

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



**Instructor and Course Information**

- Prof. Marita Sturken
- Mon/Wed 12:30-1:45
- Bobst LL1-38
- Office hours in person or on zoom: Wed 2-3:30 and by appt
- East Building, 239 Greene Street, Room 814
- [marita.sturken@nyu.edu](mailto: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. Hadiqa Shahid is the reader/grader for this class and will also be available for consultation (Hadiqa Shahid <hs3392@nyu.edu>).

## **Readings/Texts**

All readings will be posted in pdf or links 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 two 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 have a final exam. 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 13 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%

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](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: Sept. 6**

**Wednesday September 6, 12:30-1:45—Introduction**

### **Week 2: Sept. 11-13**

**Sept. 11— Modernity, Industry, and the Rise of Cities**

**Reading:**

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

**Sept 13— Origins of the Modern Consumer Society**

**Reading:**

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

William Leach, *Land of Desire*, Introduction

### **Week 3: Sept. 18-20**

**Sept. 18— 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*

## **Sept. 20— 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.

## **Week 4: Sept. 25-27**

### **Sept. 25— Spaces for Shopping: The Rise of the Department Store**

#### Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

***First paper assignment given.***

### **Sept 27— Modern Ad Design and the Billboard**

#### Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> 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*)

## **Week 5: October 2-4**

### **October 2— Commodity Fetishism and Marketing Capital**

Reading:

Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of the Commodity” excerpt

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

### **October 4—The Semiotics of Branding and the Rise of Brand Culture**

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: October 10-11**

### **October 10 (Tues)—The 1950s and the Consolidation of American Consumerism**

Reading:

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

### ***FIRST PAPER DUE.***

### **October 11—The 1950s Ad Industry**

Reading:

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

## **Week 7: October 16-18**

### **October 16—Television Advertising**

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed*, pp. 270-72 (in Chap 7)

William O’Barr, “The Rise and Fall of the TV Commercial”

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

## **October 18—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>

## **Week 8: October 23-25**

### **October 23—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”

### **October 25—Selling Youth and Marketing Coolness**

Reading:

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

***Second paper assignment given.***

## **Week 9: October 30-Nov. 1**

### **October 30— 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed*, pp. 301-311

Recommended:

Malcolm Gladwell, “The Cool Hunt”

Michael Serazio, “Buying into the Cool Sell”

## **Nov. 1— Gender and Selling Empowerment**

Reading:

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

## **Week 10: Nov. 6-8**

### **Nov. 6— Global Capitalism, Container Ships, Amazon, and the Rise of Big Box Stores**

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed*, pp. 288-93 (in Chap 7)  
Emily West, Introduction to *Buy Now: How Amazon Branded Convenience and Normalized Monopoly*  
Clare Lyster, “The Logistical Figure”

Recommended:

Vicki Howard, “The Rise and Fall of Sears”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rise-and-fall-sears-180964181/>

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>

### **Nov. 8— 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>

## **Week 11: Nov. 13-15**

### **Nov. 13— 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>

### ***SECOND PAPER DUE.***

### **Nov. 15— Guest Lecture Chobani Marketing**

## **Week 12: Nov. 20**

### **Nov. 20— 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”

### **Nov. 22 THANKSGIVING BREAK**

## **Week 13: Nov. 27-29**

### **Nov. 27— 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

### **Nov. 29— 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: December 4-6**

#### **Dec. 4— 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”

#### **Dec. 6—Reinventing Retail: Pop-Ups, the Experience Economy, and Digital “Brick and Mortar”**

Reading:

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed*, pp. 293-96 (in Chap 7)

Amanda Mull, “Retailers Bet Wrong on America’s Feelings About Stores”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2023/09/american-department-store-shopping-experience/675210/>

Recommended:

Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, “Welcome to the Experience Economy”

### **Week 15: December 11-13**

#### **Dec. 11—Advertising and Consumer Culture in the Age of Disaster Capitalism**

Reading:

Mara Einstein, “Marketing Amid a Global Crisis”

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

#### **Dec. 13—Conclusion/Final Exam**

## **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](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 papers. It requires that you recognize and

acknowledge information derived from others, including programs, 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; use AI programs to write papers.

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](#).