

SUMMER 2010 COMM 287
ADVERTISING AS SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

ONLINE COURSE

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* ***WARNING*** * This is **not** a course in **how** to advertise, how to construct ad campaigns, how to design ads, etc. It does **not** approach advertising from a practitioner's viewpoint. This course looks at advertising from the viewpoint of **social theory**, of how we can understand advertising's broad political, economic, social and cultural role in modern society.

This course will broadly examine the social role of national advertising in consumer societies. The central focus will be on its mediation of the modern person/object relationship, the satisfaction of needs, the constitution of popular culture, and the process of socialization. A wide-ranging theory locating advertising as a crucial institution at the intersection of media, popular culture and industry will be developed. The course is divided into three parts.

Part One: Existing Debates and the Development of the Consumer Culture

We will start by examining the predominant ways in which the debate about advertising has been framed until the present. Specifically we will focus on the critics who view advertising as an institution that manipulates people against their will, as well as looking at the defense of advertising that has come from the industry itself in seeking to legitimate its influential role. It will be argued that both of these perspectives are inadequate and that to properly understand advertising we need to know its institutional history, its relationship to wider social/cultural/economic factors, its role within the complex processes of satisfaction and communication in modern society, and the specific social policy concerns that it is a part of. The remainder of the course looks at these numerous dimensions.

The rest of Part One will examine the historical, social, cultural and economic roots of advertising as a key institution of consumer societies. Specifically we will focus on how changing relationships between different media forms, marketing theories, industrial strategies and popular culture have effected the content of ads when viewed historically. We will establish the existence of four separable stages in the development of national advertising through this century. There will a specific concentration on advertising as an industry that produces communication products.

Part Two: The Moral & Ethical Values of Advertising

Here we will examine the modern advertising industry that produces the commercials, as well as looking at the products of the industry - the advertisements themselves. We will analyze the complex ways in which commercials are created, how they work in terms of the mediation of meaning, the basic formats that have been used through this century by the industry to accomplish this communication, and specific ways in which we can approach the study of advertisements.

With a fuller understanding of the complex ways in which advertising developed and the ways in which it works, we can now proceed to properly locate it within the processes of satisfaction and communication of which it is an integral part in modern society. The recent sociological literature on the satisfaction of needs and the constitution of "happiness" will be closely examined. Special attention will be paid to the way in which advertising is part of a process that leads to a limit on the nature of satisfaction that contemporary society is able to offer.

Part Three: Advertising & Social Issues

In this part we will examine the various controversies that have arisen in regard to advertising's role in the consumer culture. There will be a major focus on issues of labor and globalization, (and what has to be hidden for the ads to be able to have their intended effect). We will also try and understand: the role that new direct-to-consumer advertising of pharmaceutical drugs plays in how consumers think about their personal health; the advertising of alcohol and tobacco; the specific issues that arise when discussing advertising to children; and the way that banks and credit card companies have created a culture of debt that encourages individuals to spend in ways that are both collectively and individually problematic.

FORMAT:

This course is being offered as **an on-line course** (lectures available on streaming video through SPARK). All students must regularly check their UMASS email (@student.umass.edu). Important information will be delivered via this email address and it is the responsibility of students to access it.

REQUIRED READINGS:

There are 10 required articles for this course and all are available (at no cost) via Electronic Reserves at the Library (link available on SPARK).

- Go to: <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu>
- Choose “Electronic Reserves and Reserves Pages” and then follow directions.
- The password for the course is **“summer10”**.

Once you have accessed the course page you will be able to download PDF files of the required readings.

Students are responsible for all the assigned reading. Questions or difficulties arising from the readings should be addressed to me during office hours or via email. See also the study guides for the readings

REQUIRED FILMS:

In addition to the 10 required readings **there are also 6 required films**. They can be accessed as streaming video from the course web site. A list of the required readings and the required films, and the exam that they connected to appears below.

STUDY GUIDES: (available from the link on SPARK)

There are three study guides, one for each exam. They contain study questions for the required readings and the required films.

Approximately 50% of each exam will consist of the exact questions from the study guides, so you can prepare quite specifically. If you are diligent there is no reason why you cannot perform to the best of your abilities.

GRADING REQUIREMENTS: Three exams will be held **on-line** during the summer session.

- Exam I (30%)
- Exam 2 (35%)
- Final Exam (35%)

All exams are multiple-choice format and will include questions on the lectures, the readings and the films.

EXAMS: LECTURES, READINGS & FILMS

Exam 1: The following will be examined on the first test:

- The 9 lectures from Part One
 - 3 readings:
 - “New Branded World” by Naomi Klein (study guide 1)
 - “On Advertising: Sut Jhally vs. James Twitchell” (study guide 1)
 - “Advertising as Religion” by Sut Jhally (study guide 1)
 - 2 films:
 - *No Logo* (study guide 1)
 - *The Diamond Empire* (study guide 1)
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Exam 2: The following will be examined on the second test:

- The 8 lectures from Part Two
 - 3 readings
 - “The Visible Lifestyle” by Juliet Schor (study guide 2)
 - “The State of Consumption Today” by Gary Gardner et al. (study guide 2)
 - “Laden with Lard” by Barbara Ehrenreich (study guide 2)
 - 2 films:
 - *The End of Suburbia* (study guide 2)
 - *Hijacking Catastrophe* (study guide 2)
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Exam 3: The following will be examined on the Final Test

- The 8 lectures from Part Three
 - 4 readings:
 - “The Discarded Factory” by Naomi Klein (study guide 3)
 - “Born to Buy” by Juliet Schor (study guide 3)
 - “Getting to You” by Katherine Greider (study guide 3)
 - “Credit Cards on Campus” by Robert Manning (study guide 3)
 - 2 films:
 - *Deadly Persuasion* (study guide 3)
 - *In Debt We Trust* (study guide 3)
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Lecture Topics/Reading & Film Guide:

Part One: Existing Debates & the Development of the Consumer Culture

1. Why Study Advertising (*Reading: "Big Branded World"*)
2. The Diamond Life (*Film: "The Diamond Empire"*)
3. Criticisms of Advertising (*Film: No Logo*)
4. Criticisms of Advertising (*Reading: "Advertising & Religion"*)
5. Defenses of Advertising (*Reading: "Jhally vs. Twitchell"*)
6. The Invention of Advertising
7. The Invention of Advertising
8. Four Stages of Advertising
9. The Modern Industry

Part Two: The Moral & Ethical Values of Advertising

1. How Ads Work 1
2. How ads work 2
3. Four Formats
4. A Fifth Stage (*Reading: "Laden with Lard"*)
5. Advertising, Happiness & the Future (*Reading: "The Visible Lifestyle"*)
6. Advertising, Happiness & the Future (*Reading: "State of the World"*)
7. Advertising, Happiness & the Future (*Film: "End of Suburbia"*)
8. Advertising, Happiness & the Future (*Film: "Hijacking Catastrophe"*)
9. Advertising, Happiness & the Future

Part Three: Advertising & Social Issues

1. The Hidden World of Commodities (*Reading: "The Discarded Factory"*)
2. The Hidden World of Commodities
3. Pharmaceutical Advertising (*Reading: "Getting to You"*)
4. Advertising to Kids (*Reading: "Born to Buy"*)
5. Advertising to Kids
6. Debt (*Film: "In Debt We Trust"*) (*Reading: "Credit Cards on Campus"*)
7. Alcohol & Tobacco Advertising (*Film: "Deadly Persuasion"*)
8. Conclusion