

COURSE TITLE: LESS IS MORE: From Stuff to Meaning

NO OF CREDITS: 2 QUARTER CREDITS
[semester equivalent = 1.33 credits]

WA CLOCK HRs: 20
OREGON PDUs: 20
CEUs: 2.0**

INSTRUCTOR: MIKE SEYMOUR, M.S.
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COMPLETION DATE:

3 months from your registration date

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: This course requires assignment responses to be posted in a password-secured ONLINE website hosted by The Heritage Institute.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A wide variety of environmental, health and social justice indicators suggest people in developed nations are consuming too much. In fact, according to ecological footprint expert Mathis Wackernagle, if everyone consumed at the level of Americans, we would need five (5) Earths to sustain ourselves. Over-consumption is costing us personal health, spiritual well-being, a livable environment and added suffering to folks everywhere too poor to escape the crushing effects of our inequitable global economy. This wide-ranging online independent study provides teachers grades 4-12 and in many subjects areas (language arts, social studies, math, business) a menu of assignment options to heighten awareness about the consequences of our actions as consumers and citizens. Teachers will explore how we move from unconscious “having” and consuming to conscious meaning and contributing to a better society. All course participants will explore personal values, preview *The Story of Stuff* website, and preview *Affluenza*, an award-winning video done by Seattle activist filmmaker John DeGraaf. Those taking the course for credit will have additional options for on-line and in-print reading, and must also purchase the text *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

1. Have a more complete understanding about what aspects of the consumer product cycle are harmful to personal, social or environmental health.
2. Have an inventory of print and Internet resources that provide evidence of the consequences of over-consumption and which promote socially and environmentally responsible living.
3. Have reflected on their own consumer & life values and practice how to bring these forward in their teaching.
4. Have designed and implemented some form of action project for/with students that minimizes the impact of consuming (for credit registrants).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participants will complete assignments and post responses online to specific questions outlined for each assignment. Completion of all specified assignments is required for issuance of hours or credit. The Heritage Institute does not award partial credit.

****HOURS EARNED:**

Completing the basic assignments (Section A. Information Acquisition) for this course automatically earns participant's their choice of 20 Washington State Clock Hours, 20 Oregon PDUs or 2 CEUs (**Continuing Education Units), which translates to 20 hours. The Heritage Institute is an approved provider of Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, and CEUs by IACET (International Association of Continuing Education and Training, an official national and international certifier of CEUs).

UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT INFORMATION

• UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT OPTION 400 & 500

Teachers may opt to register for 2 (two) Antioch University, Seattle, 400 or 500 level quarter credits, instead of hours, and will be required to:

1. Complete all assignments for clock hours/CEUs (*Section A: Information Acquisition*).
2. Complete the extra reading/viewing, writing and classroom application assignments specified in the syllabus for the 400 or 500 level credit option (*Section B: Learning Application*).
3. Complete an Integration Paper by answering the 5 prompts (*Section C: Integration Paper*).

• REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER

Antioch University Seattle requires 75% or better for credit at the 400 level (upper division) and 85% or better to issue credit at the 500 level (Post-baccalaureate). These criteria refer both to the amount of work submitted as well as the quality of work as determined by each instructor

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| 1. Completion of Information Acquisition assignments | 30% |
| 2. Completion of Learning Application assignments | 40% |
| 3. Completion of Self-Reflection & Integration assignments | 30% |

• CREDIT/NO CREDIT (No Letter Grades or Numeric Equivalents on Transcripts)

Antioch University Seattle Continuing Education Quarter credit is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis; neither letter grades nor numeric equivalents will show on a transcript. At the 400 level credit granted is equal to a "C" or better, and at the 500 level credit granted is equal to a "B" or better. This information is stated on the back of the transcript.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

COURSE MATERIAL and/or TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

You will need high-speed (DSL) Internet access in order to easily view online resources. Some of the reading materials may be provided in the online course environment as PDF documents, a format readable by computers with Adobe Acrobat Reader. You may download a free copy of Acrobat Reader from our website, if it is not already on your computer.

Required Textbook:

Text required for 400/500 Credit Option: *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* by A. Durning.
Purchase from Amazon (used price is \$5.50)

GETTING STARTED:

- Once you have registered for the course, you will be sent an email that contains the website address, password and course key(s) that you need to access your online course, along with instructions on how to log into the online system.
- The assignments listed in this syllabus are also listed at the bottom of each online course document. Access each assignment and enter your responses online. We suggest that you write your responses in a WORD document and then do a copy/paste function into the Responses box.
- When you have completed all assignments for the course, CLICK the 'ALL ASSIGNMENTS COMPLETED' option. The instructor will be notified that you have completed all assignments.
- The instructor will review your work and enter his/her responses online. You will be notified by email when the instructor has marked the course completed, and you will be instructed to log in and view the instructor comments. At that time, you can also SAVE a complete copy of the course assignments and responses.

NOTES TO ALL PARTICIPANTS:

- Unlike a live workshop, you are not required to be present (i.e. online) at specific days or time, participants will work at their own pace.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents or files may be attached as part of your response by using the "Share A File" option.

ASSIGNMENTS for CLOCK HRS/PDUs, CEUs, 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

A. INFORMATION ACQUISITION

Assignment #1:

The Need for a New Way of Living is my, Mike Seymour's, article on the epidemic of materialism, its causes and consequences.

Read the article (available on the assignment website), and answer the following questions:

- a) What is your personal opinion on how Americans today became so attached to material possessions, when our grandfather's generation and earlier were so much more frugal?
- b) Describe times in your life when you've had much less than you do now, and reflect on the differences in your quality of life. As Bill McKibbens' ideas suggest in my article, does happiness after a certain point of material well-being increase less (or not at all) with each increment of having more?
- c) Describe other personal reflections you had while reading this article.

Assignment #2:

The Global Footprint network and its indicators was started by sustainability expert Mathis Wackernagel and is the premiere resource for individuals, organizations and governments to assess the environmental impact of their mode of operating.

- Review the links for Ecological Footprint and Applications at their web site: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>.
- In the response box answer:
 - a) What is ecological footprint?
 - b) Give a definition of sustainability
 - c) What does overshoot mean?
 - d) Looking at the map of ecological creditors and debtors (website listed below) and the Excel file on Country Capacity (available on the assignment website)... Do you think there are moral implications for high-consuming nations/people as it affects poorer countries and, if so, how would you engage students in that conversation?

Creditors/Debtors: http://www.footprintnetwork.org/gfn_sub.php?content=creditor_debtor

Assignment # 3:

An organization called The New American Dream is dedicated to helping people become more conscientious consumers and citizens and their web site has many ideas for doing so.

- Review all the links at the bottom of their home page (<http://www.newdream.org/>).
- Select at least one action to take either in your personal or professional life (or both)
- Create and follow an action plan for a week and report on your progress in the online response box.

Assignment #4:

The Story of Stuff with Annie Leonard is a light-hearted and informative online review in story form of the destructive life-cycle of our product system. Happily, there are also many strategies presented that are working toward a better world and which provide opportunities for student and classroom participation, which we address in the next assignment. For this assignment:

- View the online video: <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>
- What did Annie say that produced an “Ah-ha” moment for you. Please elaborate by posting your comments in the online response box.

Assignment #5:

Now it's time to look at possible actions you and your school or students can engage in. As you click on each section of *The Story of Stuff* (<http://www.storyofstuff.com/>) (i.e. Extraction, Production, Distribution, Consumption, Disposal, Another Way), you'll see a "Learn More" link to click on which shows organizations that are working for the greater good.

- Research the web sites of at least ten (10) organizations which might relate to your teaching situation.
- Write a paragraph on five (5) actions that you could possibly use.

Assignment #6:

Affluenza is an award-winning film produced by Seattle activist & filmmaker John DeGraaf which is supported by a PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) web site with lots of teacher resources. In this assignment, you will have an opportunity to preview the film by obtaining a preview version of *Affluenza* from Bullfrog films without having to pay for anything except the shipping. (In the next assignment, you will review the PBS site for teaching resources on themes introduced by this film).

- Go to <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/affl.html> to order your free preview version. They have both VHS and DVD.
- Review the film, and in the online response box answer the following questions
 - a) What are some of the signs of *Affluenza*?
 - b) How are schools both victims of *Affluenza* as well as perpetrators of it?
 - c) What are some of the solutions to *Affluenza* pointed out by the film?

Assignment #7:

PBS has an excellent web site supporting the *Affluenza* film, including resources for teachers at this address: <http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/>.

- At the site, review the Diagnosis, Treatment and Escape links in that order.
- In the online response box, discuss the activities and lesson plans you reviewed that you think would be useful in your teaching situation.

This completes the assignments required for Washington Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or CEUs.

Continue to the next section for additional assignments required for University Quarter Credit

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED for 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

B. LEARNING APPLICATION

Assignment # 8:

(Required for 400 and 500 Level)

Purchase *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*, a fun, short (88 pages) and eye-opening account tracking the origin and “externalities” of nine common products like coffee, newspaper, T-shirts and more. It is available from Amazon (used price is \$5.50).

Write a brief (1-2 paragraphs) summary of what you found most compelling about these product stories and reflect as well how you might bring this into your teaching.

Assignment #9:

For 400 Level – Complete Part A only

For 500 Level – Complete Part A and Part B

Part A: (400 & 500 Level)

Choose ONE (1) of the following:

1) From all the online research, web site reviews and the book *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*, prepare a unit of 2-3 lessons you can implement with your students. Describe any suggested texts or other reading students will do. You may use your school or district’s own lesson plan format or the Lesson Plan Template provided in this document. To preserve formatting of your unit plan, please upload your document using the file share capability in this online system. Save your file as a pdf before uploading. If you include HTML links to web pages, online videos etc, please also upload the raw text so that your instructor may click the active links.

OR

2) Instruct students in how to conduct a Conversation Café, explained in greater depth at this web site (<http://www.conversationcafe.org/>). Use this discussion method to explore in depth one particular issue related to this course. The file CCHostManual at the following link http://www.conversationcafe.org/Docs/Host_kit/HostManual.doc will provide a guideline for you to host a Conversation Café in your classroom or school. Keep in mind that these instructions were prepared with a general audience in mind, so please feel free to adapt these methods to suit your needs. When the discussion has been completed, use the online response box to indicate:

- a) Subject discussed.
- b) How this activity was received.
- c) A few student comments or (if you prefer) have students write brief evaluative comments.

Part B: (500 Level only)

Choose ONE (1) of the following:

1) Read Juliet Schor’s article below. In what way are we paying too little for the products we buy, and what are some of the real costs according to Schor? Explain some ways we could consume in a more socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Social Justice vs. the Cheap Sweater: Unsustainable Consumption & the Global Economy: Juliet Schor
<http://www.newdream.org/newsletter/sweater.php>

OR

2) View the documentary film *Maxed Out* which investigates the personal and national debt owed by Americans. Write a brief summary of the film, how you might use it in your teaching and make a list of key questions to ask students. (Film is available from Netflix or other video stores)

OR

3) Develop another assignment of your own choosing provided you have the instructor’s prior approval.

C. INTEGRATION PAPER

Assignment #10: Integration Paper (Required for 400 and 500 Level Credit)

Complete the requirements for university quarter credit by submitting a final Integration paper (2-3 pages). A heading is required; please use the following format.

Your Name:	Date:
Course Name:	Course Number:
# of Credits:	Level: (400 or 500)
Advisor Name:	

Respond to each of the 5 questions below. (First list the question and then write your answer)

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?

INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WORK:

Be sure to mark the “All Assignments Completed” section in the online course environment as this will notify the instructor that you have completed the course.

Upon receiving notification of your completion of all course assignments, your instructor will provide written comments online.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:

Mike Seymour, M.S., has been associated with K-12 education since 1990, most recently in his role as President and Director of The Heritage Institute, a program of continuing education for K-12 teachers. Mike is also the founder and Director of a non-profit sponsored by The Heritage Institute, Youth for a New World, which engages youth in global issues and local solutions. Earlier Mike was a consultant and trainer to schools, school districts and Educational Service Districts on such diverse subjects as leadership, visioning and planning and at-risk students. Mike has been board member, Chairman of the Board and volunteer Executive Director of Community for Youth, a highly innovative and successful mentoring program for high-risk minority students in three of Seattle’s most low-performing high schools. Mike has a special interest in open, democratic forms of education that allow students to engage in real world issues. Mike has a B.S. in Comparative Literature from Columbia University and a M.S. in Marriage & Family Therapy from Seattle Pacific University.

LESS IS MORE: From Stuff to Meaning
Bibliography of Books, Videos & Online Resources

Required for Credit:

Durning, Alan; Ryan, John. 1997. *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* (new Report , No 4). Seattle. NW Environment Watch. 88 pages

Documenting a day in the life of the average North American consumer, *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* deconstructs the American Dream by unraveling the hidden costs behind the objects around us. From our morning cup of Columbian coffee to our South Korean-made sneakers, the book traces the environmental impact of the consumer decisions most of us make without thinking.

Optional Reading or Viewing:

Dungan, Nathan; Walsh, David. 2003. *Prodigal Sons and Material Girls: How Not to be Your Child's ATM.* Wiley & Sons. 272 pages

Financial advisor Dungan has written an informative guide to dealing with possession-crazed kids. Sure, young people are wooed by advertisers-those 18 and under spend \$150 billion in the U.S. annually-but they can still be "savvy consumers who make decisions based on their values." Part one of Dungan's book paints a scary picture of the current state of affairs (e.g., the fastest-growing segment of those filing for bankruptcy are people under 25), while part two explains what to do about it, including having financial discussions with kids, learning to say "no" and teaching them how to save.

Dominguez, Joe; Robin, Vicki. 1999. *Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationships With Money and Achieving Financial Independence.* Penguin Books. NY

Based on their West Coast self-help seminars, Dominguez and Robin here map a route to financial security through a relaxed, prudent and environmentally-friendly way of life. Systemically analyzing one's overspending, as in the case histories cited, and calculating the "life-energy" cost (time, expenses, stress) of a competitive career, the authors maintain, can lead to reduced occupational expectations and to surprisingly large economies effected by pre-pricing food, clothing, transportation, loan rates, health care and so on.

Elgin, Duane. 1993. *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple and Inwardly Rich.* William Morrow & Co. New York.

This is the original classic text on the importance of choosing simpler, more meaningful life.

Maxed Out, a documentary film investigating both the personal and the national debt owed by Americans, this thought-provoking documentary explores the staggering financial burden we live with every day and exposes how the contemporary financial industry is set up in ways that can harm unwitting customers. With both sobering facts and black humor, Maxed Out unveils the consequences of our debt addiction, including its contribution to the vanishing of the American middle class.

Simple Living Network provides a wealth of resources on how to simplify your life and make it more meaningful.

<http://www.simpleliving.net/main/>

New American Dream is an organization dedicated to promoting conscious living and responsible consumption.

<http://www.newdream.org/>

Earth & People-Friendly Fund-Raisers or Service Projects

Café Humana (coffee fund-raiser)

<http://www.cafehumana.com/>

Custom Printed Shopping Bags (for fund-raising)

<http://homelandfundraising.com/Grocery%20Totes.htm>

Recycling for Charities (funds from recycled electronics to charity of choice)

<http://www.recyclingforcharities.com/>

Recycled Phones (raise funds by recycling cell phones)

http://www.phoneraiser.com/?GCID=S15155x001-sgcell&KEYWORD=phone%20fundraisers&gclid=CLq1_vHpgJMCFQfNiQodRVRtwg

Catalog Choice-Eliminate Unwanted Catalogs (reduce catalogs sent home. Could be done as a classroom project)

<http://www.catalogchoice.org/#welcome>

Nourish the Children: donations of nutritious foods for malnourished children

<http://www.nourishthechildren.com/>

Kiva: Microcredit lending, person to person

www.kiva.org

**THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE
ONLINE COURSE
LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE**

Grade Level: _____

Subject: _____

Theme/Topic: _____

Student Outcomes: *(with Connection to State Standards)*

Required Materials and Equipment:

Agenda: *(The major events of the day posted for public viewing. Schedule warm-up, bathroom breaks, surprises (pop quiz), guest speakers, specials, assemblies, movie clips, outside assignments etc. so students can manage their time with you.)*

Warm Up: *(A one to two sentence task, written or drawn on the board, to be completed alone or in groups prior to the beginning of the lesson. At the elementary level it would be used for classroom transitions, and in grades 7-12 to define one content area from another. The warm-up is designed to access learning from the previous lesson and settle students into the flow for the present lesson on hand.)*

Anticipatory Set: *(Attention Getter to kindle student interest)*

Direct Instruction (10-20 mins): *(Input, Modeling/demo, giving directions, check for understanding)*

Guided Practice (x mins): *(Under teacher's direct supervision, students individually apply or practice what they have just learned and receive immediate feedback)*

Closure (x mins): *(Actions designed to cue in students that they have arrived at an important point in the lesson or at the end of the lesson; often closure consists of review and clarifying key points)*

Independent Practice: *(Student directed, may be incorporated before closure or as outside assignment. The aim is repetition in enough different contexts so that the learning may be applied to any relevant situation, not only the context in which it was originally learned.)*

Assessment and Follow-Up: *(Self-reflection, collaborative rubric, other rubric, anecdotal evidence, teacher created quiz/test etc., peer review, standardized test, exhibition, portfolio piece(s))*