

**CMCL C315: Advertising and Consumer Culture
Spring 2015, #25951**

M/W, 9:30-10:45 a.m.
Psychology (PY) 111

Instructor: Cory Barker

Email: barkerc@indiana.edu; Twitter: @corybarker

Office: Classroom Office Building, 800 E. 3rd Street, Office 214

Office hours: Wednesday, 2-3:30 p.m. at the Starbucks on Indiana Ave., or by appointment

Welcome to C315! The goal of this course is to make us more aware of how advertising operates in society and how we live within consumer culture. We will address questions such as: What information, ideas, and values are communicated in advertising? What role does advertising play in television, movies, magazines, and other media? How do manufacturers and retailers create "brand-name" products, and why do we care about these brands? Is consumer culture a form of democratic action, or can it actually inhibit democratic participation? What do the objects we use every day say about us? What do advertisers know about consumers? Do marketers and advertisers use tactics that encourage people to separate themselves into distinct groups? Is it possible to live in the modern world without adopting the values of consumer culture? Should we maintain certain spaces in society that are free of advertising and commercial messages? This class will examine the intersection of advertising, consumer culture, and the media, with an eye toward understanding the history, goals, strategies, and cultural role of the advertising industry.

Moreover, it is important to know that the core of this course is not about working on ad campaigns or developing strategies to be more successful in the advertising or marketing industries. Instead, C315 will ask you to develop critical thinking skills with regard to how advertising and consumer culture shapes our individual lives, but also mass media, representation, and public policy. By the end of the course, you will have a better understanding of how advertising, branding, and consumerism have developed and how they have adapted to cultural and media change, from World War II to the post-9/11 world and from radio and TV to Facebook and Twitter.

Required Text

Gary S. Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Other required readings and media materials available on Oncourse under Resources tab or on reserve at the Media Reserves Desk located in the basement of Wells library. I also encourage you to periodically browse web sites like [Ad Age](#), [Ad Week](#), [Fast Company](#), and the [New York Times Media and Advertising](#) section to keep up on current topics of discussion. If you find interesting articles or resources, don't be shy; bring them up in class.

Assignments

Reading Respondent Duty (5%): To encourage class discussion, you will be randomly assigned a few days in which you're responsible for providing *at least one* comment/question regarding the reading. If discussion breaks down, respondents will be the first line of defense to keep it going.

Attendance and Participation (10%): You are expected to be physically and mentally present in class on a regular basis. For the sessions to go smoothly, you should actively contribute to our discussions and bring all the necessary materials each and every day.

Advertising Analysis (10%): Early in the semester, you will write a 3-4-page essay applying course concepts and vocabulary to a selected print advertisement from the early 20th century.

Reading Quizzes (10%): A handful of times throughout the semester, you will answer a few brief questions about the reading from that day and/or week. These quizzes may be announced beforehand, or they may simply be thrust upon you on the spot. Be prepared and do the assigned readings.

Position Papers (Two at 5% each for a total of 10%): Twice during the semester, you will compose a brief (2-3 pages) essay responding to a contemporary news item using recent class material. Due dates will be randomly chosen by me, but announced early on in the semester. More detailed assignment prompts will be distributed within the first few weeks of class.

Final Project (25%): The centerpiece assignment of the course will ask you to apply a critical lens to an aspect of contemporary consumer culture. This project will unspool on an iterative basis. First, to make sure your work is well considered, you will be asked to submit a 1-2 page proposal with a prospective bibliography. Then in the final third of the semester, you will submit your final projects, which will draw upon course material to make a clear, coherent argument about consumer culture. I'm imagining a 6-7 page essay, but if you would like to attempt some kind of multimedia project (with a written component), please let me know as early as possible. Additional information on the final project will be provided in early February.

Exams (Two at 15% each for a total of 30%): There will be two exams; they will include a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Policies

Attendance: Attendance will be taken every day. I expect you to be here, and be on time. If you are regularly late to class, it will impact your participation grade and if needed, count as a full absence. You have three absences to do whatever you want with, but every day missed after three knocks your participation grade down 10 percent. If you need to miss class for excusable reasons (major illness, family commitment, interview, etc.), please know that you still need to provide proper documentation.

Participation: While I will lecture, this is largely a discussion-based course powered by you and your engagement with the material. The majority of our discussions will stem from the major concepts in your readings and assignments. Therefore, it is essential that you not only do the reading, but also come to class ready to share your ideas and questions about it. Participation will be important to you because it is 10 percent of your final grade, but know that I want this course to be as interactive as it is informative.

Also know that we will be discussing a variety of topics, some of them with political underpinnings. Productive engagement with a diverse range of ideas requires respect for and maturity directed towards the ideas of the assigned authors as well as one's classmates. We will not discriminate against or criticize members of the class based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or any other such factor. I expect professional and intelligent discourse from you all.

Work Load: We're going to cover quite a bit of material over the next 16 weeks. The reading will be occasionally challenging and sometimes long-ish, and you'll have to do some outside research here and there. Please reserve a few hours outside of class meetings each week to prepare.

Late Work: Class assignments will be considered late if you fail to turn them in before class time on the assigned due date. Late work will only be accepted up to **48 hours** after the original due date and will be docked 10 percent per day late.

Technology: I allow you to use your devices for classroom purposes. If your technology use becomes disruptive, or if I can tell that you're *not* using it for class purposes, I will needle you about it once, and then simply start deducting participation points. Be respectful.

Special Needs: If you have any special needs that may affect your work in this course, please let me know during the first week of the semester so we can work together to accommodate them. If you have a memo from Disability Services for Students, please also provide me a copy during the first week.

Academic Honesty: Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with the IU Academic Integrity Policy (link provided) as you will be held responsible for understanding and abiding by the code:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml>

Course Calendar

All readings are found in the required book or on Oncourse under Resources. Required readings and screenings should be done by listed date. Assignment due dates TBD.

WEEK ONE		
M 1/12	Class Introduction: What is Advertising? What is Consumer Culture?	N/A
W 1/14	Why Consumerism 'Won'	Gary Cross, vii-ix, 1-16
WEEK TWO		
M 1/19	No Class – MLK Day	N/A
W 1/21	Methods of Advertising	William Leiss et al., “The Structure of Advertisements,” 161-224
WEEK THREE		
M 1/26	The Social Tableaux	Roland Marchand, “Advertisements as Social Tableaux,” 164-205
W 1/28	Commodity Fetishism	Brief excerpt of Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodity and Its Secret”; Cross, “Setting the Course,” 17-38
WEEK FOUR		
M 2/2	Consumption, Desire, and Leisure	William R. Leach, Introduction to <i>Land of Desire</i> , 3-12
W 2/4	Before the Crash	Cross, “Setting the Course,” 39-65
WEEK FIVE		
M 2/9	And Now, A Word From Our Sponsors	Cynthia B. Meyers, “The Fourth Dimension of Advertising,” 42-46 and “The Advertising Industry Enters Radio,” 55-77
W 2/11	Consumption in the Depression Era	Cross, “The Promises of More,” 67-109 Advertising Analysis Due
WEEK SIX		
M 2/16	The Century of the Self	In-Class Screening: <i>The Century of the Self</i> Episode 1 (60 minutes)
W 2/18	Tuning In, Buying In	Lawrence R. Samuel, “The Precocious Prodigy,” 3-16, 19-32
WEEK SEVEN		
M 2/23	Criticisms of Mass Production	Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (Excerpt)
W 2/25	Criticisms of Mass Consumption	Cross, “Coping with Abundance,” 110-116, 122-143

WEEK EIGHT		
M 3/2	Taste Cultures Midterm Review	Pierre Bourdieu, Introduction to <i>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</i> , 1-7.
W 3/4	Midterm Exam	N/A
WEEK NINE		
M 3/9	The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit	Thomas Frank, "Buttoned Down: High Modernism on Madison Avenue," 34-51 Pre-Class Screening: Episodes of <i>Mad Men</i> TBD
W 3/11	Advertising Gets Hip	Frank, "Carnival and Cola: Hip Versus Square in the Cola Wars," 168-183 Final Project Proposal Due
WEEK TEN		
SPRING BREAK – March 14-March 22, 2015		
WEEK ELEVEN		
M 3/23	Mid-Century Malaise	Cross, "A New Consumerism," 145-169
W 3/25	Deregulation and Emerging Markets	Cross, "Markets Triumphant," 193-206, 220-228
WEEK TWELVE		
M 3/30	Brand Culture	Naomi Klein, "New Branded World," 3-23; Rob Walker, "The Pretty Good Problem," 3-10, 15-20
W 4/1	Narrowcasting, Personalization, and the End of the Monoculture	Touré, "Why I Miss the Monoculture" Pre-Class Screening: Eli Pariser, TED Talk
WEEK THIRTEEN		
M 4/6	'Advertising 2.0'	Charles Duhigg, "How Companies Learn Your Secrets"
W 4/8	Silicon Valley and Consumption	Jason Tanz, "How Airbnb and Lyft Finally Got Americans to Trust Each Other"
WEEK FOURTEEN		
M 4/13	Subcultures	Walker, "Chuck Taylor Was a Salesman," 79-95

W 4/15	Responses to Consumer Culture: DIY and Craft Movements	Walker, "Handmade 2.0"; Evgeny Morozov, "Making It" Final Project Due
WEEK FIFTEEN		
M 4/20	The Progression (and Co-Opting) of Culture Jamming	Naomi Klein, "Culture Jamming: Ads Under Attack," 278-292
W 4/22	Commodity Activism	Jo Littler, "Good Housekeeping: Green Products and Commodity Activism," 76-92
WEEK SIXTEEN		
M 4/27	Branding the Right and the Left	Dossier on Contemporary Politics
W 4/29	Branding the Self Final Exam Review	Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Branding the Post-Feminist Self: The Labor of Femininity," 51-72
WEEK SEVENTEEN		
FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 6, 2015, 8-10 a.m., in our regular classroom		

Class Bibliography

Banet-Weiser. "Branding the Post-Feminist Self: The Labor of Femininity." In *Authentic (TM): The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*, 51-89. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

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Frank, Thomas. "Buttoned Down: High Modernism on Madison Avenue." In *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, 34-51. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

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Marchand, Roland. "Advertisements As Social Tableaux." In *Advertising and the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, 164-205. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

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Meyers, Cynthia B. "The Fourth Dimension of Advertising: The Development of Commercial Broadcasting in the 1920s." In *A Word From Our Sponsor: Admen, Advertising, and the Golden Age Radio*, 33-54. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

---. "They Sway Millions as If by Some Magic Wand: The Advertising Industry Enters Radio in the Late 1920s." In *A Word From Our Sponsor: Admen, Advertising, and the Golden Age Radio*, 55-77. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

Morozov, Evgeny. "Making It." *The New Yorker*. January 13, 2014.

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Tanz, Jason. "Trust in the Share Economy: How Airbnb and Lyft Finally Got Americans to Trust Each Other." *Wired*. April 23, 2014.

Touré. "Why I Miss the Monoculture." *Salon*. September 28, 2011.

Walker, Rob. "Chuck Taylor Was a Salesman." In *Buying In: What We Buy and Who We Are*, 79-95. New York: Random House, 2010.

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