

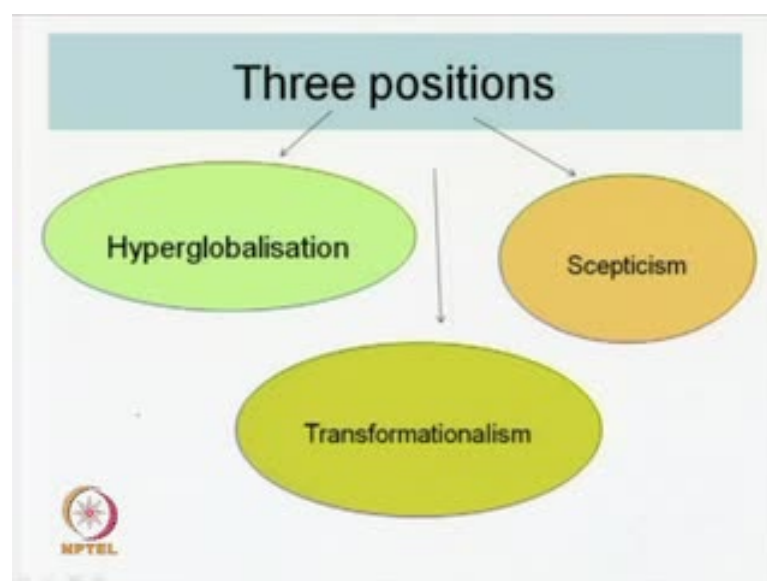
Cultural Studies
Prof. Dr. Liza Das
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Module No. # 03
Sites
Lecture No. # 08
Consumption (Part one)

Hello. Welcome to this lecture on consumption. This is part one on the topic consumption, as seen from a cultural studies perspective. You are with us in the National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning, which is the joint venture by the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institute of Science.

Our area of study is broadly cultural studies and I am here to give you a series of lectures, about 40 lectures on various aspects, various, various issues, various concepts belonging to the domain cultural studies. We are now in lecture 8, module, in the third module in cultural studies.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:32)



Well, as always, we will begin today's discussion with a brief recap on what we did in the last lecture. The last lecture was devoted to the topic globalization and we began by saying, that there are three positions, or, **we may**, we may say safely, that there are three positions with regard to globalization.

The first is hyperglobalization. As you will recall, hyperglobalization is an orientation towards globalization that sees globalization as an imperative; that sees globalization as inevitably spelling the doom of nation states. And the second orientation we saw is transformationalism, an attitude, which holds that there is change alright, and nation states are quite irrevocably affected and change impacted by globalization, but it does not really hold like a hyperglobalization, that there is the impending end of nation states.

And the third attitude we saw was skepticism, which does not at all, you know, affirm that nation states are dwindling and it holds, that even though there are globalizing forces, the nation state is here to stay.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:07)

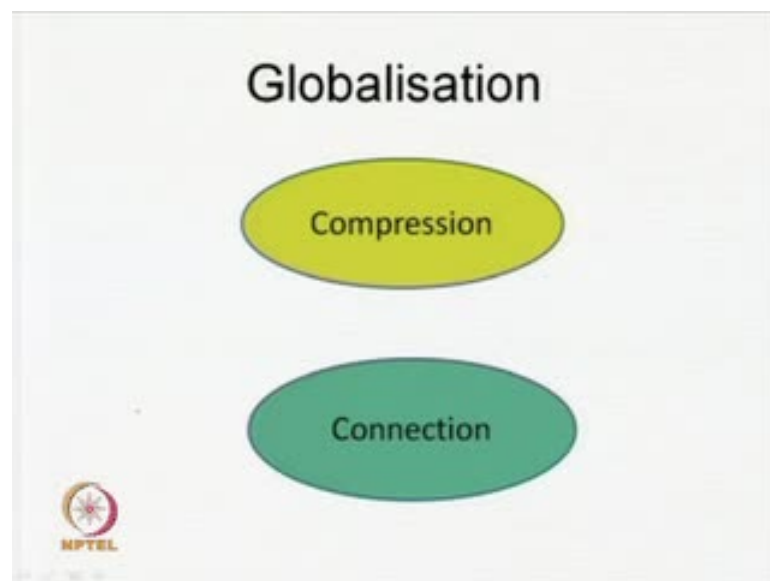


(Refer Slide Time: 03:22)



Next, we saw, that among all the processes that underlie globalization, we may say, that the three major ones are economics, internationalism and information. We then saw culture as an economic good, culture in globalization studied from a cultural studies perspective, sees culture as an economic good, sees cultural flows also, in terms of, sometimes in terms of economic flows, though, there are important differences in the two different domains. However, we may safely say that culture is also seen or explained in terms of being an economic good.

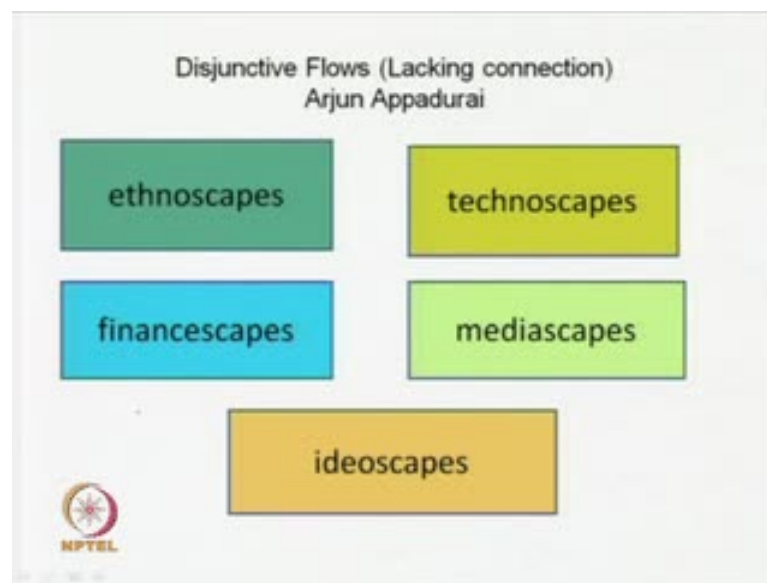
(Refer Slide Time: 04:00)



Next, we saw, that globalization entails a paradox. This paradox goes like this, even as the world is compressed, even as the world today is, sort of, shrinking in terms of, you know, being global village, in terms of, you know, easy accessibility.

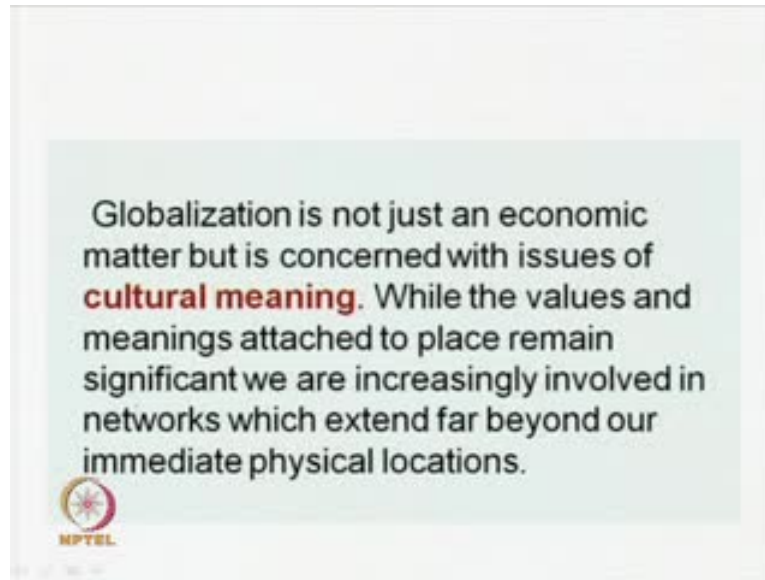
Nevertheless, there is also the other side, which is the widening, a widening through connections, particularly connections through electronic data. So, the paradox we saw in forming globalization is one of both, compression and connection of widening and of enough compressing.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:51)



Next, we also looked at what the scholar Arjun Appadurai has called disjunctive flows. We may see or we may consider or study globalisation under different flows, which may be parallel, which may be simultaneous, yet may lack obvious connections. These disjunctive flows, as he calls them, are ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples and ideoscaples, all of which deserve individual attention, as we studied these, and also the connections and also the raptures, among all these different flows.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:41)

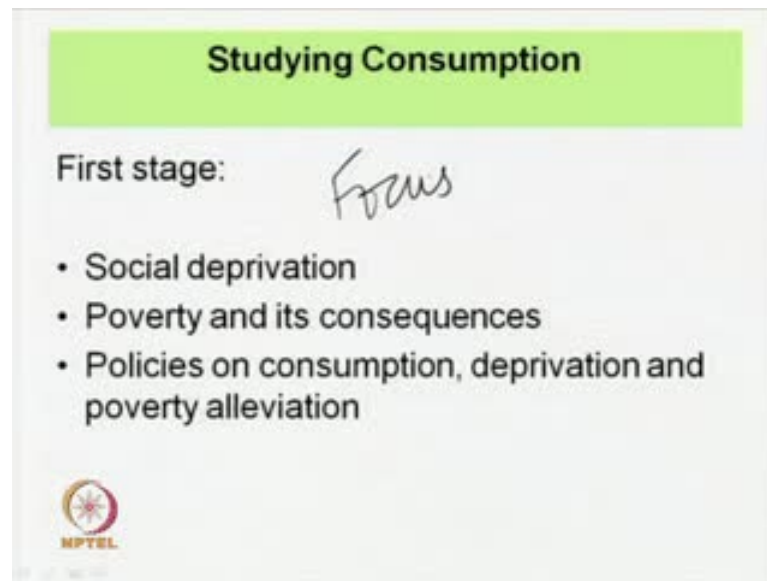


Finally, I would like to end this by another quotation which says, that globalisation is not just an economic matter. You recall, that we have said, the globalization **is**, is an area of study which may be looked at from so many different domains; for instance, globalization may be studied from the point of view of economics, definitely, political science, sociology, anthropology, even language and literature.

But from the cultural studies perspective, we may say, that globalisation is concerned with all these and more, which includes cultural meaning. So, let me read again, from here, while the values and meanings attached to place remain significant, we are increasingly involved in networks, which extend far beyond our immediate physical locations. So, cultural meanings are now, you know, more loaded **as we**, as we are able to forge connections through the electronic media.

There located or situated meanings are no longer the only meanings; there is a huge diversity and hybridity even of cultural meanings. So, this is a brief recap of what we did in the last lecture.


(Refer Slide Time: 07:41)



Studying Consumption

First stage: *Focus*

- Social deprivation
- Poverty and its consequences
- Policies on consumption, deprivation and poverty alleviation



Today, the topic of discussion is one that is immensely important in cultural studies. The topic is consumption and **we**, we shall be discussing consumption over 2 lectures, lectures 8 and 9 in this particular module. So, the study of consumption again, like globalization, is certainly not one that began with cultural studies.

Cultural studies being at least, contemporary, cultural studies being sort of, a late entry so to speak, in mainstream academics, particularly, as compared to, sociology or economics or even, **or, or** literature.

Consumption has been a topic of discussion and there are important critics and important scholars, particularly, in sociology, if I may say who have given very important insights into consumption. So, before we go or deal straight into the cultural studies exploration of consumption, let us look at, how consumption has been studied so far?

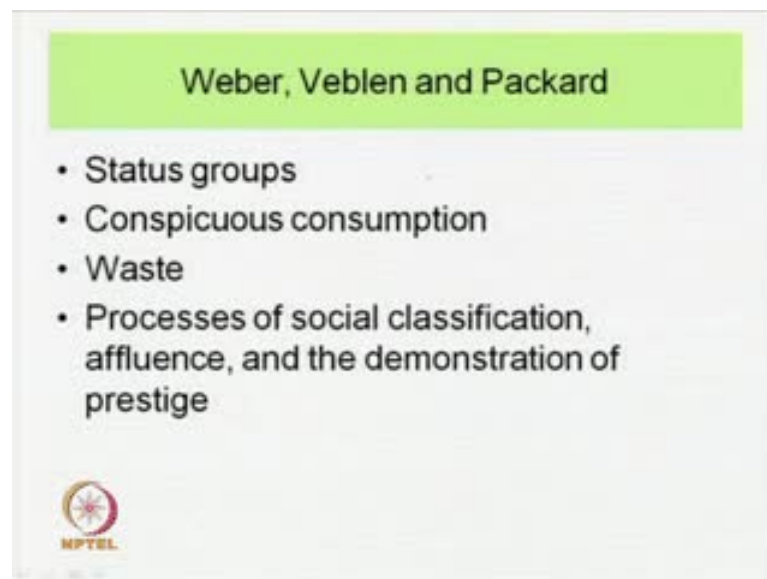
So, in studying consumption, we find that there may be different stages in the development of the discourses and there are changes in the discourses, definite changes in the discourses **on, on,** on consumption.

So, in the first stage, **the focus,** the focus in the beginning stages of studying consumption, was on topics like social deprivation, which classes or which social groups are deprived from consumption, deprived from consuming, who do not have enough consuming power. So, the study, as you will see here, was focused on deprivation, it was

focused on poverty and its consequences for consumption, the buying power of people or, you know, the lack of it in different, in various, social groups.

Then, there was also, therefore, study on the policies, on state policies on consumption, deprivation, and say, measures for poverty alleviation. So, the focus, as we see, in **this**, this phase was more on not having the power to consume, not having the means to consume. **We will**, we shall slowly see that this changes.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:11)



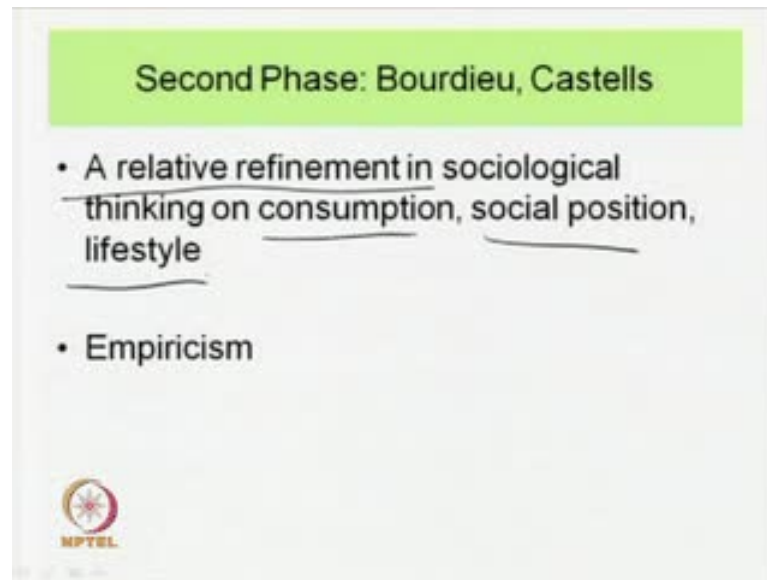
However, in this phase we have scholars like Weber and Veblen for instance, who have studied status groups, who, for instance, conspicuous consumption is a very important term in this phase by Veblen, and he studied **the**, the consumption, **the, the**, the obvious, very obvious, very consequence consumption patterns **of**, of people. There is also focus on waste, waste during the process of consumption.

So, you see that all these two characteristics, one of waste and one of conspicuous consumption is one, that is not available to, you know, **to, to**, to groups of peoples who are economically challenged, who are **deprived**, deprived of consuming power.

And also, in this phase, there was attention being drawn and theorizations being made on processes of social classification, affluence and the demonstration of prestige. So, these were the sociologists who belong to the initial phases of the study of consumption. As we shall see, on one hand, the, you know, discourse of deprivation and poverty, and on

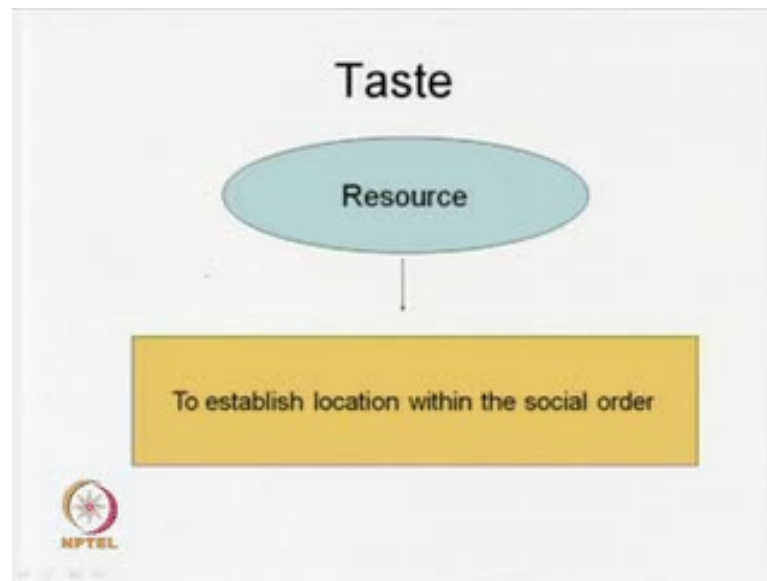
the other hand, the discourse that focus on ways, they focus on, you could say, rampant consumption, and also, in a bid to demonstrate prestige, in a bid to demonstrate affluence and one's social class. So, these were the, you know, initial attempts at studying and theorizing consumptions.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:12)



In the next phase, we may talk about scholars like Bourdieu and Castells, and we find, as it says here, a relative refinement, there is a relative refinement in sociological thinking on consumption, social position and lifestyle. There is, **as you,** if we may say, a certain sophistication in theory **and which is, says here,** of course, a relative refinement compared to the earlier phase on thinking, on consumption, and affluence on social position.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:59)

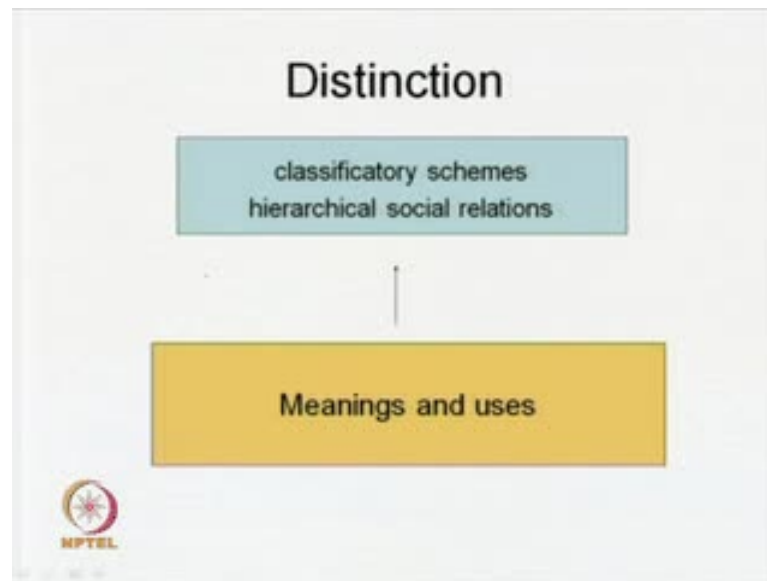


There was also, the beginner of empirical study and analysis of data, of different classes on consumption. For instance, we find very important terms given by scholars like, Bourdieu and others of taste; for instance, you know, they talk about and scholars talk about a certain refinement in theorizing, we get terms like taste, distinction, etcetera.

And what is taste? Taste is really a resource; according to scholars, it is within the consumption discourse. Taste is a resource with which people try to establish their location and also to enhance their location in the social order. So, taste does not become simply one's preferences; it is not simply one's, you know, preferences in an individual level.

Taste is to be exhibited; taste is to be exhibited, taste is to be cultivated, taste in various objects of consumption, be it food, be it furniture, be it clothing, be it different markers, in different markers - symbols of social status. So, taste therefore, becomes a resource, a social resource so to speak, whereby classes can establish and enhance their social standing, within a given social order.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:26)



We also have another term called, distinction. Distinction is a term, which you know, which is to do with meanings, meanings that emanate from different classificatory schemes; these are the uses of hierarchical social relations. So, distinction, like taste, again, is a theoretical tool, which was developed **in**, in you know, the second phase of the studies of, study on consumption by sociologists, which has, have to do with the classificatory schemes and hierarchies in social relation, that allow you to distinguish also.


It is not simply distinction in the sense of, you know, in the sense of having a certain distinction in one social order. It is also distinctive, something that can distinguish one class from another. Hierarchy is an important term within this discourse of distinction.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:32)

Habitus as a structure of cognition and appropriate aspirations

- The relation between social and cultural structures and social agency
- A structure of dispositions
- Schemas of classification
- Rules
- Expectations that predispose the individual to certain choices and actions.
- Acquired through:
 - a) family and community experiences of class structure
 - b) Individuals' everyday experiences of class.

Habitus is formed by long and collective and transmitted experiences of the economic limitations of their class position



A third important word is, in consumption studies is habitus and habitus is both, it is a structure of cognition, is a structure of the cognitive operators in us, and it is a structure of cognition and of appropriate aspirations. So, let us read from here, within habitus, the discourse of habitus, we study the relation between social and cultural structures and social agency.

Habitus is also a structure of dispositions, they are schemas of classification, these are rules, expectations that predispose the individuals to certain choices and actions, **so that you...** It is like from the word habitat, it is as if **you**, you occupy a certain habitus, **which is**, which is both, a structure of your cognitive apparatus, as far as consumption, taste, distinction, these things are concerned. As well as, you know, **it is**, it is, sort of, it is an agency towards appropriate aspirations belonging to your class.

Hence, we have words here, important words here, like structure, schemas, rules and expectations, which predispose an individual to certain choices and actions. So, it is almost like a niche, if I were to use the word, it is a niche that one has already, that one finds, that is already available through the different hierarchical systems and rules and schemas, to people in a society.

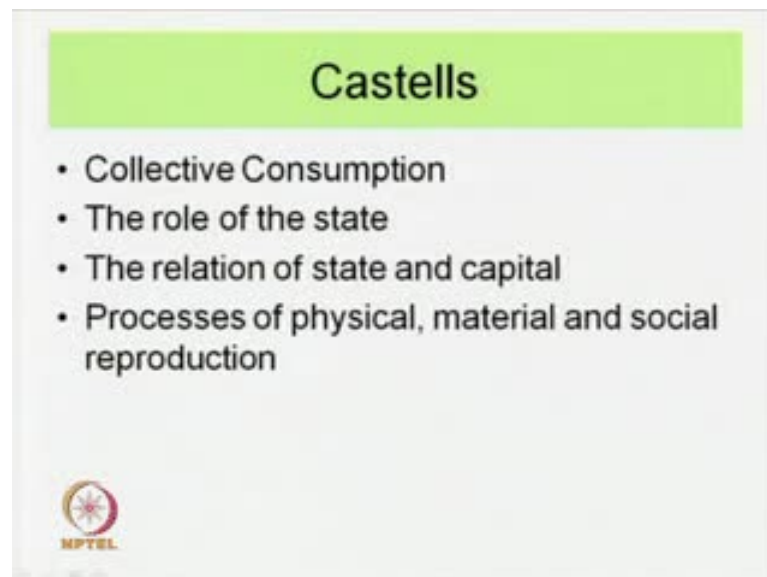
Habitus is acquired through family and community experiences of class structure, as also, an individual's everyday experience of class. And it is also formed by long and

collective, transmitted experiences of the economic limitations of their class positions, so that, you know, the word habitus, the term habitus becomes the tool by which, you can explore consumption patterns, consumption, you know, cognitions of consumption and practices of consumption of different social classes.

And we also see, how classes coalesce **to, to, to**, to sort of, inhabit different habitus practices and different habitus forms. And this is something that is given by, you know, long and established system, which is again delimited by the economic limitations of a particular class. So, we see that from studying poverty, social deprivation, as far as consumption is concerned, the very classes that have consuming power slowly become the **focus**, focus of consumption.

Their everyday practices, their cultural practices, their tastes, their distinctions and **habitus, these...** So, by now, we have a body of knowledge or a body of discourses surrounding the consumption, practices and forms, the beliefs and schemas of human beings in society.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:14)



Castells also focused on collective consumption; the collective consumption on the role of the state and on the role of capital, the relation between the state and capital, and the processes of physical, material and social reproduction of consumption patterns. So,

there was through Castell, and there was the **focus on**, focus on, you know, a focus **that**, that bound together politics, economics and the social. Fine.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:54)



Now, we come to, which really is our, you know, focus here on the cultural turn after these developments in the discourse, and after there was, you know, the development and establishment of different, you know, newer discourses focusing on newer terms, like taste, distinction, etcetera. There was what we called, the cultural turn, in studies of consumption.

Now, this cultural turn in studies of consumption is really, a multidisciplinary approach. So, it is not one that is obviously base, like all matters in cultural studies and all methodologies in cultural studies. Here too, we find that it is a multi-disciplinary approach spanning economics, anthropology, sociology and the like.

Second, it is the post-utilitarian methodology, that is, it will not talk only about the uses of consumption, it will bring or it will broaden the area so to speak, to speak **about, about** about different experiences also, different experiences of consumption for instance. The experience of shopping for instance, what is entailed their signifying practices **in**, in consuming objects, then a focus definitely on advertisements, etcetera. So, we find, that there is opposed utilitarian approach that comes into the study of consumption, once we have the cultural turn.

And there, the third there is, there are, there is more focus sometimes, even exclusive focus on the semiotics of consumption, the semiotic systems, that is, the sign systems.

How do consumption objects, how are consumption objects, forms and practices represented? A, how does this state represented? B, how do different corporations and business houses represent? How, represent consumption object forms and practices particularly, through the media? What are the signs used? And what are the politics of, by now, you are acquainted with sign signifying systems, etcetera, and here too, we find quite a lot of focus really **on**, on the signifying practices of consumption. So, what do signs stand for the politics of the sign?

Next, number four, the use and meanings of goods. So, in these post utilitarian schemas, we find that it is not that we do not talk about the **use**, use of goods, but also the use, the utility of goods is strongly studied in reference to the meanings, that are produced about goods, any product, any commodity. I will be talking about commodity on, in another lecture.

But a commodity is, it is not simply something that has utility for us, there are other aspects of it, aesthetics, for instance. How does a commodity look like? How is it presented?

(Refer Slide Time: 19:54)



The Cultural Turn

- Multidisciplinary approach
- Post-utilitarian
- Semiotic systems
- The use and meanings of goods
- Relation to postmodernism
- The experiential, aesthetic and emotional aspects of consumption

 NPTEL

Then, processes of representation that go into the commodity; processes, if you remember (()) from our previous lectures, processes of interpolation; or the commodity beckoning to you, the creation of desire, even before we use the commodity, perhaps, even sometimes before we can imagine the community, the creation of desire by, by processes and strategies of, of advertisements; these are, you know, these are things that create meaning around something, that is actually only a commodity, which should have use for us.

So, more than really the use and if, if at all, the use of, or the uses of commodities are studied, they are studied as we have said, in relation to the meanings that adhere to them, by the time the product is something that is, you know, that we are ready to purchase. So, consumption therefore, also includes the meanings that are attached to objects of consumption.

Then, there is also, in the cultural turn, relation to post-modernism, in the sense, that you know, you study consumption, you study consumption practices and forms according to the representations, as I said before, the representations sometimes, their surface meanings that come about in a, in a, in a system of discourses. So, the object no longer remains, as we have seen so many times in cultural studies, the object no longer remains simply a material tangible object, the object is one, which is full of surface meanings, full of discourses, full of resonances, from the past.

Finally, there is definitely, more importance given in the cultural turn in studies of consumption, to experience. What is the experience? Not the utility, that is why, we called it post-utilitarian, not the utility or use value of goods of an object of consumption, but the onus is on the whole experience of consuming, consuming a consumption object along with the experience of the meanings, the experience of all the signs and signifying practices, the experience also of the, of the politics of the object of consumption. So, experience is, you know, more in focus than utility.

In the same way, also, aesthetics, as I said, how the product is presented or is represented to us, you know, the use of colour, the use of form, into which so much of study, you know, has gone into. So, the aesthetics, in studying the aesthetics of the object, it is not that we are looking at it from a design perspective; we would be looking at it, you know, from the politics of aesthetic representation. Do you follow? Not from, not what is the

aesthetics, that has gone into it or what are the dimensions of, not from certain from a design point of view, if at all it is, what it is to do with the meanings of, you know, meanings that I attach to it, through the process of aestheticization of the object

And finally, and not the least, the emotional aspects of consumption. What is it that, you know, what is the psychology behind consumption? **Why**, why are consumption patterns, what they are? What goes into, what is, what is human desire as far as objects of consumption are concerned? Fine.


So, you see again, that there is definitely not just a broadening of the area, the broadening of the scope of consumption studies. There is almost, as we say an explosion in this field with the cultural turn. So, to sum it up, what are the aspects of the cultural turn **in**, in the studies of consumption, that it is post-utilitarian, and not to do only with the use value of an object? It is more to do with the, all the meanings, that have been invested in these products, in these, you know, commodity, and how they are represented. What are the politics of representation of politics of aesthetics and of experience, and what are the emotional investments?

You can see, how it is leading to a, you know, different route altogether in the study of consumption, which we do not really find. At least, we will, do not find it to be the central concern in sociology. So, that is the difference here.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:29)

Illouz, Eva. "The Volatility of Stability: Emotion, Consumption, Imagination" 2004

The seeming paradox – of 'the stability [of economic organisation] and of volatility [of consumer desires]' – can be accounted for by examining **the emotional dynamic of consumption**. 'Emotions' are an essential, albeit unacknowledged, ingredient of the dynamic of consumption and constitute the self-sustaining mechanism of the perpetually moving cultural sands of consumption.

 NPTEL

Now, I would, in this slide, like to quote from a scholar, Eva Illouz in her essay, the volatility of stability: emotion, consumption and imagination. This is what, **would form in a lit of sorry** would point more towards cultural studies, even though, this may be an essay from sociology that this is in the study of emotion, consumption, of imagination. This is more in line with the cultural studies methodology.

So, let us see, what is given here and here she says - the seeming paradox of the stability of economic organization and of volatility of consumer desires can be accounted for. Now, A here, is that there is on the one hand, a stability of economic organization, as far as the production of commodity or production of goods is concerned.

And on the other hand, we see volatility, we see, that, you know, the pattern of consumer desires is not static. It is not, and it perhaps, cannot be well organized, like the economic organization **of**, of consuming, of producing, distributing consumer goods.

So, there is a paradox A, which is, you know, the stability of economic organization and the volatility or ever changing, you know, patterns of consumer desires.

Now, how do we account **for, for**, for this? Now, this would be a question in, posed by a cultural studies scholar. So, this can be, as she says, this can be accounted for, by examining the emotional dynamic of consumption. So, she says here, that **it is**, it is, you cannot get to an understanding or can you, cannot get to an explanation or accounting for such volatility and stability at the same time.

By looking at, for instance say economics, so she says that you will then, have to look at the emotional contours of the consumption process. This can be accounted for, by what she calls the **emotional dynamic**, the emotional dynamic of consumption. Further, she says, emotions are an essential, though albeit unacknowledged, ingredient of the dynamic of consumption.

So, there are scholars therefore, who have recently, you know, brought home to us the need to look at. Also, the, you know, things like emotional aspects of consumption, which were, which was perhaps not at least, the central focus in earlier studies.

So, emotions are an essential albeit, unacknowledged ingredient of the dynamic of consumption and constitute the self-sustaining mechanism of the perpetually moving sands, which puts beautifully here, perpetually, moving sands of consumption.

So, once this is admitted, once this becomes the focus, interestingly it also is something, that is, you know, all typically, harness by the producers **by**, by advertising concerns to sort of harness, or to grab the motions of, or to capitalize it on the emotions of the consumer.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:13)



Consumption involves meaning

- Cultural meanings are necessarily shared meanings: individual preferences are formed within cultures – we draw on languages, values, rituals, habits.
- Through culturally specific forms of consumption we produce and reproduce cultures, and complicate social relations and indeed society.
- If all consumption is culturally meaningful, then phenomena like eating out cannot be seen as being simply functional or as a matter of plain convenience.

 NPTEL

Therefore, apart from consumption involving emotion, consumption involves meaning from a cultural studies perspective. Consumption involves meaning, and these meanings, like all cultural meanings, are meanings that are shared; cultural meanings are necessarily, shared meanings. Individual preferences are formed within cultures, and we draw languages, values, rituals and habits.

This is in no avail less applicable to the processes of consumption, in a cultural study of consumption. And through culturally specific forms of consumption, we produce and reproduce cultures and complicate social relations and indeed society. This also, is the explanatory framework in cultural studies for the, **discourse**, cultural studies' discourse on consumption.

Then finally, if all consumption is culturally meaningful, then phenomena, for instance like eating out, cannot be seen as being simply functional or as a matter of plain convenience. Now, this is a topic of eating, which would be, you know, our focus in the next, in as a cultural practice, as the consumption practice, in our next lecture on consumption.

But the point being made here is, any consumption practice, an act of buying, you know, deciding to buy an object, to consume an object, and act of preparing and planning to buy an appliance for instance, these are again, **not**, not simple activities that we do. They are not just functional activities; they are, you know, not activities that we used for our utility to something that will enhance our utility; that is the point being made by cultural studies.

It is not simply a matter of convenience, a matter of making life more easy, so to speak, in buying an appliance; all the peripheral things are also most important here. The emotion that goes into building the desire for an appliance, the meanings that are attached to a particular appliance or a particular practice, like, eating out for instance, these are things, that either they have not been pointed to, at least, things that have be at the central focus in consumption.

So, cultural studies therefore, looks at consumption, to sum it up, looks, that consumption, not as an act, **whereby we**, whereby we approach an object only by considering its use value, its functionality, or for the convenience it is going to bring to us. There is so much more than this, particularly, from cultural meanings, collective cultural meanings, collective cultural decisions, that go into the process of consuming, consuming objects.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:32)

The slide features a green header with the title "Baudrillard on Consumption". Below the header is a list of six bullet points. The second bullet point has a line pointing to the phrase "difference from others". The fourth bullet point has a circle around the phrase "a sense of identity". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for NPTEL, which consists of a stylized sun or starburst icon above the text "NPTEL".

- We consume, therefore we are.
- The relation between signs enables difference to be established. It is difference from others that is one of the main 'uses' of consumption.
- People seek to establish that they have more 'tastes' than others.
- The consumer is always actively creating a sense of identity.
- The primacy of the symbolic in late capitalism
- A idealist practice. The deferral of final physical satisfaction. We are fated to continue to desire the consumer experiences.

Now, we shall go on to consider another scholar, Baudrillard on consumption and quickly **we**, we shall see, you know, what he has to articulate regarding consumption.

Interestingly, he says, we consume, therefore we are. Obviously **this is**, this is a play and you will recognize this as a play on Rene Descarte's famous statement - I think, therefore I am. What Baudrillard says here, **is**, is important because he is, you know, showing to us the centrality of the consumption in our lives.

We consume, therefore we are. The point here is, consumption effects at least, it effects what we think about our and others' status. Consumption is to do with prestige; consumption is to do with power.

So, it is, as if, you know, we exist in order to consume. We consume, therefore we are. We exist, because we consume, or even, we exist in order to consume, such is the importance of consumption in our lives.

So, we consume, therefore we are, and it is the relation between signs that enables difference to be established. Now, Baudrillard again is following the structuralist, post-structuralist methodology here and again is harping on signs.

The relation between science and the **difference**, difference that objects signify, it is the difference between the signifying practices among objects that lies at the core, or is at the core of consumption. How?

He says it is difference from others; it is difference from others that is one of the main uses of consumption. This is really one, I would say, one of, it is a very strong way to put it for instance, we did say a while ago, that consumption is not about utility, simply utility, that it is not simply about functionality or convenience.

But here, Baudrillard even says, A, he says we consume, therefore we are. He says that one of the main, even **uses**, uses of consumption, he would have thought, that the use of consumption is to consume an object, to possess an object, which would give us some sort of a physiological material, sort of, satisfaction.

He says, no, the uses of consumption are not to do only with the gratification, the gratification of our needs. The uses of consumption is also, that what we consume, is a sign of our difference from others, it is our choice in selecting object A, and not object B. It is not because object A is more useful to us, or that object A would be more functional or convenient for us, it is also because object A differentiates me from another person.

So, therefore, **the, the**, the object of consumption becomes a sign, and our practices of our consumption become signifying practices, signs of difference, of differentiation of one person with the other, or with another; this is very important.

People seek to establish that they have more tastes than others, and there is most importantly, creating a sense of identity. And in again, you know, this, you will recall, that identity is a central concern of whether we are talking about ethnicity, race and nation, whether we are talking about **our**, our social identity, we are, whether we talking about prestige.

Identity is a central concern in cultural studies, and in cultural studies, consumption, consuming patterns, consuming choices, these are also seen as strategies, means, by which we create a sense of identity. So, the purchasing and consuming an, of an object is not, therefore, not to send, not a simple, sort of, innocent practice of buying what we want. It is differentiating, it is the differentiating strategy, it is an identity creating

strategy for us. That is why, you know, we have called the cultural turn, a post-utilitarian turn, as far as, consumption is concerned.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:32)

The slide features a green header with the title "Baudrillard on Consumption". Below the header is a list of six bullet points. The second bullet point has underlines under "difference from others" and "uses". The fifth bullet point has a hand-drawn circle around the phrase "a sense of identity". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for NPTEL (National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning) consisting of a stylized sun or starburst icon above the text "NPTEL".

- We consume, therefore we are.
- The relation between signs enables difference to be established. It is difference from others that is one of the main 'uses' of consumption.
- People seek to establish that they have more 'tastes' than others.
- The consumer is always actively creating a sense of identity.
- The primacy of the symbolic in late capitalism
- A idealist practice. The deferral of final physical satisfaction. We are fated to continue to desire the consumer experiences.

And of course, therefore, it is the symbolic which is very important, the symbolic, which we, as a part of late capitalism, is part and parcel, is a feature of, you know, post-modernism.

So, finally, he says, we are fated to continue to desire the consumer experiences. It is not that it has to be so, but it, as long as, **we are within the interpolating**, we are within the interpolating, so to speak, interpolating realities of the consumer experience, as long as we are there, in that sense, we are fated to continue to desire the consumer experiences.

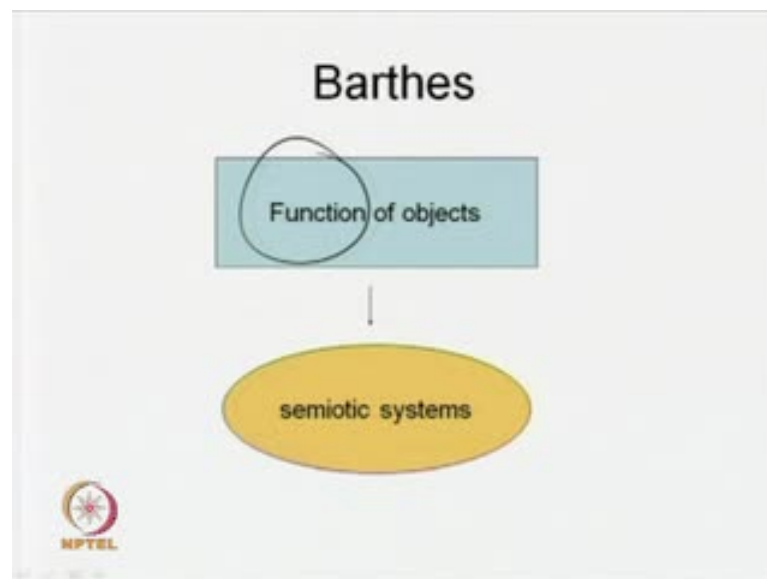
Therefore, again, to sum up, the consumer experience is not an experience, that is a, only a material one; cultural studies would say, that what lingers on even after something is materially consumed, is the feeling of having created an identity for oneself, the feeling of having established or enhanced one's status, through what? Through a system of differentiation, **using that object**, using that object as standing for, or using it as a, sorry, as a symbol or a sign of one's status or hierarchy, or placed in hierarchy.

So, in that sense, Baudrillard says, we are fated to desire the consumer experiences because again, because it mean so much more, than simply consuming something

materially and gratifying ourselves materially, at least ourselves, at least in a material, sort of, way. There are, in addition, the meanings which are so important for us.

So, I hope, you have, you know, we have an idea by now, a fair enough idea by now, of how we are moving from earlier ways of looking at consumption particularly, and sociology, to a cultural turn, that deals with meanings signifying practices, systems of differentiation and representation.

(Refer Slide Time: 43:28)



Therefore, this also leads to another critic in the structuralist, post-structuralist school, Roland Barthes. We have come across some of Barthes formulation in previous lectures, Barthe, Roland Barthes too, following this way of thinking, declares that the function of an object is not simply, you know, fulfilling of one's desires; the function of objects are part and parcel of semiotic systems.

It is again, what is interesting here is, even function, you know, functionality is, you know, by Barthe, Roland Barthe, it is also related, he says, it is also related to the systems of signs, or what he calls, the semiotic practices. So, in functions are, objects are there to function as part of semiotic practices.

(Refer Slide Time: 44:34)



Culturalising Consumption

- The central problem in looking at the 'meaning of things' in consumer culture is how to completely to **avoid naturalising** needs and things and maintain the position that all consumption is cultural.
- The problem is compounded particularly with respect to the first of our basic needs: **food**


NPTSL

So, the central problem in looking at the meaning of things in consumer culture is how to completely avoid naturalizing needs and things and maintain the position, that all consumption is cultural? Obviously, you know, we **have to**, have to avoid naturalistic sort of a framework in our understanding, because meanings of things are, do not lie, so to speak, **in, in, in the**, the material object itself, in the sense, that **meanings are attached**, meanings are attached, they do not, objects do not come to us ever **in**, in pristine forms, that have no meanings attached to them.

So, one of the problems, if you want to culturalize consumption, that is, if you want to study consumption from a cultural studies perspective is this, that you have to show that, you know, things cannot be naturalized.

(Refer Slide Time: 45:39)



Well, we will stop here as far as the, you know, articulation of the cultural studies, orientation to consumption is concerned. There will be more about the consumption in the next lecture, when we will be talking about consumption by referring to **one form of**, one form of consumption practice, the cultural practice of eating out.

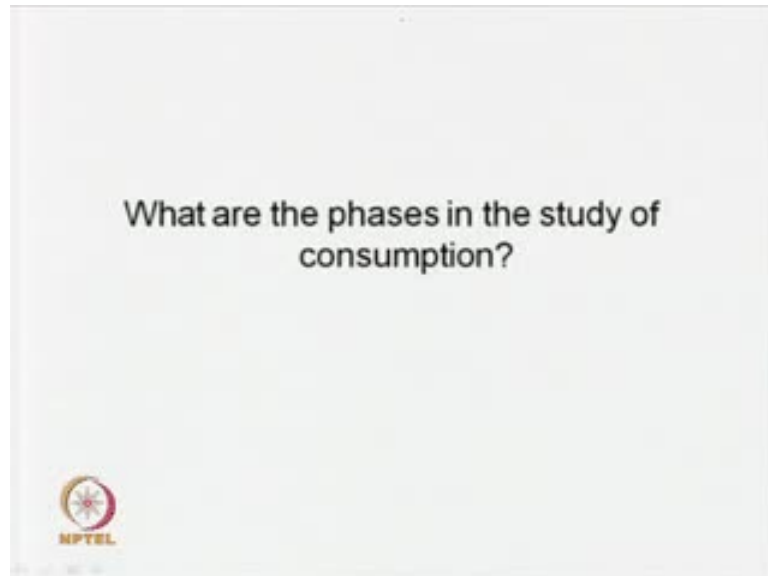
We shall see how to theorize eating out from a cultural studies perspective on consumption, where we shall see these are not simply functional or even matters of convenience, and we shall see, what goes into building a discourse?

So, in the first part on the discussion on consumption, I tried to show you how the discourse of consumption has changed and how it is like, as with all studies, cultural studies methodologies. How this is also, consumption also, is concerned with processes of representation, with processes of culturization, of identity formation, of a way of looking **at, at**, at objects from a completely known or post-utilitarian perspective, and where, which will led, as we saw a while ago, Baudrillard to declare that we consume, therefore we are.

This of course, a lot to be said, and some of the things which are left here, would be taken up in, you know, when we discuss in the next module, when we discuss forms, of cultural forms and cultural studies, which, when you would be talking about the commodity, that is where I begin talking about the commodity, first as the explanation of

the commodity, description of the commodity given to us by scholars like Karl Marx, for instance.

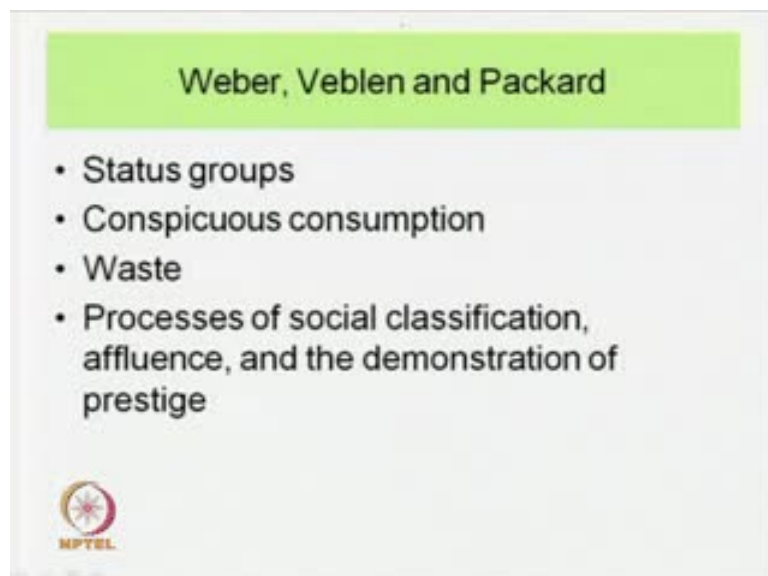
(Refer Slide Time: 48:03)



So, I hope, for now, it suffices for us to simply draw out how cultural studies of, cultural studies approach to consumption, is different from a sociological or economic space approach to consumption. So, let us look at a few questions here.

Now, if you get a question like this, what are the phases in the study of consumption?

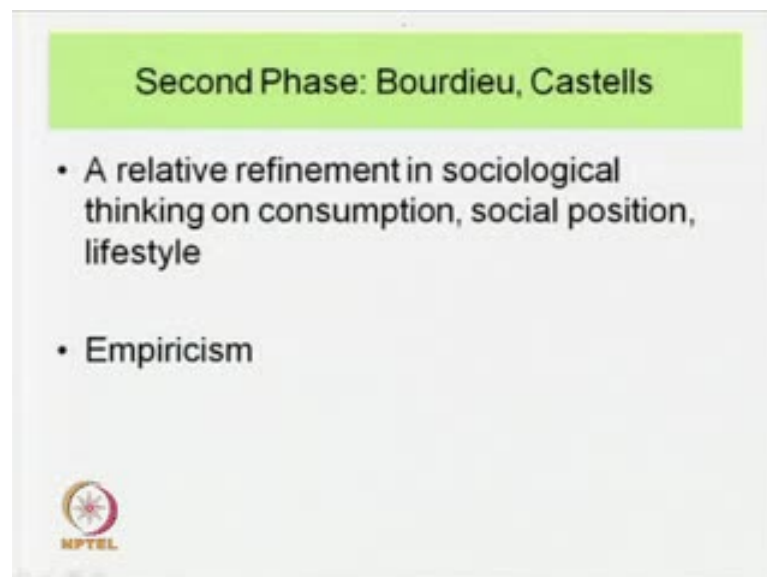
(Refer Slide Time: 48:09)



We know from our discussion, that there are phases of studying consumption before the cultural turn, and in the earlier phases, we saw, if we, characterized by scholars like, Weber and Veblen for instance, we saw that there was a focus **on**, on poverty, a focus on social deprivation; as far as consumption is concerned, how people are, do not have access to consumption.

There was also, on the other hand, apart from the discourse on poverty and consumption, there was a **discourse on excess**, discourse on excess in, you know, excess in consumption, where we have scholars like Veblen talking about conspicuous consumption by, you know, some classes and the discourse of ways and how these led to social classification, the issues of, you know, issues of affluence, of prestige, of terms like, you know, terms like, for instance in the following phase, terms given to us by Bourdieu and others, of taste; terms like taste, terms like distinction, and **the**, you know, growing sophistication in the discourse, or way, or as scholar put it, a refinement in talking **about**, about consumption.

(Refer Slide Time: 49:21)



In sociological terms, thinking of it in terms of social position and lifestyle and hierarchies in our social order and also, there is an empirical turn in this phase, in studying consumption practices.

(Refer Slide Time: 50:03)

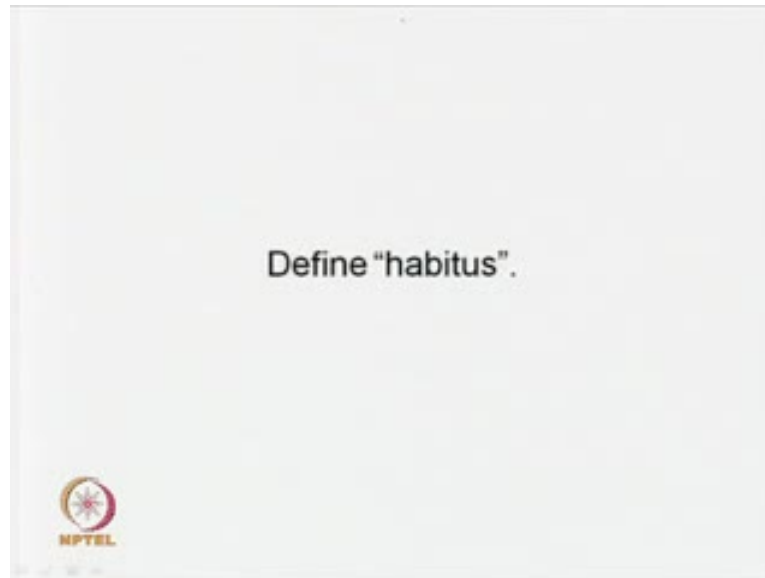


Then, we find that finally we have the cultural turn, which as we have discussed in great length, I hope, **of suppose that**, which talks about, which gives more importance on signs, on signifying practices, see as production, through at least, we have seen in some cases, for instance Roland Barthes, and he talks about the function of objects as semiotic systems.

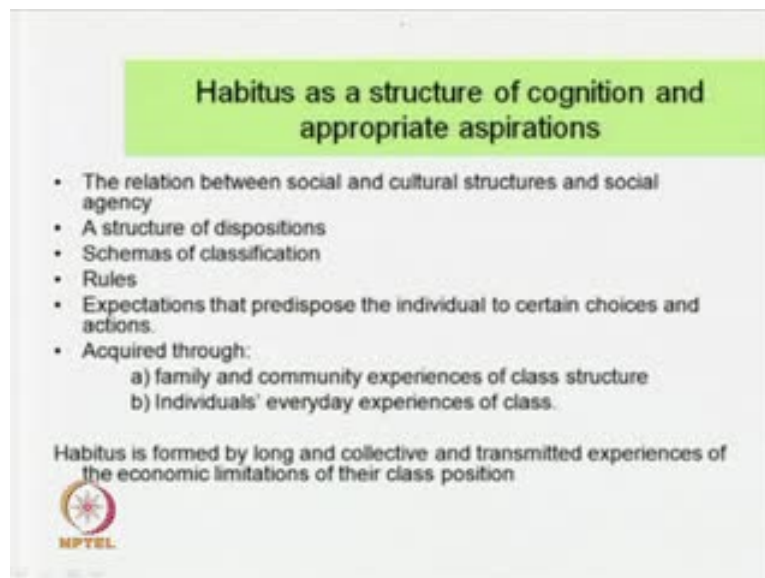
So, semiotics, study of signs, what it meanings, that adhere or at, or are attached to consumer goods, the aesthetics of representation, the experience of consumption and the emotional aspects of consumption.

We also saw, that how the paradox, according to one scholar, the paradox of, you know, stability in economic organization and volatility in consumption, is to be addressed by bringing in the aspect of emotions, as far as the consumer is concerned. So, this is the cultural turn, which is multidisciplinary and post-utilitarian.

(Refer Slide Time: 51:08)



(Refer Slide Time: 51:12)



Then, if you get a question, define habitus. We will then say, that habitus is both, the structure of cognition in our minds, as well as, agency of appropriate aspirations. You may highlight the fact, that habitus is to be seen **as**, as structures of classification, of schemas, of rules, and this emanate from one's habitus, emanates from the family and community experiences of one's class, you know, of one's class standing and not simply, one's individual experiences of class. These works together, give us a sense of habitus, and collect long, the experiences transmitted through a long tradition, or a long and

collective transmission of experiences by classes, that, you know, whose aspirations are delimited by economic considerations.

So, well, we shall stop here. Now, as far as this part of the lecture on consumption is concerned, and as I had said, in the following lecture, in the ninth lecture in this module, we shall be looking at the cultural practice of eating out from the point of cultural studies of consumption.

Thank you for now002E