Course Description
We are a nation of consumers is a commonly stated observation of Americans. Some theorists and cultural critics argue that in fact consumption is the national religion and it is the thread that binds the diverse and divergent constituents that make up the nation’s population. This course will provide an opportunity for us to think critically about the role of consumption culturally, historically, and economically in the United States.

Consumption is our broad theme through which we will explore a range of topics, debates, and methods in the field of American Studies. The course will look at various forms of consumption, including food, music, amusement parks, psychology, education, and representations. Students will engage with primary and secondary sources as well as various forms of media and literature. The goal of the course is expose students to scholarly possibilities afforded to them in the field of American Studies, as well as provide incoming majors with key concepts and analytical tools to prepare them for more advanced courses in the major.

Required Texts
Books can be purchased at the Douglass Co-op Store. Materials are also on reserve at Douglass Library.


Course Requirements
Students are expected to complete all readings for each class, to arrive ready to engage with the written and visual materials assigned, and to prepare thoughtful responses to course materials. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as the semester progresses. It is your
responsibility to stay abreast of changes to the course schedule by attending class, checking email regularly, and contacting me for updated information.

**Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated.** Plagiarism includes copying classmates’ answers and improper citation of any text in the course or otherwise. Ignorance of university policy is not an excuse.

**Grading Breakdown**
- Participation (attendance and discussion moderation): 15%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Paper (3-5 pages): 25%
- Final Exam: 20%

**Class Preparation/Participation**
Students are expected to attend all lectures. Over the course of the semester, each member of the American Studies faculty will give a lecture to highlight a range of teaching methods, subject matter, and interests in the field of American Studies. These lectures have been demarcated on the syllabus. All students are required to attend the lectures. Absence from these lectures will negatively impact your grade.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Students must report to me at the beginning of class to make sure that their names are checked off the attendance list. I expect everyone to contribute to our understanding, application, and evaluation of the reading assignments and visual materials analyzed in class. This course requires that you participate as an active reader of U.S. culture. **More than 3 unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.**

As a component of your participation grade, students will work in small groups to help facilitate discussion during one class. Students will sign up for discussion moderation duties at the beginning of the semester. Students will be expected to have prepared, typed questions to be turned in to their section instructor.

Syllabus and class updates will be posted on sakai.rutgers.edu. Students will also be expected to collaborate and post assignments on sakai.rutgers.edu throughout the semester.

**Quizzes**
Students will be given quizzes throughout the course. You will not be able to make up quizzes, unless you have a documented emergency or serious illness. Quizzes will cover course readings as well as lectures.

**Analytical Paper**
Students are required to write one analytical paper that critically engages with issues raised in the course. The essay topic will require students to apply the concepts and theories of the course to a
specific cultural text (book, film, music). More details will be provided closer to the assignment’s due date.

**Midterm Exam**
The midterm exam will cover all materials through the first half of the semester. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and short response questions

**Final Exam**
The final exam will be cumulative. A firm grasp of the material covered throughout the semester will be vital to your success. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and short response questions.

**Course Policies**
All assignments must be completed in order to pass the class. **Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late.** All papers must be double-spaced, typeset with Times or Times New Roman 12pt font, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Format of papers should adhere to a recognized style manual (such as MLA, APA and Chicago).

**Course Schedule**

**Key**
ER= electronic reserves  
L= lecture, RAB 001  
S= section, 1: RAB 001; 2: ARH 200

1/18: **L: INTRODUCTION**
Overview & syllabus

SECTION: GENDER, RACE AND DOMESTICITY
1/22: **L:** The Godey’s Lady’s Book: [http://www.history.rochester.edu/godeys/](http://www.history.rochester.edu/godeys/)
Read: In January 1850 issue: “Ideal Husbands; Or School Girls Fancies” and “Points of Etiquette”
Genovese, “Kitchens, High and Low” pp. 540-549 [ER]

1/25: **S: THE RISE OF MASS ENTERTAINMENT**
Kasson, Amusing the Million, pp. 29-86
Screening: Roscoe Arbuckle’s Coney Island (1917)

1/29: **L:** FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR ROCKLAND
Topic: Why Study Trash?

SECTION: THE RISE OF MASS ENTERTAINMENT
2/1: **S:** Doctorow, Ragtime, Ch. 1-9

**Quiz 1**

2/5: **L:** FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR GILLESPIE
Topic: Folk Cultural Studies & the Commodification of the Blues
Doctorow, *Ragtime*, Ch. 10-19

2/8: **S**: Doctorow, *Ragtime*, Ch. 20-29

2/12: **L**: FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR BARNETT
Doctorow, *Ragtime*, Ch. 24-30

2/15: **S**: Doctorow, *Ragtime*, Ch. 31-conclusion

**Quiz 2**

**SECTION: BODILY PLEASURES, SOCIAL TABOOS AND INGESTION**

2/19: **L**: FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR FISHBEIN
Topic: Prostitution and Interracial Sex in Early 20th Century
Mumford, Kevin. "New fallen women: black/white prostitution“ *Interzones* [ER]

2/22: **S**: de la Pena, Carolyn. Ch. 4: “Powering the Intimate Body,” *The Body Electric* [ER]

2/26: **L**: FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR FABIAN
Topic: Gambling
Fabian, Ann. “Gamblers in the Garden.” [ER]

3/1: **S**: Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation*, Ch. 1, 6 [ER]

Review session

Extra credit: Screening of *Fast Food Nation*
Organized by Rutgers Film Co-op/New Jersey Media Arts Center
Friday - Sunday, March 3-5, 2007: 7:00 p.m. in Scott Hall #123 *CAC*
**Write 2-page analysis and hand in to section instructor by 3/19.

3/8: **S**: IN-CLASS MIDTERM

**SPRING BREAK: MAR 10-18**

3/19: **S**: Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Ch 4-9 (Joe- Snow)

3/22: **L**: FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR SIFUENTES-JAUREGUI
Topic: Latino consumption
Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Ch. 10-12 (Floor Show- The Human Body)

**PAPER DUE**

3/29: **L**: CONSUMPTION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN AMERICAN CINEMA
Clips: Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Some Like it Hot, LA Confidential, Pretty Woman

SECTION: THE SCIENCE AND CULTURE OF ADVERTISING
4/2: L: The Social Psychology of Advertising
  Lecture: Alena Singleton
  Eagly. “Cognitive Theories of Persuasion” [ER]

  Griffin. “‘You’ve Never Had a Friend Like Me’: Target Marketing Disney to a Gay Community” [ER]

4/9: L: FACULTY PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR WU
  Topic: "Chinatown, Mass Culture, and Consumption"
  Wong, Jade Snow. Fifth Chinese Daughter (excerpts) [ER]
  Wong, K. Scott. “Chinatown: Conflicting Images, Contested Terrain” [ER]

  Quiz 3

SECTION: GENDER, RACE, AND PERFORMANCE
4/16: L: Madonna, Cultural Appropriation, and Gender Play
  Bordo. “‘Material Girl’: The Effacements of Postmodern Culture
  Clips: Paris is Burning, music videos

  Quiz 4

  Clips: Ethnic Notions, Bamboozled

4/30: L: DIGITAL CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION
  Ahrens. “The Lessons of Lonelygirl: We can be Fooled and We Probably Don’t Care” [ER]
  Rushfield. “Lonelygirl?: Not any longer” [ER]
  Exam Review

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED FOR WED, MAY 9 AT 7-9PM