

9-2002

## C&I 352E.01: Ethics and Consumer Economics

Audrey Peterson

*University of Montana - Missoula*

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### Recommended Citation

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## C&I W352E – ETHICS AND CONSUMER ECONOMICS

Professor: Audrey Peterson e-mail: audreyp@selway.umt.edu  
Office: ED 210B Phone: 5262  
Office Hours: M 4 PM; W 9 AM, 4 PM; Thurs 2PM; F 9-11; or by appointment

### READINGS AND MATERIALS:

Text: Durning, A. (1992). *How Much Is Enough?* New York: W. W. Norton and Co.  
Electronic Materials: Access to the Internet for work on Blackboard course supplement and materials on electronic reserve

### COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:

*You already know enough. So do I. It's not knowledge we lack.  
What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and to draw conclusions.*  
Sven Lundquist

Successful participants will:

1. apply skills in moral analysis along with previously acquired knowledge to the assessment of current consumer economic issues and role-related responsibilities of consumers of the 21st century.
2. research and analyze a selected current consumer issue, presenting findings through a policy analysis paper, poster and handout;
3. use critical thinking and moral analysis skills to develop recommendations about the selected consumer issue and communicate those through a letter to the editor or to a major policy maker or stakeholder involved;
4. give careful attention to logic, organization, voice and grammar in their written presentations, taking time to review and revise their work;
5. engage in class activity, learning from classmates through collaborative processes and peer review, and contributing thoughtful and focused considerations, both face-to-face and online.

### COURSE DESIGN AND EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated throughout the term by the following:

#### ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

25% Student attendance, preparation and participation are crucial to course continuity and completion of the objectives. Twenty-five percent of the final grade will be dependent on completion of activities both in class and online, work sheets, exercises, class participation, presentation, and attendance.

#### TESTING

25% There will be several quizzes and a final presentation, together worth 25% of the final grade.

#### WRITING ACTIVITIES

10% **Video Review Essay:** From a list of videos on advertising and/or media and culture you will select and view a video and write a review, **due Sept. 25**. A more detailed assignment will be given out in class. The videos are all available at the Mansfield Library; the choices and their call numbers are: *Dreamworlds 2* (VT 04906), music video images portraying sex and sex roles; *Killing Us Softly 3* (VT 10136), advertising and the image of women; *Tough Guise* (VT 09628), male identity in the media; *Slim Hopes* (VT 05505), advertising and the obsession with thinness; *Calling the Shots* (VT 01558), advertising of alcohol; *Pack of Lies* (VT 03809), advertising of tobacco; *The Ad and the Ego* (VT 07348), advertising in the culture; *Killing Screens* (VT 04465), violence and the media.

30% **Policy Issue Analysis.** You'll identify, research and present an analysis of a selected current consumer issue that relates to your major area of study (see following list of possible topic areas). A research-based report will be completed in three sections and peer-reviewed.

Section 1: **due in class October 8**

Sections 1 and 2: **due in class October 29**

Sections 1-3: **due in class November 12**

10% **Personal Response.** You'll write a letter to the editor or a letter to a corporation or congressperson that takes a position on the issue addressed in your policy analysis paper.

**Due in class November 21**

**Possible Topic Areas for Policy Issue Analysis and Personal Response:** You will need to turn in a statement by **September 24** identifying your topic and its focus. It is expected that the series of research and writing activities related to your chosen issue will reflect knowledge and judgment about your topic, address inherent ethical themes, incorporate understanding of the cultural context of your issue, and include information from outside reading and research. You will receive more complete assignments, examples, and evaluation criteria for each writing project.

**Corporate/Consumer Controversies**

marketing issues

- marketing of tobacco or alcohol
- anti-smoking campaigns for youth;
- advertising messages to women, men, children
- exploitation of workers; child labor issues

**Emerging Technology Issues**

consumer impacts of the breakdown of the human genome

- genetically altered food
- medical and pharmaceutical research
- genetic testing/diagnosis
- genetic discrimination

medical technology

- use of fetal tissue transplants / stem cell research
- life support decisions / right to die issues

e-commerce consumer issues

- privacy, safety
- Identity theft or other fraud
- marketing and advertising online; e.g., online auction sites
- term paper marketing

**Economic and Social Issues:**

deregulation of electric power industry

pharmaceutical marketing and pricing

Montana's use of tobacco settlement money

sales tax proposals for Montana

legalization of drugs

distributive justice issues and government policy, e.g. poverty, homelessness, hunger

financial services

- installment credit marketing and practices / student credit
- fringe banking / alternate economy

insurance issues

- redlining
- genetic discrimination
- health coverage for the uninsured

**Sustainability Issues:**

environmental concerns

- global warming policy
- loss of species diversity
- Milltown dam controversy
- sustainable campus issues

consumption & animal rights issues

- cosmetic product testing
- tuna/dolphin controversy
- fur, ivory, and similar products

GRADUATE CREDIT:

Students desiring graduate credit will be asked to do a book review of a current "bestseller" addressing a consumer issue. See instructor for listing of titles and complete assignment.

## SEQUENCE OF TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATION:

### SEGMENT 1: Lifestyle Issues and Moral Sensitivity

<b>Topics:</b>	Cultural expectations, media and moral theory,
<b>Readings:</b>	Durning: Ch. 1, 2, 3, 9;
<b>Evaluation:</b>	Quizzes; Video Review Essay

### SEGMENT 2: American Consumer Movement and Global Perspectives

<b>Topics:</b>	Consumer sovereignty, social and economic issues, consumer protection, consumer legislation, global issues
<b>Readings:</b>	Durning: Ch. 4, 5,6,7
<b>Evaluation:</b>	Quizzes, Issue paper peer and instructor review

### SEGMENT 3: Consumer Role Related Responsibilities

<b>Topics:</b>	Consumer behaviors: sharing and giving, alternate approaches to the market, voluntary simplicity
<b>Readings:</b>	Durning: Ch. 8, 10;
<b>Evaluation:</b>	Quizzes, poster session, letter to editor or policymaker

### **Curriculum Goals: Content Mastery**

In order to successfully complete this course, you will need to be able to:

1. assess cultural presumptions that impact decisions about resource use.

Indicators: Students can

- differentiate between level of living and standard of living, and analyze consumer choice in terms of both.
- identify characteristics of "industrial-age" consumers, "transitional" consumers, and "post- industrial" consumers, as described by Stampfl.
- recognize multiple cultural forces which influence consumer demand and moral perspectives;
- identify and discuss various impacts of media and advertising on the consumer, the economy and the culture.

2. describe and examine consumerism as a social movement.

Indicators: Students can

- define consumer sovereignty and discuss the degree to which it exists in our economy.
- identify factors that have consistently created interest in consumerism throughout U.S. history.
- relate current consumer activism to its Progressive Era roots and moral foundations.
- evaluate the general effectiveness of laws and agencies that have been designed to protect consumers at both the state and federal levels.

3. articulate decisions about resource use, both individual and aggregate, in light of personal value priorities and ethical responsibilities.

Indicators: Students can

- identify various influences/impacts of the American market on the global community.
- state several criteria important for a selected individual consumer purchasing decision, involving both macro and micro issues.
- identify the moral arguments inherent in a contemporary consumer issue.
- articulate and justify personal opinions on current consumer issues.
- articulate personal beliefs regarding a high quality life and consumption behaviors, addressing the tension between personal needs/wants and social needs/wants.

Primary means of instruction used in this class include lecture, case study, videotapes, small group discussions, and poster presentations.

**GRADE SCALE AND DESCRIPTION:**

*"No student ever attains very eminent success by simply doing what is required . . ., it is the amount and excellence of what is over and above the required that determines the ultimate distinction."*

Charles Kendall Adams

A = 90-100%	(Excellent, Superior, Outstanding) Doing extremely well. Improvements will be high degrees of refinement.
B = 80-89%	(Above Average) Doing very well. Improvements will be toward higher refinements of the expected outcomes.
C = 70-79%	(Average, Normal) Doing well. Improvements will be to work toward refinement in quantity or quality.
D = 60-69%	(Below Average) Doing less than expected in quantity or quality; something is wrong. Improvements will be to reach the level of expectations.
F = Below 60%	(Failure) Doing far below the expected level. Improvements are to renew purposes, seek better assistance, change goals, increase efforts, review standards, etc. (Actually, the term "failure" is relative since we rarely learn much about ourselves from our successes.)*

\*Grade descriptors above selected from Koberg, O. & Bagnall, J. (1976). *Values Tech.* Los Altos, CA: Kaufman, Inc.

**NOTE:** Students must attain an overall score of 70% in order to pass on a P/NP grading option. Students required to complete the Upper Division Writing Assessment must do so as a requirement for passing this course.