

Spring 2009  
Media, Culture, and Communication  
E59.1015.001  
T/TH 11-12:15  
Waverly 431

TA: Kari Hensley  
kari.hensley@gmail.com

Prof. Marita Sturken  
Department of Media,  
Culture, and Communication  
239 Greene St. 7th Floor  
212-992-9424  
marita.sturken@nyu.edu  
Office hours:  
Thursday 2-4 and by appt.

## **Advertising and Society**

### **Course description:**

This course examines the social implications of consumerism and advertising as an economic and cultural force. The course surveys the history of consumer culture and advertising, focusing primarily though not exclusively on the United States and investigates the changing strategies that have been used by advertisers from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It approaches advertisements as texts that indicate the cultural attitudes and norms of their time. This course thus provides a cultural approach to advertising and its history as a means to understand advertising as a central component in capitalist economies and its role as an indicator of cultural attitudes and ideologies. It also examines consumer practices, the role that consumerism plays in identity, social trends, and style, and the consequences of a society structured by consumerism.

### **Course Requirements:**

Students are required to attend all lectures, complete the readings, and complete all assignments, and encouraged to participate in online discussion. Lectures cover much more material than the reading and attendance at them will be monitored. If you miss more than 4 lectures without a reasonable excuse, your grade will be lowered. Participation in the Blackboard online discussion will enhance your grade.

### **Website:**

We will use two websites in this class. The class Blackboard site will be used for class announcements, assignments, class readings (which will be posted in pdf form under Course Documents), links to online sources about advertising, and online class discussion. We will also use the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication Advertising Archive of print and TV images. This site is <http://cultureandcommunication.org/advertising/>. The user name is "dcc" and the password is "advertising"

### **Assignments and grading:**

You are responsible for the material covered in lecture and in the reading. You will be evaluated on (1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation) (2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms (3) and your ability to creatively explore these theories and methodologies. All of your written work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales (1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class (2) how well it structures and articulates its argument.

There are two papers, a midterm, and a final exam (which will be cumulative but concentrate primarily on the second half of the course). These assignments will be worth the following portion of your grade:

paper 1 20%  
midterm 20%

paper 2 30%  
final exam 30%

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams, making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others, and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours. You violate the principle of academic integrity when you cheat on an exam, submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors, receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in has been your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class, and that you have properly cited other people's work and ideas. Do not take this policy lightly! Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course. If you have questions about these policies, or proper citation of scholarship, please come speak with me in person.

### **Reading:**

Books:

Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of Advertising*

Marcel Danesi, *Brands*

Joseph Turow, *Niche Envy*

Essay readings (labeled pdf) will be posted in pdf form on Blackboard under Course Documents.

### **Week 1:**

**Jan. 20 -- Introduction: Obama Inauguration and Obama consumerism**

**Jan. 22 – Considering Consumerism**

Reading:

Michael Schudson, "Delectable Materialism" (pdf)

Sharon Zukin, "A Brief History of Shopping" (pdf)

**Week 2:**

**Jan. 27 – Origins of the Modern Consumer Society: The Therapeutic Ethos**

Reading:

*Practices of Looking*, Chapter 7, pp. 265-75 (pdf)

T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization” (pdf)

**Jan. 29 – The Rise of Modern Advertising**

Reading:

*Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 2

**Week 3:**

**Feb. 3 -- The Rise of the Ad Industry and the Department Store**

Reading:

*Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 3

Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style* (Chapter 4: “Bricks and Mortar”) (pdf)

**Feb. 5 – Modern Ad Design and Aesthetics**

Reading:

*Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 4

Catherine Gudis, “Modern Art and Advertising” (pdf)

**First paper assignment given.**

**Week 4:**

**Feb. 10 – Billboards and the Mobile Consumer**

Reading:

Catherine Gudis, “The Aesthetics of Speed” (pdf)

**Feb. 12 – The Consolidation of Consumer America in the 1950s**

Reading:

*Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 6

**Week 5:**

**Feb. 17 – The Shopping Center and the Mall**

Reading:

Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center” (pdf)

James Farrell, “Designing Malls” (pdf)

**Feb. 19 – Semiotics and Branding**

Reading:

Danesi, *Brands*, Chapters 2 and 3

**First Paper Due.**

**Week 6:**

**Feb. 24 – The “Creative Revolution” of the 1960s Advertising**

Reading:

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, Chapter 1 (pdf)

*Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 7

**Feb. 26 – Commodity Fetishism, Exchange Value, and the Brand**

Reading:

Danesi, *Brands*, Chapter 4

Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of the Commodity” (pdf)

*Practices of Looking*, Chapter 7, pp. 275-93 (pdf)

**Week 7:**

**March 3 – Selling Youth Culture and Marketing Coolness**

Reading:

Thomas Frank, “Think Young” (pdf)

Malcolm Gladwell, “The Cool Hunt” (pdf)

*Practices of Looking*, Chapter 7, pp. 293-99 (pdf)

**March 5 –Midterm Exam**

**Week 8:**

**March 10 – Postmodern Advertising**

Reading:

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “Yo! Hailing the Alienated Spectator” (pdf)

Laura Miller, “This is a Headline for an Essay About Meta” (pdf)

**Second paper assignment given.**

**March 12 – NO CLASS**

## **SPRING BREAK MARCH 16-20**

### **Week 9:**

#### **March 24 – Selling Cultural Difference**

Reading:

bell hooks, “Eating the Other” (pdf)

Caren Kaplan, “A World Without Boundaries” (pdf)

#### **March 26 – Brands as Popular Culture**

Reading:

Danesi, *Brands*, Chapter 5

Rob Walker, “Click” (pdf)

### **Week 10:**

#### **March 31– Global Brands and iPod Culture**

Reading:

Danesi, *Brands*, Chapter 6 and Conclusion

Rob Walker, “Ignoring the Jones” (pdf)

#### **April 2 – The New Consumerism: Global Capitalism, Wal-Mart, Cheap Goods, and Outsourcing**

Reading:

David Bosshart, “The Wal-Martization of Society” (pdf)

### **Week 11:**

#### **April 7 – The New Consumerism and the Crisis of Advertising**

Reading:

Joseph Turow, *Niche Envy*, Chapters 1 and 2

**Second paper due.**

#### **April 9 – The Internet and the New Consumer Landscape**

Reading:

Joseph Turow, *Niche Envy*, Chapters 4 and 5

Rob Walker, “The Commercialization of ChitChat” (pdf)

**Week 12:**

**April 14 – Product Placement and Consumer Profiles**

Reading:

Joseph Turow, *Niche Envy*, Chapters 3 and 8

**April 16 – Ethical Consumerism and Branding Charity**

Reading:

Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Red is the New Black” (pdf)

Rob Walker, “Marketing Ethics and What’s the Matter with Wal-Mart Shoppers” (pdf)

**Week 13:**

**April 21 – Environmental Consumer Politics—the “Case” of Bottled Water**

Reading:

Elizabeth Royte, *Bottlemania* (excerpt) (pdf)

**April 23 – Culture Jamming and Consumer Resistance**

Reading:

Kalle Lasn, “Culture Jamming” (pdf)

*Practices of Looking*, Chapter 7, pp. 300-304 (pdf)

Anne Elizabeth Moore, *Unmarketable* (excerpt) (pdf)

**Week 14:**

**April 28 – Alternative Marketing and the new Cultural Entrepreneurs**

Reading:

*Practices of Looking*, excerpt, Chapter 2, pp. 82-89 (pdf)

Richard Laermer and Mark Simmons, *Punk Marketing* (excerpt) (pdf)

**April 30 – Conclusion**

**Final Exam: Thursday May 7, 10-11:50**