



COMM 355: Advertising and Communication

Fall 2013

Mondays and Wednesdays, 5 – 6:20pm

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Course Catalog Description. Theories of advertising as a mode of communication; history of advertising in the US; institutions of the advertising industry; economic and policy context for advertising; critical analysis of advertising texts.

Course Themes. The presence of advertising—itsself but one component of the overall ‘sales effort,’ and a diminishing one at that—is something that we take for granted. This course aims to challenge students’ preexisting perceptions of the notion of advertising as a means of communication, as a cultural practice, as a material practice, and as a *social choice* for the subsidization of media—even as the advertising “subsidy” is borne by the consumers of the very products advertised. My objective is to present the marketing imperative as continually contested terrain in relation to the production of media. Specifically, by the end of the course, students will:

- Have a firmer grasp of the evolution of advertising from its historical roots to the present. In particular, we will explore key moments of controversy regarding advertising and the development of (and emergent policy favoring) commercial media;
- Explore classic debates about advertising as text and as an institution—in particular, with an eye toward how advertising as an institution interacts and affects media it supports;
- Understand and draw connections between shifting modes of consumption, production, and broader political economies of the advertising world itself in past and present contexts;
- Gain an understanding of the construction and sale of the ‘audience product’;
- Gain a deeper understanding and a more sophisticated read of this thing flying under the name of “privacy”;
- Develop literacies to critically analyze contemporary advertising, acquiring knowledge of the various forces and ideologies that shape advertising practices (e.g. capitalism, liberalism, neoliberalism, multiculturalism), and gain experience analyzing ads in terms of these ideas.
- Become accustomed to taking an entrepreneurial approach to critical discussions of the advertisements they encounter in their everyday lives: through blogging and class discussions they will build the confidence and skills needed to communicate with authority about advertising in professional and public situations.

Required Texts. These should be available at the USC school store and certainly at your favorite online destinations.

- Leiss et al., (2005). *Social Communication In Advertising*. 3rd Edition. New York: Taylor & Francis. [If you’re buying online: ‘3rd edition’ is crucial!]
- Turow, Joseph. 2011. *The Daily You*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sivulka, Juliann. 2012. *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising*. 2nd Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. [You can get either edition of this book for our purposes. There are tons of used copies for cheap available online.]
- Additional articles and chapters provided on the course Blackboard site.

Following current events. In addition to our readings, you should be keeping tabs in off-moments on key happenings in the world of advertising and marketing. Your final paper will be based on current events of your choosing. To help you toward this end, here are some starting points:

- Free Press distributes a weekly newsletter called the “Media Fix” about media policy and politics, with material that regularly overlaps with our class discussions. Please subscribe to their newsletter as soon as you can at <http://www.freepress.net/media-fix>
- Jeff Chester’s Center for Digital Democracy operates a semi-regularly updated blog that speaks to issues of new technologies, privacy, and commercialism: <http://www.democraticmedia.org/blog>
- Follow AdWeek, Advertising Age, and several other trade press journals (www.iwantmedia.com is also a terrific place to go for this stuff).

Assignments

- *Exams (45%).* Material for the course will be covered in two exams, a midterm (20%) and a final (25%) taken during finals week. **The final exam is scheduled for WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11 FROM 4:30-6:30pm.** These exams will be short answer / essay format. Students will be tested on their knowledge of material presented in readings and lectures. **While the readings are vital, I will cover material in class not in the readings.**
- *Final Paper (25%):* Students will write a 10-12 page paper responding to an emergent controversy relating to theoretical issues we discuss, present advertising practices, the political economy of the sales effort, or representation. **Due FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6.**
- *Advertising Labs (and in-class assignments) (20%).* Several times this semester, you will be required to perform perfunctory research on a specific topic or to reflect on what our authors have said. Completed 'labs' will be posted on a class blog via Blackboard, which means they will only be viewable by those of us in this class. Each post should be about two to three well-thought-out paragraphs. It should address and critically engage with at least one of the readings for that week (wrestle with the readings, pose new questions, agree/disagree with author's position, draw connections with other readings, ask questions about the readings, etc.). **They will be due by NOON on the Friday of the week assigned.** Late lab posts will be given a zero.
- *Participation and attendance (10%).* This class, while fairly large, will feature extensive discussion: it's the only way to make sense of many of the concepts that we will be encountering. As such, attendance will be taken every class. Each student is allowed three unexcused absences for the semester, after which your final grade will be reduced.

Course Policies.

Late submissions – including blog posts – will NOT be accepted. All deadlines are firm. If you are aware of a conflict that will prevent you from completing an assignment on time, you are responsible to contact the instructor in advance. Emergencies will require written documentation.

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity Code as detailed in the SCampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies. Should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will not be accepted as an excuse. For further clarification, please refer to "University Student Conduct Code" and "Appendix A: Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines" in the SCampus guide.

ADA Compliance Statement. Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Class Schedule and Readings.

Readings are subject to change, but any changes will be announced in class and noted on blackboard. All readings on blackboard are denoted with “[BB]” and are posted in the “Assignments” section. *While I foresee few changes to the below, always please consult the “Assignments” section of blackboard to ensure you are doing the correct reading each week.*

Introductions

1. *Monday, August 26.* Welcome
2. *Wednesday, August 28: Two provocations and some core questions*
 - a. Raymond Williams. “Advertising, the magic system.” From *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. (1980). New York: Verso. [BB]
 - b. Robert McChesney and John Nichols, “The death and life of great American newspapers.” From *The Nation*, March 18, 2009 [BB]

—*Monday, September 2: LABOR DAY. NO CLASS*—

Basic lenses and frames

3. *Wednesday, September 4: Class, key concepts, and obfuscation*
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 1: “Introduction”
 - b. Karl Marx: “The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof” from *Capital, Vol. 1* [Link on BB]
 - c. Thorstein Veblen: Conspicuous consumption, from *Theory of the Leisure Class* [BB]
4. *Monday, September 9: Advertising and gender.*
 - a. Susan Bordo, “Hunger as ideology” from *Ways of Reading: An Anthology* [BB]
 - b. Angela McRobbie, “Notes on postfeminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the new gender regime,” from *All About the Girl* [BB]
 - c. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, “Spectatorship and power,” from *Practices of Looking* [BB]. *Focus here on the discussion of the theoretic device of “the gaze” toward the beginning of the article; that is most relevant to our discussion. The other two are more important to get through.*
5. *Wednesday, September 11: Advertising and race*
 - a. bell hooks, “Eating the other,” from *Black Looks* [BB]
 - b. Patricia Hill Collins, “Mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images,” from *Black Feminist Thought*. [BB]
6. *Monday, September 16: Thinking through “search”*
 - a. Siva Vaidyanathan (2011). *The Googlization of Everything*. Chapter 2, “Google’s ways and means: Faith in aptitude and technology” [BB]
 - b. Siva Vaidyanathan (2011). *The Googlization of Everything*. Chapter 3, “The Googlization of us: Universal surveillance and infrastructural imperialism” [BB]

The development of consumer society

7. *Wednesday, September 18: Roots of American advertising*
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 2: “From traditional to industrial society”
 - b. Sivulka, Chapter 1: “The beginnings: 1492 to 1880”
8. *Monday, September 23: Consumer culture is born*
 - a. Stuart Ewen, selections from *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (1976). [BB]
 - b. Leiss et al., Chapter 3: “Advertising in the transition from industrial to consumer society”
9. *Wednesday, September 25: Political economies of the ad business, I*
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 5: “Advertising and the development of agencies”
 - b. Edward Bernays, excerpts from *Propaganda* (1928) [BB]
10. *Monday, September 30: Depression-era advertising and early critiques.*
 - a. Upton Sinclair, “The owner and his advertisers” and “The advertising boycott.” From *The Brass Check*. (1928/2003). Urbana: University of Illinois Press. [BB]
 - b. James Rorty, “The business nobody knows” from *Our Master’s Voice* (1934). From McChesney, Robert and Ben Scott (eds). *Our Unfree Press: 100 Years of Radical Media Criticism*. New York: The New Press. [BB]
 - c. *You should skim* Sivulka, Chapter 5: “The depression and war years” to at least see what advertising artifacts of the time looked like, but our class will focus largely on (a) and (b).
11. *Wednesday, October 2: Consumer movements – calling the institution into question.*
 - a. Inger Stole. “Consumer protection in historical perspective: The five-year battle over federal regulation of advertising, 1933 to 1938.” *Mass Communication & Society* 3 (4), 351-372, 2000. [BB]
 - b. Inger Stole. “The salesmanship of sacrifice: The advertising industry’s use of public relations during the Second World War.” *Advertising and Society Review* 2 (2), 2001. [BB]
12. *Monday, October 7: Postwar advertising and further concerns.*
 - a. Vance Packard, excerpts from *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) [BB]
 - b. Sivulka, Chapter 6: “The postwar boom: 1945 to 1960”
13. *Wednesday, October 9: The 60s and the “creative revolution.”*
 - a. Thomas Frank, selections from *The Conquest of Cool* (1996) [BB]
 - b. Sivulka, Chapter 7: “The creative revolution: 1960 to 1975”
14. *Monday, October 14: Advertisers and their influence: the television age.*
 - a. Selections from Erik Barnouw, *The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate* (1978) [BB]
15. *Wednesday, October 16: —MIDTERM EXAM—*

From consumer society to...something else?

16. *Monday, October 21: Critiques from the late modern era, and their update.*
 - a. Paul Baran and Paul M. Sweezy. "The absorption of surplus: The sales effort." From *Monopoly Capital*. (1966). New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 112-141. [115-131 is the essential part here] [BB]
 - b. Robert W. McChesney, John Bellamy Foster, Inger L. Stole, and Hannah Holleman, "The sales effort and monopoly capital." *Monthly Review*; Apr. 2009; 60, 11. [BB]
17. *Wednesday, October 23: Late consumer society: initial shifts.*
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 8: "Consumer cultures and mediated markets" (only pp. 263-274 and 290-293)
 - b. Leiss et al., Chapter 10: "Media in the mediated marketplace"

The modern sales effort comes into view

18. *Monday, October 28: Political economies of advertising, II. I promise a pop quiz on the reading during this class. It's that important. You've been warned.*
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 11: "Full service agencies"
 - b. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*: Chapter 1, "The power under the hood"
19. *Wednesday, October 30: Constructing "the audience product."*
 - a. Philip Napoli. "The audience marketplace." From *Audience Economics* (2003). New York: Columbia University Press. [BB]
 - b. Leiss et al., Chapter 12: "Structure and agency: Tensions at play in advertising design" [selected portions]
 - c. Dan Schiller, "Parasites of the quotidian" from *How To Think About Information*. (2007). Urbana: University of Illinois Press. [BB]
20. *Monday, November 4: Crafting/constructing audiences.* (Note: don't panic at the amount of reading this week upon first glance. I'll make this very manageable in a way for which you'll need to wait and see.)
 - a. Leiss et al., Chapter 13: "The mobilization of yuppies and generation X."
 - b. Leiss et al., Chapter 14: "Negotiated messaging for Generation X"
 - c. Leiss et al., Chapter 15: "Mobilizing the culturati"
21. *Wednesday, November 6: Free labor and expanding commoditization.*
 - a. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*: Chapter 2, "Clicks and cookies"
 - b. Tiziana Terranova, "Free labor: Producing culture for the digital economy." *Social Text* 63, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer 2000. [BB]
22. *Monday, November 11: Brand culture and self-branding.*
 - a. Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Free self-esteem tools? Brand culture, gender, and the Dove real beauty campaign." From Banet-Weiser, S. and Mukherjee, R. (2012). *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neoliberal Times*. New York: New York University Press. [BB]
 - b. Alison Hearn (2008), "'Meat, mask, burden': Probing the contours of the branded 'self.'" *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2). [BB]

23. *Wednesday, November 13: New practices.*

- a. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*, Chapter 3: “A new advertising food chain”
- b. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*, Chapter 4: “Targets or waste”

24. *Monday, November 18: “Algorithmic identities” and audience construction.*

- a. John Cheney, “A new algorithmic identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 28: 164. [BB]

25. *Wednesday, November 20: The new environment and democratic media.*

- a. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*, Chapter 5: “Their master’s voices”
- b. Thomas Frank. “Bright frenetic mills.” From McChesney, R. and V. Pickard, *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights*. (2011). New York: The New Press. [BB]

26. *Monday, November 25: Social media.*

- a. Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*, Chapter 6: “The long click”

—*Wednesday, November 27: THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS*—

27. *Monday, December 2: Putting it all together.*

- a. Robert McChesney (2013), Ch. 5: “The Internet and capitalism II: Empire of the senseless?” from *Digital Disconnect* (2013). [BB]

28. *Wednesday, December 4: Class wrap up and review.*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6: TERM PAPERS DUE