

Culture and Communication
E59.1015001
M/W 11:00-12:15
Silver 805

Prof. Marita Sturken
Culture and Communication
239 Greene St. 7th Floor
992-9424
marita.sturken@nyu.edu
Office hours:
Mon: 2-4 and by appt.
Graduate Assistant:
Melissa Aronczyk
melissa.aronczyk@nyu.edu

Advertising and Society

Course description:

This course examines the role of advertising as an economic force and a form of cultural representation and the social implications of the role of consumerism in contemporary American society. The course surveys the history of advertising in the United States and investigates the changing strategies that have been used by advertisers from the 19th to the 21st centuries. It approaches advertisements as texts that indicate cultural attitudes and norms of their time and that can be understood through textual analysis. This course examines the broader context of consumerism in which advertising is a key factor. It thus provides a cultural approach to advertising and its history, as a means to understand both advertising as a central component in capitalist economies and its role as an indicator of cultural attitudes and ideologies.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to attend and participate in all lectures, complete the readings, participate in on-line discussion, and complete all assignments. Lectures are an important element of this class. They cover much more material than the reading. Attendance at them will be monitored. If you miss more than 4 lectures without a reasonable excuse, your grade will be lowered. This class has an active web site, with course materials, on-line discussion, and a gallery of print and TV images. Students will be asked to contribute to discussions on the web site as part of their class participation grade.

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.

-2-

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 25%
final exam 25%
class/discussion/web participation 10%

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:

Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of Advertising*
Juliet Schor and Douglas Holt, eds., *The Consumer Society Reader* (CSR)

A mandatory reader is available at Advanced Copy on LaGuardia Place

PART 1: THE ORIGINS OF A CONSUMER SOCIETY

Week 1:

Sept. 7 --Introduction

Week 2:

Sept. 12 --Considering Consumerism

Reading:

Douglas Holt and Juliet Schor, Introduction, *Consumer Society Reader* (CSR)

Michael Schudson, "Delectable Materialism" (Reader)

Optional: John Kenneth Galbraith, "The Dependence Effect" (CSR)

-3-

Sept. 14 – Commodity Fetishism and the Selling of the Empire

Reading:

Anne McClintock, “Soft Soaping Empire” (Reader)

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

Week 3:

Sept. 19 -- Origins of the Consumer Society

Reading:

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 2

Optional: *Soap, Sex and Cigarettes*, Chapter 1

Sept. 21 -- The Rise of Consumer Culture and the Therapeutic Ethos

Reading:

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

Optional: *Practices of Looking*, Chapter 6 (Reader)

Week 4:

Sept. 26 -- Modernity and Advertising

Screening: *The Crowd*

Reading:

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 3

Ben Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism” (Reader)

First paper assignment given.

Sept. 28 – Early Cigarette Advertising and the Semiotics of Ads

Reading:

Practices of Looking, Chapter 1 (Reader)

Week 5:

Oct. 3 – Modern Design

Reading:

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 4

Oct. 5 – Selling and Sacrifice – The Depression and World War II Consumerism

Reading:

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 5

-4-

Week 6:

Oct. 10 –Columbus Day, NO CLASS

Oct. 12 ----The 1950s and Advertising Men

Screening: *A Face in the Crowd*

Reading:

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 6

Vance Packard, “The Hidden Persuaders” (Reader)

First Paper Due.

Week 7:

Oct. 17 –The Consolidation of Consumer America

Reading:

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*, Prologue and Chapter 6 (Reader)

Oct. 19 – The “Creative Revolution” of the 1960s

Reading:

Thomas Frank, “Advertising as Cultural Criticism” (CSR)

Soap, Sex and Cigarettes, Chapter 7

Week 8:

Oct. 24 – Marketing Youth Culture

Reading:

Thomas Frank, “Think Young” (Reader)

Oct. 26 –Midterm Exam

Week 9:

Oct. 31 –Political Advertising and the Selling of the Nation

Reading: TBD

Nov. 2 –Selling the Nation and the Corporation: Post 9/11 Advertising

Reading:

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “The Corporate Politics of Sign Values” (Reader)

-5-

Week 10:

Nov. 7 –Advertising Gender

Reading:

Susan Bordo, “Hunger as Ideology” (CSR)

Malcolm Gladwell, “Listening to Khakis” (Reader)

Practices of Looking, pp. 72-93 (Reader)

Nov. 9 –Selling Otherness and Cultural Difference

Reading:

bell hooks, “Eating the Other” (CSR)

Second paper assignment given.

Week 11:

Nov. 14 --Postmodern Advertising: Metacommunication

Reading:

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning” (CSR)

Practices of Looking, pp. 264-78 (Reader)

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

Nov. 16 –The Coolness Factor

Reading:

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “Authenticity in the Age of the Poseur” (Reader)

Malcolm Gladwell, “The Cool Hunt” (CSR)

Alez Kotlowitz, “False Connections” (CSR)

Week 12:

Nov. 21 –Questions of Taste and Cultural Capital

Reading:

Pierre Bourdieu, “The Aesthetic Sense” (CSR)

Douglas Holt, “Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?” (CSR)

Nov. 23 –Advertising the Global

Reading:

TBD

Second Paper due.

-6-

Week 13:

Nov. 28 –Product Placement and New Ad Strategies

Reading:

Lance Kinney, “Product Placement” (Reader)

Joe Cappel, “The Future of Advertising” (Reader)

Nov. 30 – Guerrilla Ads and Viral Marketing

Reading:

TBD

Week 14:

Dec. 5 – Consumer Politics

Reading:

Betsy Taylor and Dave Tilford, “Why Consumption Matters” (CSR)

Dec. 7 --Consumer Resistance: The Anti-Consumer Movement

Reading:

Joe Basso, “Consumer Movement” (Reader)

Juliet Schor, “Towards a New Politics of Consumption” (CSR)

Week 15:

Dec. 12 --Culture Jamming

Reading:

Kalle Lasn, “Culture Jamming” (CSR)

Dec. 14 --Conclusion

Final Exam: Monday December 19, 10-11:50