

COMM 287
ADVERTISING AS SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
STUDY GUIDE 2

Questions for

“The Visible Lifestyle” by Juliet Schor

“Laden with Lard” by Barbara Ehrenreich

“The State of Consumption Today” by Gary Gardner, Erik Asadourian & Radhika Sarin

Film: End of Suburbia

Film: An Inconvenient Truth

Juliet Schor *The Overspent American: “The Visible Lifestyle”*

1. What does competitive spending revolve around?
2. Why do visible products become status goods?
3. What is one of the most important features of the status game?
4. What is the function of advertising on the outside of a car?
5. Why do middle-class consumers (more than the rich) need logos?
6. What does Tommy Hilfiger say about the importance of logos for sales?
7. For what type of products is peer group influence always higher?
8. What is similar about the history of athletic shoes, T-shirts, bicycles, sunglasses and coffee?
9. What is the growth of branded middle-class consumption evidence of?
10. What does the research on museums reveal about how we consume positional goods (like tourism)?
11. In the research conducted by Schor why do women pay more for lipstick than for facial cleanser?
12. What is the relationship between income/education and status consumption?
13. The proliferation of what types of goods are testimony to our concern with making an impression?
14. How have some designers dealt with the problem of fakes?
15. According to Russell Belk, what are our possessions?

16. What is the new game in town?
17. Where is the new game of consumption most evident?
18. Why are natural fabrics so important to the new game?
19. When does spending come to the fore as a powerful determinant of social status?
20. How did Doris Shepley pay dearly for her status seeking?
21. What does Schor think our sense of the "aesthetic" is drenched in?
22. What does the example of vitamins and jeans tell us about status?
23. What is status seeking pushing American consumers toward?
24. How could the money that we are spending on status competition be used?

Barbara Ehrenreich "Laden with Lard"

1. How did Gloria Steinem describe the East German revolution?
2. What were the two reasons that Communism failed?
3. What are the messages of advertising about?
4. What do people in the post-Communist world confuse?
5. What was the "old left" position on consumption?
6. What are the two sides of capitalism?
7. What are the two faces that capitalism presents to us?
8. In the campaign for a livable wage or social benefits, what appears irrelevant?
9. What else is the consumer culture other than the bright side of an otherwise Dickensian economic system?
10. What does the consumer culture leave out? How does it fail to deliver?
11. What is the flip-side of the consumer spectacle?
12. How does advertising play a subversive role within consumer capitalism?
13. What does Ehrenreich mean when she says we have to find ways to glamorize the possibility of an activist public sector?
14. What does Ehrenreich mean by "conviviality"?
15. What does Ehrenreich believe the political project to be?

Gary Gardner, Erik Asadourian & Radhika Sarin
“The State of Consumption Today”

1. According to industry analysts, how will the number of cars on China’s streets compare to the number on US streets moving forward?
2. From the perspective of Chinese government officials, what economic advantages are produced by the rise of automobile culture?
3. What percentage of the global “consumer class” is made up of people in developing countries?
4. According to the authors, what is the stark dilemma the world faces because of rising consumption?
5. Based on US consumption patterns, what are the prospects for slowing consumption elsewhere in time to prevent severe damage to the planet?
6. According to the authors, what is the “key” to delivering a high quality of life with a minimum of environmental abuse and social inequity?
7. According to the authors, when does consumption threaten the well-being of people and the environment?
8. In comparison with the 20th century, what new challenge is faced by economies of mass consumption in the 21st century?
9. Beyond population growth, what is the other major reason that the amount of money spent on goods and services at the household level has exploded worldwide?
10. When we think about the negative effects of consumption, why would it be a mistake to believe that the skyrocketing rates of population growth in developing countries pose a greater global challenge than the much lower rates of population growth in the US?
11. What percentage of ALL of the worldwide private spending done by consumers is done by the 12 percent of us who live in North America and Western Europe?

12. What income level was used to determine that roughly 1.2 billion people live in “extreme poverty”?
13. What do members of the global consumer class tend to have in common?
14. What region of the world has the smallest consumer class?
15. According to the authors, when are worries about potential increases in Asian consumption misplaced?
16. Which countries are responsible for the bulk of the consumption-caused degradation of the global environment?
17. According to the authors, why does hunger exist despite record food supplies?
18. How many people worldwide lacked access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation in 2000?
19. In addition to providing access to local news and entertainment, what does TV provide that relates to increases in consumption?
20. Why do the authors say that “the view emerging from the [television] screen is increasingly global in scope”?
21. How much would it cost to provide adequate food, clean water, and basic education for all of the poorest people in the world?
22. The US, with 5 percent of the world’s population, consumes how much of the world’s oil?
23. Even though recycling has increased worldwide, why is the amount of paper NOT recycled higher than ever?
24. According to the authors, how have mainstream economists since Adam Smith viewed consumers?
25. How might advertising relate to “unhealthy levels of consumption”?

26. What advantage has a “globalizing world” offered corporations?
27. What’s the comparison between the amount of time it took for radio, TV, and the Internet to reach an audience of 50 million people?
28. How does Moore’s Law relate to the author’s argument about consumption?
29. How does the pressure felt by companies to cover fixed costs affect production?
30. According to the authors, what has been perhaps the most powerful tool designed to stimulate consumer demand?
31. How much space does advertising occupy in the average US newspaper, the mail Americans receive, and network television programming in the US?
32. What do the profits of credit card companies depend on?
33. How do the authors define “waste”?
34. According to a study, approximately what percentage of the total value of the US economy is spent on waste?
35. As the waste “champions,” how much more waste does the average American produce than the average resident of any other OECD country?
36. According to a study published in the journal *Science*, why are nearly all of the world’s ecosystems shrinking?
37. What does the “ecological footprint” measure, and what does it show about total consumption levels relative to the ecological capacity of the planet?
38. Where does the US rank among the 17 countries measured in the UN Development Program’s Human Poverty Index?
39. Which three features of American society does Robert Putnam identify as reasons for a decline in the civic engagement of Americans? 62

40. What is the relationship between high consumption and the three features Putnam identifies?
41. According to the authors, what is perhaps the “most damning” evidence that “continued consumption is generating diminishing benefits”?
42. Despite their differences, the slew of books recently published about consumption share what view of consumption-oriented societies?
43. How can governments help enhance consumer choices that will help achieve greater balance?
44. What “self-serving” reasons do the authors cite to help achieve more ethical levels of consumption in the face of massive world poverty?

FILM: End of Suburbia

1. What does James Kunstler label suburbia in terms of resource allocation?
2. According to Richard Heinberg, what party is coming to an end?
3. What are the three kinds of historical suburbs that Kunstler describes?
4. In the aftermath of WW2 what were the first suburban developments driven by?
5. What happens to cities as the population moves to the suburbs?
6. What were GM, Firestone and Standard Oil convicted of?
7. How is the interstate highway system connected to population movement?
8. What has made our contemporary life possible?
9. According to Matthew Simmons, what ended with the 2003 blackout?
10. What is "peak oil"?
11. In what year did U.S. oil production peak?
12. According to Matthew Simmons what country's peak date is key to recognizing that the world has peaked?
13. How will the peak first be felt in the suburbs?
14. According to James Kunstler what will be the effects of not having access to cheap oil and gas?
15. What will happen to interstate trucking as the highway system deteriorates?
16. What will happen to retail as the crisis hits?

17. What does James Kunstler mean by “cluster fuck?”
18. According to Richard Heinberg, what is bad for the media business?
19. According to Richard Heinberg, what is good for the media business?
20. According to James Kunstler, what are the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq the opening engagements in?
21. What is the problem with hydrogen as a form of alternative energy?
22. What is the problem with ethanol as an alternative form of energy?
23. Do the people interviewed in the film think that alternative forms of energy can sustain our current way of life?
24. What is the “new urbanism”
25. According to Matthew Simmons, what is the only thing that can save us?
26. What will reverse globalization?
27. According to James Kunstler what can we not afford anymore?

FILM: An Inconvenient Truth

1. What quote from Mark Twain does Gore use to illustrate his point that conventional wisdom can get us into trouble?
2. What is one of the most vulnerable parts of the planet?
3. What did Roger Revelle's research show?
4. Regarding Mt. Kilimanjaro, what does Gore say will disappear within a decade?
5. What is the particular problem in relation to glaciers in the Himalayas?
6. When Gore goes to Antarctica and looks at core samples in the ice, what specific event does one scientist identify in the ice?
7. In 650,000 years what have CO₂ levels never risen above?
8. Where will CO₂ levels go to in the future?
9. In which period have the 10 hottest years of atmospheric temperature been recorded?
10. What happens when the oceans get warmer?
11. What was responsible for making Hurricane Katrina even more severe once it left Florida?
12. Why does Gore quote Winston Churchill on the threat of fascism in the 1930s?
13. What is the relationship of global warming to precipitation?
14. What has happened to Lake Chad in Africa?
15. What is the first of the canaries in the coalmine?

16. What has happened to the tundra in Alaska over the last 35 years?
17. Why does the melting of the Arctic ice cap increase global warming?
18. What is happening to polar bears as a result of the ice melting?
19. What impact will the melting of the Greenland ice have on ocean currents and why is it important?
20. How does global warming affect the feeding of migratory birds in the Netherlands?
21. What is the second canary in the coalmine?
22. What happens if the West Antarctic land ice melts?
23. What would happen to the maps of the world if Greenland broke up and melted?
24. According to Gore what collision are we witnessing at the present time?
25. What is the first of the factors causing the collision?
26. What causes almost 30% of the CO₂ that goes into the atmosphere in any year?
27. What has been transformed by the second factor causing the collision?
28. How much of global warming is the United States responsible for?
29. What is the third factor causing the collision?
30. Why does Gore tell the story of the frog in the boiling pot?
31. Why does Gore tell the story of his sister's death from lung cancer?
32. What is the first misconception that bedevils our thinking about global warming?

33. Who did Phillip Cooney go and work for after he resigned from the Bush administration?
34. What is the second misconception that affects our thinking?
35. Why does Gore think that the second misconception offers a false choice?
36. What is the third misconception that affects our thinking?
37. What is the one resource that Gore believes we do not presently have to solve the problem?
38. How does Gore use the example of the hole in the ozone layer?
39. What is at stake in global warming?
40. What suggestions are offered by the filmmakers (in the credits) as to what actions people can take?