

# Consumer & Corporate Social Responsibility

SOCL 210  
Spring 2011  
WF 12:30pm-1:45pm  
Stein 120  
ejones@holycross.edu

Dr. Ellis Jones  
Office: Beaven 221  
Office Hours: W 1:45pm-2:45pm  
F 11:00am-12:00pm  
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## I. OVERVIEW

This course asks what it means to be a good citizen, good consumer, and good corporation in light of contemporary social and environmental problems. Our inquiry will focus on the relationship between democracy and capitalism on local, national, and global levels. We will investigate the complexities of understanding and implementing social responsibility from both an individual and institutional standpoint by asking questions like: Is it possible for large corporations to behave responsibly? Can one truly be an ethical consumer? How can we tell the difference between responsible companies and slick marketing? The course will emphasize deep reading, critical thinking, a variety of learning styles (audio, visual, literary, applied), in-depth research, face-to-face interviews, and the development of a resource- and skill-set that will allow you to pursue questions of corporate social responsibility on your own.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Grasp the many complexities that make up consumers, corporations, and their impacts on, and responsibilities to, the larger society.
2. Achieve a basic understanding of the national and global social transformation resulting from the evolution of the relationship between the modern corporation and the modern consumer.
3. Gain the ability to think critically about the economic, social, and environmental impacts of corporations and consumers on the local, national and global levels.

## IIIa. REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. *The Corporation* by Joel Bakan - Free Press – 2005.
2. *The Ethical Consumer* by Rob Harrison et al - Sage Publications – 2005.
3. *Cradle to Cradle* by McDonough et al - North Point Press – 2002.
4. *Stuff* by Alan Durning - Northwest Environment – 1997.
5. *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* by Nicholas Abercrombie - Penguin - 5th Ed – 2006.
6. *The Better World Shopping Guide* by Ellis Jones - New Society – 3rd Ed – 2010.
7. (CD/MP3/Book) *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist* by Ray Anderson by Blackstone Audio or St. Martin's Press – 2009.
8. (DVD) *The Corporation* by Jennifer Abbott & Mark Achbar - Zeitgeist Films – 2005.

## IIIb. REQUIRED RENTALS \*

9. *Capitalism: A Love Story* – 2010. (DVD/Netflix Streaming)
10. *The Cove* – 2009. (DVD/Netflix Streaming/Vudu)
11. *Food, Inc.* – 2009. (DVD/Netflix Streaming/AppleTV/Amazon/Vudu)

\* Each of these titles can also be purchased new/used in stores or online (the earlier, the better).

## IIIc. RECOMMENDED READINGS

12. *Supercapitalism* by Robert Reich – 2007.
13. *The Rough Guide to Shopping with a Conscience* by Duncan Clark - Rough Guides – 2007.

#### **IV. INSIGHT-QUESTION CARDS**

In lieu of weekly response papers, I've decided to create a much more efficient assignment that will allow you to: keep up with the readings, get credit for your hard work outside of class, and facilitate class discussion on any given day. It should only take you 10 minutes to prepare, twice a week, and it should allow you to focus more specifically on the ideas in class that speak to you.

In brief, for every class, you will bring in a 4X6 card with your name, the class day (WEEK #3 – Wednesday), and an insight gained from the readings/videos on the front (2-4 sentences). You'll also include 1-3 questions sparked by the readings/videos on the back. What you write is completely up to you. You will hand these in at the end of every class period. At the end of the semester, I will assess the quantity (50%) and quality (50%) of the IQ cards you've handed in to determine a fair grade for your work on them. These cards will make up 15% of your final grade.

#### **V. ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS**

On the Moodle website for the class you'll find a folder labeled "Consumer & Corporate Social Responsibility News Forum". Over the course of the semester, you are expected to add at least 3 interesting audio, video, photo, illustration or document files that you come across as you explore various aspects of social responsibility on the web. Your online contributions will count for 1/5 of your scholarly attitude score (2% of your final grade).

#### **Vi. RADIO NEWS CLIP WEDNESDAYS**

On one of the 14 weeks of class, you and another student will be assigned to bring in a 1-5 minute audio clip taken from a news story concerning aspect of corporations, consumers, or social responsibility, heard on public radio within the last week. The purpose of the radio news clip will be to allow the class to discuss the most recent issues of corporate and consumer responsibility in order to apply what we are learning in class to real world events.

You may download the clip from a website (e.g. [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) or [www.pri.org](http://www.pri.org)), but it must be from a public radio news source (ABC, NBC, CNN, etc. are not acceptable). You may not repeat another student's news clip. You must email your clip to me as an attachment (MP3 preferred) that is playable via computer (with a definitive start and stop point between 1 and 5 minutes). The sign-up sheet will be available on the very first day of class to allow you plenty of time to prepare. Your radio clip will count for 1/5 of your scholarly attitude score (2% of your final grade).

#### **Vii. ASSIGNED OFFICE HOURS**

On one of the 14 weeks of class, you will be required to attend my office hours for 10 minutes so that I can get to know you and gain a better understanding of how the class is going for you. You may bring in any number of specific questions or topics to discuss, but at the very least I'd like you to bring in one question and one topic related to the class that interests you. Your office hour visit will count for 1/5 of your scholarly attitude score (2% of your final grade).

#### **Viii. SCHOLARLY ATTITUDE**

Many college instructors evaluate a student's "participation" as one component of his or her total course grade. In this class, you will be evaluated on your "scholarly attitude." Having a "scholarly attitude" involves developing intellectual curiosity and a genuine engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Students with a scholarly attitude take the student role seriously and demonstrate their commitment to academic pursuits by actively engaging in the material, reflecting deeply on the readings, raising thoughtful questions and comments in class, bringing unsolicited materials to share that are directly relevant to the topics being covered, come early and/or stay late to raise their own questions about the material, and generally go above and beyond the



#### **SAFE ZONE**

This class respects all people regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, social class, religion, ethnicity, or ability.

requirements of the course. Students who lack a scholarly attitude passively complete the readings and responses, occasionally engage in other activities during lecture (iPods, texting, daydreaming, and so on), and are primarily concerned with obtaining a particular grade in the course.

I understand that some college classes do not lend themselves to the nurturing of your intellectual curiosity. The inclusion of a “scholarly attitude” score reflects my own commitment to cultivating a spirit of inquiry among my students. In other words, I promise to do my best to spark your interest the course material. The points will be given out as follows: Excellent = 4, Very Good = 3, Good = 2, OK = 1, Fair = ½, Low = 0. To receive anything above OK, you must stand out in my mind as having gone above and beyond the others in the class. This will make up 4% of your grade. The other 6% come from your online contributions (2%), radio news clip (2%), and assigned office hours (2%). The total of the 4 make up 10% of your grade. Note that this score is not assessed along the typical grading scale – it is earned from the bottom up.

## IX. MIDTERM EXAM

In the middle of the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate your ability to apply your new found knowledge on a midterm exam that will cover all of the material presented since the beginning both in-class and through the assigned readings and videos. It will be a very straight forward assessment of your total comprehension of the material including concept definitions, short answers, and essays. The last week of class before the midterm will include an overview of its structure, assessment criteria, and sample questions. The exam takes place on **Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>** and makes up 25% of your grade.

## X. INDUSTRY PROFILE RESEARCH PAPER

During the second half of the semester you will craft a research paper (5 page minimum, single-spaced, 10pt font) where you will investigate the social responsibility issues involved in one of 25 industries (coffee, clothing, computers, etc). You will be asked to utilize all 3<sup>rd</sup>-party sources (i.e. you cannot integrate information offered by the companies themselves) in your investigation. The end result will be a social responsibility profile of your particular industry and the challenges/opportunities faced by socially responsible consumers. Details of this paper will be handed out at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> full week of class. The paper will be due in class on **Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**. This paper will make up 25% of your grade.

## XI. FINAL EXAM

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate your ability to apply your new found knowledge on a final exam that will cover all of the material presented since the midterm in-class and through the assigned readings and videos. It will be a very straight forward assessment of your total comprehension of the material including concept definitions, short answers, and essays. The last weeks of class will include an overview of its structure, assessment criteria, and sample questions. The final exam will take place sometime between **May 12<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>**. This exam will make up 25% of your grade.

## XII. GRADES

<i>Engagement</i>	>	Scholarly Attitude	10%
	>	IQ Cards	15%
<i>Analysis</i>	>	Midterm Exam	25%
	>	Research Paper	25%
<i>Comprehension</i>	>	Final Exam	25%

## XIII. COURSE POLICIES

Please note that late work will not be accepted except in the case of a medical/family emergency that must be verified with documentation. Make-up exams will not be offered. If you have any special requirements, please speak with me during the first week of class about possible accommodations. Attendance is not compulsory. Please come only if you are truly interested in learning about consumers, corporations, and their impacts on society.

## SOCL 210: SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE DUE	TOPIC	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
1	WED Jan 26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	N/A
	FRI Jan 28 <sup>th</sup>		Perry – Stages of Critical Thinking Plato – Allegory of the Cave Hardin - Tragedy of the Commons
2	WED Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>ADVANCED CAPITALISM</i>	Noug – On The Protestant Ethic & The Spirit Of Capitalism Robbins – <i>Global Problems</i> [4-7,32-38] Gereffi – The Global Economy
	FRI Feb 4 <sup>th</sup>		<b>FILM: <i>Capitalism: A Love Story</i></b>
3	WED Feb 9 <sup>th</sup>	<i>THE EVOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION</i>	Bakan – <i>The Corporation</i> : Chapter 1 Robbins – <i>Global Problems</i> [86-91] Drutman – History of the Corporation VIDEO – <i>The Corporation</i> : 1-3
	FRI Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>		Bakan – <i>The Corporation</i> : Chapter 2 <i>Summary Excerpt</i> – Corporation: Legal Status & Types DSM IV Summary - Psychopathy VIDEO – <i>The Corporation</i> : 5,6,8,9
4	WED Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>	<i>CORPORATE ORGANIZATION</i>	Bakan – <i>The Corporation</i> : Chapter 3 VIDEO – <i>The Corporation</i> : 4,7
	FRI Feb 18 <sup>th</sup>		Ritzer – The McDonaldization of Society
5	WED Feb 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>CORPORATIONS &amp; THE STATE</i>	Bakan – <i>The Corporation</i> : Chapter 4 VIDEO – <i>The Corporation</i> : 17-21
	FRI Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>		Robbins – <i>Global Problems</i> [102-103,118-119,122-127] Smith, Chomsky, Bakan – Corporation: Criticism
6	WED Mar 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>CORPORATIONS &amp; CONSUMERISM</i>	<b>Ryan – <i>Stuff: The Secret Life of Everyday Things</i></b>  Bakan – <i>The Corporation</i> : Chapter 5 VIDEO – <i>The Corporation</i> : 11-15 Veblen, Mill: Conspicuous Consumption
	FRI Mar 4 <sup>th</sup>		<b>FILM: <i>The Cove</i></b>
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>			

7	WED Mar 16 <sup>th</sup>		<b>*** MIDTERM EXAM ***</b>
	FRI Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	<i>ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARADIGMS</i>	Derber – <i>Corporation Nation: Five Reasons</i> [172-186] Robbins – <i>Global Problems</i> [364-377] VIDEO – The Corporation: 22,23
8	WED Mar 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</i>	Frederick – <i>Corporation, Be Good!: Four Views</i> [30-35] UNCTAD – <i>Disclosure of the Impact of Corp's</i> [3-7] Derber – <i>Corporation Nation: What's Wrong?</i> [221-229]
	FRI Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Anderson – <i>Confessions of a Radical Industrialist</i></b>
9	WED Mar 30 <sup>th</sup>	<i>THE RISE OF THE CITIZEN-CONSUMER</i>	Bakan – <i>The Corporation: Chapter 6</i> Robbins – <i>Global Problems</i> [378-387]
	FRI Apr 1 <sup>st</sup>		<b>VIDEO: Reich – <i>Supercapitalism</i></b>
10	WED Apr 6 <sup>th</sup>	<i>THE ETHICAL CONSUMER</i>	Harrison, et al – <i>The Ethical Consumer</i> Ch 1-6 & 13
	FRI Apr 8 <sup>th</sup>		<b>FILM: <i>Food, Inc.</i></b>
11	WED Apr 13 <sup>th</sup>	<i>ECONOMY &amp; DEMOCRACY</i>	Clark & Unterberger – <i>Shopping with a Conscience</i> Young & Welford – <i>Ethical Shopping</i>
	FRI Apr 15 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Jones – <i>The Better World Shopping Guide</i></b> Jones – <i>Social Responsibility Activism</i>
12	WED Apr 20 <sup>th</sup>		VIDEO: The Story of Stuff
<b>E A S T E R   B R E A K</b>			
13	WED Apr 27 <sup>th</sup>	<i>LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY</i>	<b>McDonough – <i>Cradle To Cradle</i></b>
	FRI Apr 29 <sup>th</sup>		Hollender – <i>In Our Every Deliberation</i> Esposito – <i>Sustainability</i> Toffel - <i>Sustainability</i> Jones – <i>On Sustainability</i>
14	WED May 4 <sup>th</sup>	<i>RESEARCH EXCHANGE</i>	<b>*** RESEARCH PAPER DUE ***</b>
	FRI May 6 <sup>th</sup>	<i>CLASS WRAP-UP</i>	
	May 12 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup>		<b>*** FINAL EXAM ***</b>

***All full-length books and videos/films are noted in bold along with major assignments.***

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

*All students are expected to behave in accordance with the academic honesty policy developed by College of the Holy Cross. Plagiarized, fabricated, or fraudulent work will not be tolerated, nor will facilitating the process for other students. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please refer to:*

[www.holycross.edu/catalog/academic-honesty-policy.pdf](http://www.holycross.edu/catalog/academic-honesty-policy.pdf)