

## SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION

### 21524 - SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION (2024-25)

#### General

**Code:** 21524

**Lecturer responsible:**

ALCAZAR RUIZ, RAFAEL

Credits ECTS:	6,00
Theoretical credits:	1,20
Practical credits:	1,20
Distance-base hours:	3,60

#### Departments involved

- **Dept:** SOCIOLOGY II  
**Area:** SOCIOLOGY  
**Theoretical credits:** 0,6  
**Practical credits:** 0,6

- **Dept:** SOCIOLOGIA I  
**Area:** SOCIOLOGY  
**Theoretical credits:** 0,6  
**Practical credits:** 0,6

This Dept. is responsible for the course.

This Dept. is responsible for the final mark record.

#### Study programmes where this course is taught

- [DEGREE IN MARKETING](#)  
Course type: COMPULSORY (Year: 3)

### Course context for academic year 2024-25

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There is no doubt that in today's advanced societies consumption is much more than a social activity like any other. Actually, it represents the most transversal phenomenon in these societies. And not only that. It constitutes the essence of them. It is not by chance, therefore, that these societies are named. They are thus constituted as consumer societies. But today with the term consumption we should not refer only to products and material objects. First of all, nowadays, ideas and meanings infinitely created by advertising are consumed. In this way, consumption and advertising are today the same thing. We therefore speak of the consumption-advertising system. This system thus constitutes the authentic sustaining axis of the compulsory subject entitled Sociology of Consumption of the third year of the Marketing Degree of the UA.

For all that has been said, the current consumer society, perhaps the most complex of all, apart from its material and productive dimension, has, like current capitalism, a fundamentally semantic nature. Hence, its enormous capacity to continually redefine itself based on the different socio-historical contexts of the contemporary age. With the sole condition of maintaining the principle of extracting value, collectively generated, in the form of surplus value in favor of a minority, capitalism and the consumer society adapt, within an order, to any spatio-temporal circumstance.

As a consequence, concepts such as social classes, politics, groups or social organizations, so useful in sociology's understanding of industrial society, must be integrated with the sociological analysis of the consumption-advertising system, which is much more explanatory of today's postmodern society. The sociology of the object and the satisfaction of needs, typical of industrial societies, evolves towards a sociology of the symbolic and the semantic in today's consumer society. The object converted into a sign endorses the transition from a society, such as the industrial one, based on merchandise and the satisfaction of needs, to one based on significance, such as that of consumption. The object converted into a sign has raised the latter from the real to the mythological. The consumer society itself is a myth. Everything is possible just by defining it. Happiness, defined by advertising, is the backbone of this society. The mere idea of consumption, constituted in foundational myth, configures the very social essence. It is not real enjoyment, but the anticipation of future pleasure and happiness that generates the social integration of individuals. It is not necessary to generate a social change in reality, it is enough to define it in advertising. If the consumption of objects, mass-produced from industrial society, is necessary for the satisfaction of material needs in any society, what defines the consumer society is the idea of consumption.

Therefore, the sociological analysis of the consumption-advertising system, apart from the development of a more accessible, immediate and economical perspective in terms of effort and time in order to understand the consumer society, constitutes a perfect means of social contextualization for the Marketing Degree. Yes, because as a tool for promoting product sales framed in marketing, advertising, a co-substantial element of consumption, has not only been emancipated from marketing, but has become the communicative essence of our societies.

## Course content (verified by ANECA in official undergraduate and Master's degrees) for academic year {0}

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### Transversal Competences

- **CT1** : Llegir i comunicar-se en l'àmbit professional en un idioma estranger, especialment en anglés.
- **CT2** : Usar habitualment les eines informàtiques i les tecnologies de la informació i les comunicacions en tot l'exercici professional.
- **CT3** : Capacitat de comunicació oral i escrita.

### Specific Competences

- **CE11** : Comprendre el procés de direcció estratègica de l'empresa.
- **CE25** : Conèixer les teories sociològiques sobre el consum i entendre les motivacions de consum en la societat i la influència de l'entorn en el consumidor.
- **CE6** : Entendre les institucions econòmiques com el resultat i l'aplicació de representacions teòriques o formals sobre el funcionament de l'economia.

### Competencias Básicas y Generales:>>Generales

- **CG1** : Adquirir capacitat per a la cercar i analitzar informació rellevant que permeti interpretar l'evolució dels mercats de béns i serveis i formular una estratègia de màrqueting.
- **CG2** : Ser capaç de treballar en equip, liderar-lo i motivar-lo, durant el treball professional, en la direcció de màrqueting.
- **CG3** : Ser capaç d'aprendre per a emprendre estudis posteriors de màrqueting i recerca de mercats, amb un alt grau d'autonomia.
- **CG5** : Ser capaç de prendre decisions empresarials i en la direcció de màrqueting, aplicant els coneixements a la pràctica des d'una perspectiva interdisciplinària i integradora de coneixements.
- **CG6** : Ser capaç de derivar informació rellevant, impossible de reconèixer per no professionals, a partir de dades socioeconòmiques.
- **CG7** : Comprometre's amb l'ètica i la responsabilitat social en el treball, respectant el medi ambient, coneixent i comprenent la importància del respecte als drets fonamentals, la igualtat d'oportunitats entre homes i dones, l'accessibilitat universal per a les persones amb discapacitat i el respecte als valors propis d'una cultura de pau i valors democràtics.
- **CG8** : Analitzar els problemes, en l'àmbit dels mercats i el màrqueting estratègic, amb raonament crític, sense prejudicis, amb precisió i rigor.
- **CG9** : Mostrar capacitat de síntesi en l'anàlisi dels entorns econòmics i empresarials i a l'hora d'emetre judicis basats en les dades obtingudes.

### Exclusive skill taught in this course

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No data

### Learning outcomes (Training objectives)

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No data

## Specific objectives stated by the academic staff for academic year 2024-25

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The basic objective of any subject is the development of a series of skills by the student. In this subject of Sociology of Consumption, the aim is to develop the following skills:

### SUBJECT COMPETENCIES

This subject develops two types of competences, and, within each of them, the following:

Among the transversal or general competences -those that transcend between the different subjects, subjects or degrees- the Sociology of Consumption develops the following:

- Oral and written communication (CT1)
- Capacity for organization and planning (CT2)
- Capacity for analysis and synthesis (CT3)
- Development of critical and self-critical thinking (CT6)
- Ability to work in a team (CT7).

Among the specific competences -those involved in the development of the object of study of the subject- there are different kinds of competence. In the first place, the specific competences of disciplinary training (knowledge) can be considered. These competences are those that are presented in the last epigraph of this field as objectives of the subject. The second type is the specific skills of vocational training (know how). They are those that, based on cooperative learning, the teaching methodology used in the subject, develop professional or instrumental skills. Basically the following work:

- Mastery of social research methods and techniques.
- Ability to apply fundamental qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques of social research.
- Management of a correct vocabulary from a sociological point of view.

Finally, the specific competences of personal training (knowing how to be) -those resulting from learning experiences- practically converge with the transversal competences, already mentioned. They are, therefore, the least specific within this second type. Perhaps the most notable is the development of Information Management Capacity.

### SUBJECT OBJECTIVES

- Know the fundamentals of Sociology.
- Know the fundamental sociological concepts.
- Know the basic characteristics that define sociology as a scientific discipline and its object of study.
- Interpret social reality from a sociological perspective.
- Know how to contextualize and explain social phenomena.
- Know the main sociological perspectives on consumption and advertising.
- Develop a critical spirit towards consumption and what it means in today's societies.
- Know the evolution of the different sociological theories on consumption, both critical and legitimizing.
- Learn to produce and analyze relevant data to improve consumer knowledge.

### Content for academic year 2024-25

A sociological perspective on consumption can be established between two extreme fields of development. The first would be configured by a reduced approach to it. Consumption would thus be understood as little more than the satisfaction of needs. In its most extensive facet, it would refer not only to material needs, but, in an expansive continuum, it could reach the satisfaction of psychic needs, as is well pointed out in Maslow's pyramid. The other extreme in the development of a sociological perspective on consumption would be given by a more global and all-encompassing orientation of it. Consumption would thus be understood as the essential and defining element of our hyper-developed societies. The establishment of the consumer society is thus the obvious consequence of this reality. Consumption, therefore, would no longer be given by the satisfaction of more or less subtle needs, more or less linked to the psychic sphere. Its field would be the globality of the person and, above all, their deep desires of all kinds, even the most unspeakable, the development of consumption as a founding myth of our societies and the anticipation of a future happiness beyond any contradiction with reality. Consumption would thus become the universal mediator of individual and collective consciousness. Obviously between both extremes there is no rupture, but rather a progressive historical continuity that leads to this last broad consideration of consumption. Society and consumption are, therefore, so intimately and substantially intertwined in our societies that the analysis of one of the terms inevitably constitutes the analysis of the other, and vice versa. This is the approach that will be developed in the subject of Sociology of Consumption.

Crucial in achieving this goal is the student's awareness that the realities of industrial society, studied by classical sociology, have been totally recreated in the consumer society. Thus, traditional themes such as kinship and family, social classes, politics and political parties, power, religion or, among all other spheres of the social, social movements are recreated and transformed in current societies in signs (the object converted into a sign), in social networks, in social communication through mass media and in emotional satisfaction in the imaginary. For the establishment of a clear conscience of this change on the part of the student it is necessary, in the first place, the knowledge, although it is superficial, of the classic realities of the industrial society. Thus, it will be able to emerge, in a following movement, to the daily realities of the consumer society.

To achieve this goal, the course is structured around three thematic blocks. In the first two, the most general and classic perspective of any sociology program is developed. It would be a synthetic introduction to sociology, typical of any manual to use. The first of these two blocks deals with the consideration of sociology as a science, and, therefore, with a specific object of study. The second deals with the conceptual development of that object of systemic study: society. For its part, the third block represents the ultimate objective of this course: the sociological analysis of the consumer society through the consumption-advertising system. This perspective, apart from being the most appropriate to the complexity of today's societies, has a double dimension: one more specific, the other more general. The first aims to analyze consumption as a social phenomenon. Therefore, it provides an understanding of the most transversal phenomenon of our societies. The second, broader and more general, makes it possible to establish the main consequences and effects that capitalism and advertising control of collective perception have on social actors. Hence, the most important part of the contents of the program is dedicated to the sociological analysis of the consumer society.

#### PART I. THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY.

From the deep understanding of what science implies with respect to other forms of knowledge, the student will progressively delve into the peculiarities of sociology as such. But before establishing the essential characteristics of the scientific process in sociology and its scientific status in the environment of the other sciences, the student must understand its ultimate cause: the complexity of its object of study. The student must have a certain mastery of the dual character of this object, of its difficult theoretical and practical apprehension, to later understand the differences between sociology and other sciences. Once the problem of sociology as a science and the complexity of its object of study have been established, the theoretical, methodological and substantive polarization with which this form of knowledge is presented to us can be perfectly perceived by the student. Understanding the multidimensionality and multiparadigmism of sociology at a theoretical level, the student should not have problems understanding these characteristics at a methodological level and social research techniques.

Therefore, being these the general objectives of this block, the consequent specific objectives of the same will be the following:

1. The student must know the peculiarities of the object of study of sociology, its scientific statute and the polarization of its paradigms.
2. Elementary knowledge of theory formation as a fundamental element of science is an important goal for the student.
3. From the theoretical multi-paradigm of sociology, the student should pass without difficulty to its methodological multi-paradigm.
4. With this base, a very elementary comparison support can be established between the paradigmatic social research techniques of each of its methodological perspectives. With this, an introductory base is established for the subjects of social research techniques.

This block is configured in two themes:

UNIT 1. Sociology and society.

UNIT 2. Methodological perspectives in sociology.

## PART II. SOCIETY AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM: FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS.

Once the theoretical and methodological knowledge of sociology has been completed in the first block, the object of study will be developed in the second. In establishing its object of study, sociology has generated elementary concepts of considerable depth and great analytical structures. For didactic coherence, the student should first access the most elementary concepts and then the structures with greater analytical depth. Among other reasons, because the latter cannot be understood without the former, and because they simply integrate them, relate them and make them more complex by taking them to spaces of greater relevance and sociological generalization. As a consequence, the design of this part follows this logical and didactic structure. The student, therefore, must, first of all, obtain, as an effect of the study of this part, an approximate idea of concepts as basic and general as those framed in the area of the cultural, the institutional, of social deviation, and of social structure and social inequality. From this base, the student should, in the second place, have the path sufficiently paved to grasp great analytical structures of sociology as important as kinship, power, the State or religion. All these themes that have provided this discipline with some of its most brilliant moments and historical achievements.

Therefore, being these the general objectives of this block, the consequent specific objectives of the same will be the following:

1. The mastery by the student of the basic concepts within analytical orders as characteristic as culture, the institutional system, kinship, social deviation or social inequality.
2. Elementary knowledge of the theories that support these concepts is another of the fundamental objectives for which the student must strive.
3. With this cognitive base, the student is perfectly capable of immersing himself in the study of the great social institutions and the interpretations of the different sociological schools in charge of their study.
4. Both in the case of elementary concepts and the theories that support them, as well as in the case of large social institutions, it is necessary for the student to have an approximate idea of the historical changes that have occurred in all of them over time. This conception will be developed simultaneously with the study of each of these sections.

UNIT 3. Culture and society.

UNIT 4. Demography.

UNIT 5. Social inequality.

UNIT 6. Large social institutions

## PART III. SOCIOLOGY AND CONSUMER SOCIETY.

The third thematic block establishes the analysis of the consumer society and its multiple dimensions through the consumption-advertising system. The consumer society is the conceptual key stone to understand how in a society in which the perceptual and the imaginary progressively replace the tangible, the control of collective perception is the ultimate source of any form of power. Politics, the economy, the social distribution of ranks and social prestige or the deepest desires of social actors are, ultimately, a consequence of collective perception more or less massively directed by advertising and consumption.

Therefore, being these the general objectives of this block, the consequent specific objectives of the same will be the following:

1. Understanding the fundamental characteristics of consumption and the consumer society, both from the point of view of infrastructural aspects as well as superstructural or cultural ones.
2. Knowledge of the deep roots of advertising, as the backbone of consumption, with the myth and the collective unconscious.
3. Knowledge of the linguistic and social genesis of the advertising discourse and its relationship with the rest of the social discourses of power.
4. Knowledge of social control from production capitalism to consumer capitalism.
5. The understanding of the social multidimensionality of consumption and advertising as a shaper of basic behavior in contemporary society.

UNIT 7. The consumer society.

UNIT 8. The myth and advertising in the consumer society: from the collective unconscious and the archetype to advertising.

UNIT 9. Myth and advertising as forms of contemporary power that substitute the idea of God.

UNIT 10. From social control in industrial societies to social control in the era of access.

For the follow-up of the subject, the manual will be used: Basterra, A. (2020), *Sociology of the consumer society and advertising*, Alicante, Publicacions Universitat D'Alacant. For all purposes, and at the discretion of each teacher, it will be considered as the base text for the development of the subject.

The syllabus of this program may undergo some variations that will be notified sufficiently in advance to the students in the program distributed on paper or other media.

## Related links

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No data

### Sociología de la sociedad de consumo y de la publicidad

**Author(s):** Basterra Pérez, Ángel

**Issue:** Alicante : Publicacions de la Universitat d'Alacant, 2020;

**ISBN:** 978-84-9717-734-4

**Category:** Básico

### El sistema de los objetos

**Author(s):** Baudrillard, Jean

**Issue:** Madrid : Siglo XXI, 0;

**ISBN:** 9682303478

**Category:** Complementario

### La sociedad de consumo: sus mitos, sus estructuras

**Author(s):** Baudrillard, Jean

**Issue:** Madrid : Siglo XXI, 2009;

**ISBN:** 978-84-323-1376-9

**Category:** Complementario

### Mitologías

**Author(s):** Barthes, Roland

**Issue:** México : Siglo XXI, 2010;

**ISBN:** 9786070301476

**Category:** Complementario

## Assessment procedures and criteria 2024-25

### GENERAL EVALUATION

The learning process, and therefore also the teaching process, will be evaluated in a mixed way. The practical credits will be evaluated continuously, the theoretical ones through a knowledge exam in the official call. As is known, continuous assessment consists in the fact that the final grade for the course is the result of weighing all the grades obtained on time throughout the course. The other evaluation system proposed is the one traditionally known by all teachers and students: the final exam. The conjunction of both systems tries to enhance the advantages of each one of them in a more complete evaluation.

Continuous evaluation implies the evaluation of work groups linked to cooperative learning. The group must prepare a written report, a poster, a chart, or any other suitable format, explaining their conclusions about the material proposed for the course. This material corresponds to a series of texts -the most seminal- selected among all those that make up the agenda or program of the subject.

The evaluation of the work will be done in group. The note obtained, therefore, will be of all of him. It will be held in a face-to-face public session so that all students can benefit from their contributions and can intervene. It corresponds to 50% of the final grade. The evaluation will be done in weeks and when, due to different contingencies, the teacher indicates it.

Non-continuous evaluation depending on the number of students in each call, the teacher will decide between a multitest exam with closed questions with a penalty for wrong answers (normally 3 errors subtract 1 correct answer) or a development-type exam with general questions. When the number of students is reduced, the professor will decide whether or not it is convenient to carry out the development-type exam, which will be communicated in good time through the usual channels (announcements on the campus, class, paper program, etc.). Normally, and by default, the multitest exam will be performed. Although the test-type exam is carried out by the group, in exceptional cases, and given the academic peculiarities of some students, previously assessed by the teacher, they may opt for a single development-type exam as an alternative, previously renouncing the test. All these tests, with the aforementioned indications, will be carried out in the official call.

Description	Criteria	Type	Weighting system
Assessment through direct work on texts or problem solving	This type of evaluation will be carried out through the direct work of the students on texts or didactic materials and also on the solution of practical problems. As the evaluation of each of these materials will be carried out throughout the course, in practice it is a continuous evaluation, since in the end the student will have obtained several qualifications distributed throughout the course. The final grade of this continuous evaluation will be the result of the average of all the student's grades.	ACTIVITIES OF EVALUATION DURING THE SEMESTER	50
Multiple choice exam or development according to the conditions of the group and of the students taken individually	Depending on the changing conditions in the number of students and their different difficulties, the teacher will choose between a type of multiple choice or development exam. The usual thing will be a massive test-type exam and for specific cases of development. Normally the first, especially in the case that it is closed, will imply some type of penalty for questions answered incorrectly. The development-type exam will be adjusted to much more general questions and its correction will depend on the information provided by the student, their knowledge and their expository capacity.	FINAL TEST	50



## Official exam dates for academic year 2024-25

Exam session	Date	Time	Group - Classroom(s) allocated	Comments
(C1) Pruebas extraordinarias de finalización de estudios	03/10/2024			
(C2) Periodo ordinario para asignaturas de primer semestre	09/01/2025			
(C4) Pruebas extraordinarias para asignaturas de grado y máster	03/07/2025			

## Academic staff



**ALCAZAR RUIZ, RAFAEL**  
Lecturer responsible

THEORY CLASS: Groups: 1  
THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP: Groups: 1



**ALCARAZ SANTONJA, ALBERT**

THEORY CLASS: Groups: 1  
THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP: Groups: 1



**SORIANO CLEMOR, CECILIA**

THEORY CLASS: Groups: 77  
THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP: Groups: 77

## Groups

### THEORY CLASS



Group	Semester	Morning or afternoon session	Language	No. of enrolled students
Gr. 1 (THEORY CLASS) : 1	1S	Afternoon	Spanish	65
Gr. 77 (THEORY CLASS) : 77 INGLÉS	1S	Afternoon	English	91

### THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP


Group	Semester	Morning or afternoon session	Language	No. of enrolled students
Gr. 1 (THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP) : 1	1S	Afternoon	Spanish	65
Gr. 77 (THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP) : 77 INGLÉS	1S	Afternoon	English	91

## Timetables

### THEORY CLASS

Group	Start date	End date	Day	Start time	End time	Lecture room
1	09/09/2024	20/12/2024	LUN	17:00	19:00	<a href="#">A1/0-10P</a> 
77	09/09/2024	20/12/2024	LUN	19:00	21:00	<a href="#">A1/0-01G</a> 

### THEORETICAL/PRACTICAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP

Group	Start date	End date	Day	Start time	End time	Lecture room
1	09/09/2024	20/12/2024	VIE	17:00	19:00	<a href="#">A1/0-10P</a> 
77	09/09/2024	20/12/2024	MAR	19:00	21:00	<a href="#">A1/0-01G</a> 