard & Johnson (2000)	Exercise your products
Feb 15	Chemistry II: Case study: Lawns	Robbins (2007) Chapter 4, 5	A
Feb 20	Food I: Industrial food systems	Gottlieb & Joshi Chapter 1, 2	B
Feb 22	Food II: Local food, food security, food justice	Alkon Chapter 3, 5	C
Feb 27	Clothes I: Cotton & Plastics	Green washing 1 <i>True Cost</i>	
Mar 1	Labor	*The Price of Nails (NY Times)	Exercise live off wages <b>Mid-term due</b>

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			<b>3 at a time</b>
Mar 6	SPRING BREAK		
Mar 8	SPRING BREAK		
Mar 13	Cities I: Housing (& homelessness), smart design	Greenwashing: 6 TBD	A
Mar 15	Cities II: Cars	Green washing: 4 <i>Who Killed the Electric Car?</i>	B
Mar 20	<i>Philanthropy: Guest lecture by Hillary Hoffstein</i>	TBD	C
Mar 22	Garbage	Green washing: 5 <i>Waste Land</i>	A
Mar 27	Health care: Obesity	Guthman (2011) Chapter 1, 2	B
Mar 29	Health care: Breast Cancer	*Ehrenreich: Welcome to Cancerland <i>Pink Ribbon Inc.</i>	C
Apr 3	Solutions? I: Individual factors	Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002) TBD	<b>Plan Sust Solu Conf</b>
Apr 5	Solutions? II: Voluntary simplicity vs. political consumption	TBD	Debate
Apr 10	Solutions? III: Economy	TBD	
Apr 12	Solutions? IV: Degrowth vs. Virtual environmentalism	TBD	Debate
Apr 17	Sustainable solutions conference		<b>Pres</b>
Apr 19	Sustainable solutions conference		<b>Pres</b>
Apr 24	Last class: Review, Reflection, Evaluation		
FINAL			<b>Final</b>

**Notes:**

- all readings will be re-posted with explanations about how to find them in announcements a week before they are expected to be completed
- "Green washed" is a required book: Pierre-Louis, K. (2012). *Green washed: Why we can't buy our way to a green planet*. Ig Publishing.
- *in italics* are movies (either on library reserve or on Netflix)
- \*marked sources are websites (both text and video)/journals/, link will be provided in announcements

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- the rest are either book chapters and/or scholarly sources that can be accessed via electronic course reserves
- TBD readings will be added at least one week before the date they are assigned for