This course is geared towards enabling students to explore some key approaches to understanding consumption in contemporary times. It has two broad objectives: (1) to situate multiple theorisations of contemporary consumption in relation to overarching processes of cultural change, and secondly, (2) to explore some of the key substantive themes (the shopping experience, advertising, food and drink, tourism and fashion and clothes) in the area of sociology of consumption with reference to spaces and practices of consumption in the Indian context. While examining different conceptions of identity, lifestyle, freedom, choice, and power, the course will engage with different approaches to the study of culture and consumption in relation to wider debates around modernity, post-modernity and global information. Through exposure to a variety of contemporary and classical theories, students will be encouraged to reflect on the social patterns of consumption and how these patterns reproduce, subvert, or reformulate inequalities of class, gender, and ethnicity. Drawing primarily on sociological and social anthropological research and literature, the course intends to provide the students with a broader analytical framework to understand the phenomenon of consumption as a meaningful and meaning creating activity in modern society. It will focus on some of the most compelling interpretations of the functions of consumption and also consider instances of resistance and attendant arguments for ecological constraint and restraint. In its entirety, the course will attempt to go beyond purely economic approaches to consumption. Though privileging Indian experience (to be circumscribed by the available literature), it will bring in comparative cross-cultural perspectives to enhance students’ analytical capabilities. The overall purpose is to equip the students with conceptual tools for analysing economic phenomena as embedded in societal structures. It will endeavour to improve students’ skills for more complex interpretations of theoretical issues and practical implications linked to the changing nature of contemporary economic processes. The course will also present case studies from selected areas of the sociology of consumption.

Pedagogy:

The course will involve thirty contact-hours spread over ten weeks. The course will be taught by a combination of lectures and seminars. Each lecture will give a critical overview of an aspect of contemporary culture of consumption and will highlight key themes gleaned from the relevant literature. There is no prescribed textbook for the course and the readings indicated for each session are included in the course handout. This readings list also forms the basis of seminar discussion. In the beginning of the course,
and in consultation with the course instructor, students will select a product, service or lifestyle for their term-end project assignment and presentation.

**Assessment:**

Mid-term Examination: 40%
Project and Project Presentation: 40%
Class Participation: 20%

**Session Plan**

**Session 1: Introduction to the Course: What is Consumption?**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

**Session 2: The Historical Development of Consumer Culture**

*Readings:*

Mike Featherstone. 1990. ‘Perspectives on Consumer Culture’, *Sociology,* 24 (1).


CEMS MIM pillar: Reflective Critical Thinking

**Session 3: The Coming of Consumer Society**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

**Session 4: Understanding Consumption in Contemporary Times: Theoretical Approaches**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

CEMS MIM pillar: Reflective Critical Thinking

**Session 5: Why Consumption Matters?: The World of Goods**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Responsible Citizenship

CEMS MIM pillar: Reflective Critical Thinking

**Session 6: Cultural Dimensions of Markets**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Responsible Citizenship

CEMS MIM pillar: Reflective Critical Thinking

Session 7: Lifestyle

Readings:

CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism
CEMS MIM pillar: Responsible Citizenship

Session 8: The Shopping Experience

Readings:

CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

Session 9: The Brand: Advertising and the Consumer Culture

Readings:

**Session 10: Choice, Identity and Freedom**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Responsible Citizenship

**Session 11: Spaces of Consumption**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Responsible Citizenship

**Session 12: Taste and Distinction**

*Readings:*


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

**Session 13: Consumption and Fashion**
Readings:


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

Session 14: Leisure, Travel and Tourism

Readings:


CEMS MIM pillar: Internationalism

Session 15: Consumption and Cultural Reproduction I: Class

Readings:


Session 16: Consumption and Cultural Reproduction II: Ethnicity and Gender

Readings:


Session 17: Politics of Consumption
Readings:


Session 18: The Contradictions of Consumer Culture: An Indian Perspective

Readings:


Session 19: Project Presentations

CEMS MIM pillar: Comprehensive Leadership

Session 20: Project Presentations

CEMS MIM pillar: Comprehensive Leadership