

COMN 3700

Advertising: The Growth of a 20th Century Belief System

(soon to be renamed Advertising, media and the development of consumer culture)

Instructor: Dr. Natalie Coulter



“Advertising is capitalism’s way of saying ‘I love you’ to itself.”
Michael Schudson

“The basic myth of our culture is that consumption is the goal of life.”
Dallas Smythe

The course approaches advertising as a privileged form of communication and as central to the media. This course will explore the emergence of consumer society and the social, political and economic roles of advertising within this development with particular focus on how the promotional discourses of advertising have become entrenched in modern culture and have had ecological impacts.

Course Description

This course will explore the emergence of modern consumer society and the social, political and economic roles of advertising within this development.

During this course students will examine the role of advertising and promotional communication in the context of everyday life. The key objectives of this course are to provide a historical perspective on advertising’s role in the expansion of the market economy and consumer culture during the 20th and 21st centuries. The course surveys the history of consumer culture and advertising; changing strategies that have been used by advertisers; and how advertisements produce and reproduce the cultural attitudes and norms of consumer culture.

This course seeks to understand advertising as a central component in capitalist economies and how the promotional discourses of advertising have become entrenched in modern culture. It also examines, consumer practices, the role that consumption plays in identity, social trends, and style, and the political, social, cultural and the environmental consequences of a society structured by consumerism. Such a course is critical in addressing the current climate crisis by interrogating the ideologies behind consumption.

Course Texts

To avoid a costly textbook, this course will post a series of readings accessible through the library website and on moodle.

Course Objectives

Main Objective:

In order to understand the environmental crisis, the goal of this course is to explore how consumption has come to be central to our culture and way of thinking.

Other goals:

- To provide a critical understanding of consumption as a form of ideology.
- To allow students to reflect on their own experience of and interaction with advertising and consumer culture, or in other words to defetishize their consumer experiences.

- To introduce new areas of thought from the fields of critical advertising studies and consumer culture studies.
- To develop the transferable skills of forming and supporting critical arguments both in their written work and in oral discussion. This includes learning how these skills have value in the job market.
- To engage students in the material in ways that are accessible, engaging, thoughtful and fun.

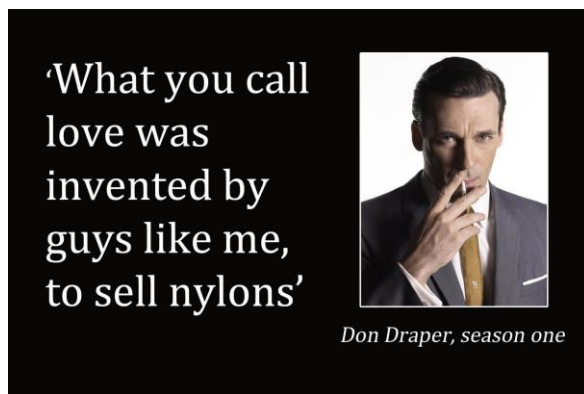
Course Assignments

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|------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|
| Tutorial Participation | 15% | Oral History Interview | 20 % |
| Consumer Culture Diary | 15% | Research Essay/ Advertising Analysis | 30 % |
| Final Exam | 20 % | | |

Weekly Topics (Subject to Change)

Week 1: Introduction of advertising, media, consumer culture and capitalism

Week 2 Advertising, Media and Consumer Culture: Introducing the Concepts



Week 3 The Ideologies of Consumption

Week 4 Capitalism, Colonialism and Consumption

Week 5: Post War: Building an Ideology of Consumption

Week 6: Mad Men, Playboys and Dandys: The Male Consumer

Week 7: Advertising, 1980s and Global Capitalism

Week 8: Yuppies, Teens and Tweens: Consumer Culture and Market Segmentation

Week 9: The 1990s: Disney Movies, Superheros and Product Licensing

Week 10 Public Relations, Sponsorship and Branding: Greenwashing and AstroTurfing

Week 11: Global Advertising Cultures: Global Advertising Campaigns in the 2000s

Week 12: Final exam option in class or during exam period

Note: Based on feedback I have received from students I will be returning to running the exam as I have in the past. Students will have the option to either write during the final class or during the exam period. Each student must choose only one option and cannot do both.

