## **Consumption and Consumers Ethics**

## Prof. Emanuela Mora; Prof. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with a reflective understanding of consumer behavior and related ethical issues and the necessary knowledge to understand the complexity of the cultural dynamics of consumer action. To this extent the course examines theories of consumption, and consumer culture in the context of everyday life with a specific focus on fashion and food.

We will investigate practices of consumption at both a theoretical level and in relation to our own practices of consumption, consumer identities, and ethics of consumption. As individuals, in fact, we spend our lives being at the same time consumers and citizens. As such we hold interests, and responsibilities toward earth, society, other people, ourselves that have become a global matter, known as the “climate change emergency”; however, the latter comprises also other issues such as those related to social justice (dignity of work, access to goods and resources, inclusion of minorities in all the social, cultural and economic processes). The United Nations have addressed these topics in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 (17 Sustainable development goals). The course will explore how the Agenda addresses the topic.

Fashion and food systems play a relevant role in the climate change emergency. Thus, the course will present cases of companies, products and consumption practices that provide harm to the environment and to people. It will also present cases of fashion and food industries that are in the middle of the sustainable transition. Moreover, cases of NGOs and associations that promote critical and ethical forms of consumption will be presented.

The course will include lectures, seminars and talks. It will introduce the concepts, research and the most significant issues in the contemporary sociological debate with particular reference to consumer action.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. use the specific lexicon of the sociology of consumption
2. identify the cultural and social characteristics of consumer action with particular attention to the phenomenon of critical consumption
3. analyse in detail responsible consumption in the textile-clothing and food sectors.
4. acknowledge what kind of processes can promote the sustainable transition of industries, cities, social organizations.

***COURSE CONTENT***

This course focuses on the values, identities, and practices that compose consumption and consumers ethics today; particular attention will be given to the social and economic conditions that gave rise to the ethical consumption practices in general and in the fashion and food sectors in particular.

The course aims to address the following topics:

* the sociological study of consumption: classical and contemporary approaches
* the theoretical perspectives about ethical issues in fashion and food: preserving the planet and its resources for the next generations + don’t harm nature’s spaces and times
* the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
* critical consumption: history, characteristics and peculiarities
* critical consumption in the textile-clothing sector and in the food sector. Individual and associated experiences.

***READING LIST***

A reading list for the preparation of the exam will be provided during the course and collected by the professors in a lecture note; the latter will be made available on the Blackboard page of the course itself. The slides of the lessons and any additional didactic material used will also be available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course includes lectures, seminars/talks with experts from the fashion and food sectors, and discussion sessions with students to deepen the topics covered in the lessons. The course envisages also practical individual and group assignments.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed through an oral exam. The questions will aim to assess students’ ability to express themselves dialectically with correct and appropriate language as well as to demonstrate their knowledge of main theories in the field of consumer behavior and ethics.

Assessment will take into consideration relevance of answers, appropriate use of specific terminology, argumentative and coherent structure of students’ expositions and their ability to link concepts and identify open issues.

The teachers may reserve the right to provide, at the end of the entire cycle of lessons, a written exam with the aim of ascertaining a basic knowledge of the evolution of theories and research methods on cultural production with reference to both the internal debate discipline, and the socio-cultural context in which the various theories and methodologies arose, developed and compared.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No prior knowledge is required; however, intellectual curiosity for the study of consumer behavior and ethics and a minimum knowledge of sociological terminology are desirable. To this end, the consultation of a Sociology Dictionary is recommended.

Students are encouraged to regularly consult the Blackboard platform for alerts and updates. In the event that the sanitary emergency relating to the Covid-19 pandemic will not allow face-to-face teaching, distant learning will be guaranteed.

*Place and time of consultation hours*

Prof. Emanuela Mora: By appointment, on Wednesdays, at 10.30 am. Department of Sociology, Franciscanum Building, III Floor. If necessary, by appointment on Skype and/or Teams. Please, ask the Secretariat for Prof. Mora’s office directions.

Prof. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice: by appointment, Department of Sociology, Franciscanum Building, III Floor or on Skype and/or Teams.