

Advertising and Consumer Society
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-UE 1015 Spring 2023



Instructor and Course Information

- Prof. Marita Sturken
- Mon/Wed 9:30-10:45
- Bobst LL150
- Office hours in person or on zoom: Mon 11-12:30 and by appt
- East Building, 239 Greene Street, Room 814
- marita.sturken@nyu.edu

Course Description

This course surveys the history of advertising, branding, and consumer culture, focusing primarily though not exclusively on the United States historically and expanding to global contexts; it investigates the changing strategies that have been used by advertisers and marketers from the 19th to the 21st centuries. This course follows a cultural approach to the study of advertising and consumer society, looking at branding as a central component in capitalist economies and indicator of cultural attitudes and ideologies. It examines the history of advertising media, the changing advertising industry, consumer practices, the spaces of consumerism, the role that consumerism plays in identity, and the environmental impact of consumerism. The second half of the course examines the impact of digital media, social media, and data gathering on the emergence of brand culture and changing consumer practices.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend all lectures, complete the readings, and complete all assignments on time. Lectures cover more material than the reading and attendance at them will be monitored.

I am available for consultation via email and during office hours. Eddie Ceja is the reader/grader for this class and will also be available for consultation (ec4389@nyu.edu).

Readings/Texts

All readings will be posted in pdf on Brightspace.

There are some recommended readings listed on the syllabus and on Brightspace, which you may want to read if the topic interests you further and which should be useful to you in writing your papers.

Websites:

The Brightspace site will be used as the primary site for the class, with instructions and links for each week set up in a unit. Use this site as your primary resource for the class. It will be updated with any important changes.

We will have several NYU Wordpress Blog sites (linked off of Brightspace) for your weekly blogs. You will be assigned one of these sites according to the first letter of your last name.

We will also use the MCC Advertising Archive as a resource for historical ads.

<http://cultureandcommunication.org/advertising/index.php>

The user name is "dcc"/password is "advertising"

Other useful resources: Adtext <http://www.adtextonline.org/> and the Advertising Educational Foundation website <https://aef.com/classroom-resources/>

Assignments

You will write two papers, and one take home final. You will also be required to do one blog post, in response to a prompt, each week. Do your best to do this every week and not get behind. You will be expected to do a total of 14 blog posts. Engagement is key! You will be assigned to a blog the first week of class.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

paper 1 20%

paper 2 30%

blog posts 30%

Take home final 20%

Please type and double-space your written work and number your pages. Any citation style is fine as long as you use it consistently.

I recommend you use Chicago style for your citations; the short version is here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Papers should be submitted via email, put your last name first in the file name .

Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments

Week 1: Jan 23-25

Monday, January 23, 9:30-10:45 —Introduction

Wednesday, January 25—Modernity, Industry, and the Rise of Cities

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 89-103

Week 2: Jan 30-Feb 1

Jan 30— Origins of the Modern Consumer Society

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 260-65, 272-78 (in Chap 7)

William Leach, *Land of Desire*, Introduction

Feb 1— The Creation of Brands

Reading:

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 2: Selling the Goods: pp. 46-59

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 3: The Rise of a Consumer Economy, pp. 84-102

Recommended:

Charles Goodrum and Helen Dalrymple, “Cereal, Soap and Sex” From *Advertising in America*

Week 3: Feb 6-8

Feb 6— The Rise of the Advertising Profession

Reading:

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 2: Selling the Goods: pp. 67-78

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 3: The Rise of a Consumer Economy, pp. 102-16

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 4: The Roaring Twenties, 147-61

Recommended:

Roland Marchand, "Men of the People: The New Professionals" From *Advertising the American Dream*) pp. 25-38.

Feb 8— Spaces for Shopping: The Rise of the Department Store

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 265-70 (in Chap 7)

Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style*, pp. 77-86

Adam Gopnik, "Under One Roof"

Recommended:

Christoph Grunenberg, "Wonderland: Spectacles of Display from the Bon Marche to Prada"

Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style* (Chapter 5: Window Shopping)

Week 4: Feb 13-15

Feb 13—Modern Ad Design and the Billboard

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 265-68 (in Chap 7)

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 2: Selling the Goods 59-64

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 4: The Roaring Twenties, 127-37

Catherine Gudis, "The Aesthetics of Speed"

Recommended:

Catherine Gudis, "Modern Art and Advertising"

Roland Marchand, "The Consumption Ethic: Strategies of Art and Style" (From *Advertising the American Dream*)

First paper assignment given.

Feb 15— Commodity Fetishism and Marketing Capital

Reading:

Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of the Commodity” excerpt

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 257-60, 278-83 (in Chap 7)

Week 5: Feb 20-22

Feb 20—No Class, Presidents Day

Feb 22—The Semiotics of Branding and the Rise of Brand Culture

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 32-37 (pdf on semiotics)

Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Keyword: Brand”

Marcel Danesi, “From Product to Brand”

Recommended:

Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Authentic: Introduction”

Week 6: Feb 27-March 1

Feb 27—The 1950s and the Consolidation of American Consumerism

Reading:

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 6: The Postwar Boom

March 1—The 1950s Ad Industry

Reading:

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*: Chapter 2: Buttoned Down

FIRST PAPER DUE.

Week 7: March 6-8

March 6—Television Advertising

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 270-72 (in Chap 7)
William O’Barr, “The Rise and Fall of the TV Commercial”

<http://muse.jhu.edu/article/389521>

March 8—The Shopping Center and the Mall

Reading:

Alexandra Lange, *Meet Me By the Fountain*, excerpt

Ian Bogost, “When Malls Saved the Suburbs from Despair”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/02/when-malls-saved-cities-from-capitalism/553610/>

Watch: The Rise and Fall of the American Mall

<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-american-mall-2020-7>

March 13-17, SPRING BREAK

Week 8: March 20-22

March 20—The “Creative Revolution” of 1960s Advertising

Reading:

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, Chapter 3: Advertising as Cultural Criticism

Recommended:

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, Chapter 4: Three Rebels

Juliann Sivulka, *Sex, Soap and Cigarettes*, Chapter 7: “The Creative Revolution”

March 22—Selling Youth and Marketing Coolness

Reading:

Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, Chapter 6: Think Young

Week 9: March 27-29

March 27— MS out of town—Guest Speaker TBD

March 29— Irony, Self Reflexivity, and Hipness: Postmodern ads

Reading:

Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “Yo! Hailing the Alienated Spectator”, pp. 83-91, 102-105, 108-110

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 301-311

Recommended:

Malcolm Gladwell, “The Cool Hunt”

Michael Serazio, “Buying into the Cool Sell”

Second paper assignment given.

Week 10: April 3-5

April 3— Gender and Selling Empowerment

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 283-88 (in Chap 7)

Sarah Banet-Weiser, “The Fun House Mirror” from *Empowered*

Recommended:

Ed Timke, “Representations of Masculinity and Femininity in Advertising”

<http://muse.jhu.edu/article/648423>

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 120-31

April 5— Global Capitalism, Container Ships, and the Rise of Big Box Stores

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 288-93 (in Chap 7)

Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics*, pp. 1-14

Clare Lyster, “The Logistical Figure”

Week 11: April 10-12

April 10— Advertising Confronts the Web

Reading:

Joseph Turow, *The Daily You*, Chapter 2: Clicks and Cookies

Recommended:

James Hamilton, “A New Take on Digital Advertising” <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.nyu.edu/article/652405>

April 12— Anti-Ads, Guerrilla Marketing, Product Placement

Reading:

Mara Einstein, “From Mass to Millennials” and “What We Share and Why We Share”
Michael Serazio, “Illuminating the Invisible: The Guerrilla Logic and Strategy of Digital Branded Content” <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.nyu.edu/article/684254>

Week 12: April 17-19

April 17— Social Media Marketing

Reading:

Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender and Aspirational Labor in the Social Media Economy*, Chapter 1
Nicole Cohen, “Commodifying Free Labor Online”

April 19— The Rise of Amazon and the Transformation of Retail

Reading:

Emily West, Introduction to *Buy Now: How Amazon Branded Convenience and Normalized Monopoly*
Vicki Howard, “The Rise and Fall of Sears”
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rise-and-fall-sears-180964181/>

Recommended:

Anna Wiener, “What a Tour of an Amazon Fulfillment Center Reveals”
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-silicon-valley/what-an-amazon-fulfillment-center-tour-reveals>

SECOND PAPER DUE.

Week 13: April 24-26

April 24— Consumer Data and Tracking

Reading:

Mara Einstein, “The Digital Sell: Big Data, Programmatic Buying, and Living by the Numbers”

Recommended:

Mark Bartholomew, *Ad Creep*: “Colonizing New Advertising Spaces” pp. 27-46

April 26— Consumer Activism and Corporate Social Responsibility

Reading:

Mara Einstein, “Cause Marketing and the Rise of Values-Based Brands”

Sarah Banet-Weiser and Roopali Mukherjee, Introduction to *Commodity Activism*

Recommended:

Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte, *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World*, Chap 5

Week 14: May 1-3

May 1— Fast Fashion, Bottled Water, and the Environmental Impact of Consumption

Reading:

Elizabeth Cline, “Fast Fashion” from *Overdressed*

Andy Opel, “Constructing Purity: Bottled Water and the Commodification of Nature”

Recommended:

Juliet Schor, “The Paradox of Materiality”

Josée Johnson and Kate Cairns, “Eating for Change”

Nicki Lisa Cole, “Ethical Consumption in the Global Age: Coffee’s Promise of a Better World”

May 3—Hipster Urbanism, the Experience Economy, and the Rise of the Gourmet

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3rd Ed*, pp. 293-96 (in Chap 7)
Sharon Zukin, “Destination Culture”

Week 15: May 8

May 8—The Future of Advertising and Consumerism

Reading:

Andrew Essex, “The End of Advertising”

Recommended:

Mara Einstein, “Marketing Amid a Global Crisis”

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/760224>

TAKE HOME FINAL DUE: Thursday May 11, by 5 pm

COURSE POLICIES

Evaluation Criteria

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.

Evaluation Rubric

A = Excellent

This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B = Good

This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C = Average

This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D = Unsatisfactory

This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F = Failed

This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignment.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to 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.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; report from other's oral work; paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

I am obligated to report cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty for appropriate disciplinary action.

Student Resources

- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting reasonable accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for students with Disabilities. You can begin the registration process by completing [Moses Center Online Intake](#). Once completed, a Disability Specialist will be in contact with you. Students requiring services are strongly encouraged to register prior to the upcoming semester or as early as possible during the semester to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations.

- NYU Writing Center (Washington Square): 411 Lafayette, 4th Floor. Schedule an appointment online at <https://nyu.mywconline.com> or just walk-in.

- **[Steinhardt Writing Center](#)**

The Steinhardt Writing Center provides judgment-free one-on-one sessions with a professional writing consultant, allowing students to workshop their papers and receive feedback on content and organization as well as mechanics and grammar. The center works with students at any stage of the writing process (from brainstorming to final drafts) and with any kind of writing (term papers, short responses, journal articles, dissertations, theses, cover letters, and more). For more information and to make an appointment, see [our webpage](#).