Course Description: Americans are a nation of consumers. Partly this is due to the simple fact of American industrial productivity. Much of this consumption is also due to the average American's love of shopping. Of course, America's shopping mania is not uninfluenced by the corporations that profit from consumption and brand marketing. All of this shopping and buying has made the United States rich, but it is not clear that it has made it happier. This course will first attempt to understand the beliefs, values, and cultural modes that underlie modern consumerism. Next we will sample some of the ways in which our social identities (nationality, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, etc) are constructed, commodified, branded, and performed throughout consumer culture. Then we will examine how citizenship has been shaped by consumerism, and thus the role(s) that consumer culture plays in politics. The final research paper will give students the opportunity to research and critique cultural artifacts of their own choosing in relation to how social identities are often constructed and performed through modes of branding and consumerism. Contact Adam Cohen at ancohen@bgsu.edu for more information.