

Week 3: Consumer Geography Project StoryMap Assignment

GEOG 30763: Economic Geography | Summer 2025

Assignment Overview

Points: 100 points

Due Date: Sunday, July 27, 2025, 11:59 PM

Format: ArcGIS StoryMap with personal consumption tracking and spatial analysis

Length: 1,500-2,000 words + maps, photos, and consumption data visualizations

Learning Objectives

By completing this assignment, you will:

- Analyze your own consumption patterns through a geographic lens
- Understand how consumer behavior shapes and is shaped by space
- Examine retail location strategies and market segmentation
- Connect personal consumption to broader economic and social processes
- Critically evaluate the geography of consumption and consumer identity

Assignment Description

You will conduct a detailed 7-day analysis of your own consumption patterns, documenting where, when, and how you shop and consume goods and services. This self-ethnographic approach will help you understand how consumer geography concepts apply to real behavior while critically examining your own role in broader economic systems.

Core Requirements

I. Consumption Tracking Period (20 points)

7-Day Documentation Requirements:

- Track ALL purchases and consumption activities for 7 consecutive days
- Include both planned and impulse purchases

- Document both goods and services consumption
- Record spatial and temporal details for each consumption event

Required Data for Each Purchase/Activity:

- Date, time, and location (with GPS coordinates when possible)
- Type of purchase/consumption activity
- Amount spent (if applicable)
- Method of purchase (cash, card, online, etc.)
- Reason for choosing that specific location
- Social context (alone, with friends/family, etc.)
- Mode of transportation to reach location

Daily Consumption Log Format:

Date: [Date]

Time: [Time]

Location: [Store/Business Name, Address]

GPS: [Coordinates if possible]

Purchase: [Detailed description]

Amount: [Cost]

Payment: [Method]

Transportation: [How you got there]

Reason: [Why this location?]

Context: [Social situation]

Reflection: [Immediate thoughts/feelings]

2. Spatial Analysis Component (25 points)

Required Maps (create in ArcGIS Online):

Map 1: Personal Consumption Geography (*Primary requirement*)

- Interactive map showing all consumption locations over 7-day period
- Different symbols for different types of consumption (food, retail, services, etc.)
- Include your home base and show travel patterns/routes
- Pop-ups with purchase details, timing, and brief reflections
- Color-code by day of week or type of consumption

Map 2: Retail Trade Area Analysis (*Secondary requirement*)

- Map showing major retail centers and commercial areas in your region
- Mark which ones you used vs. didn't use during tracking period
- Include drive-time zones (5, 10, 15 minutes) from your home
- Basic demographic data layer to understand market targeting
- Simple analysis of your consumption patterns vs. available options

Technical Support Available:

- Step-by-step guide for tracking consumption locations
- Template map for consumer geography analysis
- AI assistance permitted for technical mapping questions
- Sample consumer geography maps for reference

3. Consumption Analysis & Theory Application (30 points)

Section A: Spatial Patterns & Retail Location Theory

- Analyze spatial patterns in your consumption behavior
- Apply retail location theory to explain where you shop
- Discuss concepts of convenience, comparison, and specialty shopping

- Examine role of distance, accessibility, and transportation

Section B: Consumer Identity & Social Geography

- Analyze how your identity influences consumption choices
- Examine role of social networks and peer influence
- Discuss how consumption creates and expresses identity
- Consider intersections of class, race, gender, age in consumption

Section C: Market Segmentation & Targeting

- Analyze how retailers target you specifically
- Examine marketing strategies and store designs you encounter
- Discuss how businesses use geographic and demographic data
- Consider personalization and algorithmic targeting

Section D: Alternative Consumption & Resistance

- Identify examples of conscious or alternative consumption in your patterns
- Discuss attempts to resist mainstream consumer culture
- Examine local/sustainable/ethical consumption choices
- Consider constraints on alternative consumption options

4. Critical Reflection Component (25 points)

Personal Geography Analysis:

- Reflect on what your consumption patterns reveal about your place in society
- Examine how your geographic location shapes consumption opportunities
- Discuss how privilege or constraints affect your consumption choices
- Consider how your patterns might differ in other geographic contexts

Broader Implications:

- Connect your individual patterns to broader economic and social processes
- Discuss environmental and social impacts of your consumption
- Examine how consumer geography reinforces or challenges inequalities
- Consider possibilities for more conscious consumption practices

StoryMap Structure and Organization

Required StoryMap Sections:

1. Introduction & Methodology (200-300 words)

- Engaging opening about consumer culture and personal connection
- Clear explanation of your tracking methodology
- Overview of key findings and thesis statement
- Brief reflection on the experience of self-monitoring

2. Consumption Geography Overview (300-400 words)

- Systematic presentation of your consumption patterns
- Integration of maps showing spatial and temporal patterns
- Quantitative analysis of spending, locations, transportation
- Identification of key patterns and surprises

3. Retail Landscape Analysis (400-500 words)

- Analysis of retail environments you frequent
- Discussion of store location strategies and market targeting
- Examination of how retail design influences behavior
- Connection to broader theories of retail geography

4. Identity, Social Context & Consumer Behavior (400-500 words)

- Analysis of how identity shapes consumption choices

- Discussion of social influences and peer effects
- Examination of consumption as identity performance
- Critical reflection on consumer culture participation

5. Critical Evaluation & Future Implications (300-400 words)

- Critical assessment of your consumption patterns
- Discussion of environmental and social impacts
- Consideration of alternative consumption possibilities
- Personal commitments to changing consumption behavior

Special Requirements

Data Visualization:

- Create compelling charts and graphs showing consumption patterns
- Visualize spending by category, time, location, etc.
- Use appropriate visual design principles
- Make quantitative data accessible and meaningful

Photography & Documentation:

- Include original photographs of retail environments
- Document store designs, marketing materials, and spatial layouts
- Photograph products and consumption contexts
- Use images to support analytical arguments

Honest Self-Reflection:

- Provide genuine, honest analysis of your consumption behavior
- Acknowledge contradictions between values and actions
- Discuss uncomfortable realizations about consumption patterns

- Demonstrate authentic engagement with consumer culture critique

Evaluation Criteria

Excellent (90-100 points):

- Comprehensive 7-day tracking with detailed spatial documentation
- Sophisticated application of consumer geography theory
- High-quality spatial analysis with professional mapping
- Honest, reflective analysis showing genuine self-examination
- Strong writing with clear analytical arguments and evidence

Good (80-89 points):

- Complete 7-day tracking with adequate spatial documentation
- Solid application of course concepts to personal consumption
- Good spatial analysis with appropriate mapping techniques
- Clear understanding of consumer geography principles
- Good writing with clear organization and reflection

Satisfactory (70-79 points):

- Basic completion of tracking requirements
- Adequate application of concepts but limited depth of analysis
- Mapping meets technical requirements but lacks sophistication
- Shows understanding of basic concepts but limited critical reflection
- Acceptable writing with some organizational issues

Needs Improvement (Below 70 points):

- Incomplete tracking or inadequate documentation
- Poor application of theoretical concepts

- Technical problems with mapping or poor spatial analysis
- Limited self-reflection or superficial analysis
- Writing issues that interfere with communication

Consumption Categories to Track

Goods:

- Food and beverages (groceries, restaurants, coffee, etc.)
- Clothing and accessories
- Electronics and technology
- Personal care and health products
- Entertainment and media
- Transportation (gas, transit, rideshare, etc.)

Services:

- Healthcare and personal services
- Financial services (banking, ATM use, etc.)
- Education and professional services
- Entertainment and recreation
- Digital services and subscriptions
- Maintenance and repair services

Considerations:

- Include both necessary and discretionary consumption
- Track free activities and services too (parks, libraries, etc.)
- Note consumption you wanted but couldn't afford/access
- Include online and digital consumption with delivery locations

AI Policy for Technical Support

Newly Permitted AI Use for Technical Tasks:

- "How do I add GPS coordinates to my consumption tracking map?"
- "What's the best way to show travel routes in ArcGIS Online?"
- "How do I create different symbols for different types of purchases?"
- "How do I add drive-time areas around my home location?"
- "What's the process for importing my tracking data into ArcGIS Online?"
- General troubleshooting for ArcGIS Online interface and data management

Still Prohibited AI Use:

- Writing any portion of your analysis or reflection
- Generating consumption data or fabricating tracking logs
- Creating theoretical analysis or critical evaluation
- Completing spatial analysis or personal reflection

Technical Support Resources:

- Companion guide for consumer geography mapping
- Template for consumption tracking data collection
- Sample consumer geography StoryMaps for reference
- Virtual office hours for hands-on technical assistance

Submission Requirements

1. **StoryMap URL:** Submit working link to published StoryMap
2. **Raw Data:** Complete 7-day consumption log with all required details
3. **Reflection Essay:** 2-page reflection on the research process and key insights
4. **Photo Portfolio:** Original photos with detailed captions and analysis

5. Data Visualizations: Charts and graphs as separate files

Getting Started Checklist

- Set up consumption tracking system (app, notebook, etc.)
- Plan 7-day tracking period (consider including weekend)
- Create data collection template with all required fields
- Research retail location theory and consumer geography concepts
- Begin consumption tracking with detailed spatial documentation
- Take photographs of retail environments and consumption contexts
- Plan StoryMap structure and multimedia integration

Research Resources

Consumer Geography Theory:

- Course readings on consumer behavior and retail geography
- Academic literature on consumption and identity
- Research on retail location strategies and market segmentation
- Studies of consumer culture and alternative consumption

Data Sources:

- Personal consumption tracking apps
- Retail industry reports and market research
- Census data on retail trade and consumer spending
- Local economic development and retail planning documents

Questions?

Contact Dr. Crotty during virtual office hours (Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 PM) or via email. This assignment requires honest self-reflection, so don't worry about "perfect" consumption patterns - the goal is authentic analysis.

Success Tip: Be honest and thorough in your tracking. The most interesting insights often come from contradictions between stated values and actual behavior. Embrace the discomfort of examining your own consumption critically.