Dr. Jack Z. Bratich  
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30  
Office: 111 SCI  
732-932-7500 x8173  
jbratich@rutgers.edu  

Teaching Assistant/Grader  
Vyshali Manivannan  
vm275@eden.rutgers.edu  
Office hour: Thursdays 2-3  
SCI Annex; ANX-304  

Instructional Assistants/Tutors  
Woo Kim  
Office hour: Wednesdays 3-4  
Near the entrance of Alexander Library  

Sarah Pottieger  
Office hour: Fridays 2:30-3:30  
SCI Student lounge  

Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to provide a critical understanding of advertising's role in society. We will examine the history of advertising, the commercial and social aspects of the messages conveyed by ads, and the advertising industry's influence on social relations and institutions, such as journalism. The basic orientation of the course is to study consumer media culture (advertising, public relations, and branded space) as a form unique to modern society.

Advertising, as the authors of one of our readings put it, is a mode of social communication, one that has become the “privileged form of discourse.” This has implications for relations between democracy and communication. This means that this course is not a practical training class in how to create ads, nor necessarily in how to create more effective mediated communication. Some of you will become journalists, and you will be facing a number of issues regarding the commercialized form of news. As citizens and members of society you will need the tools to understand the pervasiveness of consumer culture in the mediated sphere. This course will give you these tools. We will primarily be focusing on the broader implications of advertising and consumer culture. What can we say about a society that has advertising as its highest art form? How do ads draw on, reflect, distort, and create social desires?

The course begins with a broad history of modern advertising, and then we learn how to read ads critically as conveyors and creators of social values. We will then focus on advertising’s
relationship to a variety of social issues and practices (gender, race, youth, environmentalism, rebellion). Some time will be spent on the recent innovations and experiments in “techniques of persuasion.” We’ll examine these techniques as they inform new modes of interactive and networked communication. Finally, we will examine the recent globalization of advertising, as well as the counterpractices (culture jamming, adbusters, cyberprotests) directed at an increasingly commercialized and branded world.

The course will also introduce a number of media studies modes of analysis, including semiotics, cultural history, political economy, quantitative data analysis, and ethnography.

**Learning objectives:**

1) Demonstrate an understanding of approaches to, and debates surrounding, the role of advertising in society.

2) Describe the implications of corporate influence on public institutions, including journalism and education.

3) Describe the implications of consumer culture on social identities (especially race and gender), youth, and relationships.

4) Analyze print and audio-visual advertisements using semiotic and social semiotic methodologies.

**Intellectual Skills**

By the end of the course a successful learner will be able to:

- Reason critically when discussing advertising.
- Demonstrate and exercise an independence of thought.
- Deploy analytic strategies for interpreting ad texts.
- Contribute to discussions of consumer culture with a thorough understanding of historical and social contexts.

**Practical and Transferable Skills**

By the end of the course a successful learner will have:

- Acquired and improved their media literacy skills.
- Developed written abilities to express their analytic skills.

**Assessment**

Objective 1: The exams will synthesize the semester's historical and theoretical discussions.

Objective 2: Exams will cover the impact of consumer culture on particular institutions and events (e.g. journalism, families, schools).

Objective 3: The first paper gives students a number of ads that require race and gender analysis.

Objective 4: The first paper will primarily involve semiotic analysis of particular ads.

**Required Texts:**

There is no required course textbook. All readings will be found on Sakai (in Resources section) at [https://sakai.rutgers.edu/](https://sakai.rutgers.edu/) Use your NetID and password to log into the website. It is the
student's responsibility to ensure that they are able to access the Sakai website and material for this course. Updates to the syllabus and course announcements will be sent out periodically to the email address connected to your Sakai profile; please regularly check your email connected to your profile at least three times per week. The readings are divided according to the corresponding weeks.

**Grading:**
Grades will be based on the following assignments:

- In-Class Paper Assignment (500 words) 15%
- Analysis of contemporary technique (250 words) 5%
- Pop Quizzes (at least 5) 5%
- Midterm 30%
- Final 45%

All grades will be available on the Sakai site in the Gradebook section. Grades cannot be emailed to students.

Rutgers undergraduate grading scale:
- 90-100, A
- 85-89.99, B+
- 80-84.99, B:
- 76-79.99, C+
- 70-75.99, C
- 60-69.99, D
- Below 60, F

Decimal points .5 and higher will be rounded up

There will be extra credit on the exams and quizzes, but no separate extra credit assignments will be given. No late assignments will be accepted whatsoever.

**Attendance and Class Policies:**

Attendance will not be taken. Lectures will cover material not found in the readings. Videos will periodically be shown in class, and they are fair game for exams. No additional screenings will be provided. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting the notes from a classmate (in other words, I won't make mine available nor summarize lectures during office hours). Makeup exams will only be given in the case of documented illness or emergency.

Plagiarism: Rutgers University takes academic integrity and plagiarism seriously. Familiarize yourself with the policy if you haven’t already:
http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/
For a handy, digestible guide to understanding the policy:
http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/101/plagiarism_policy/index.html
Students with documented disabilities who wish accommodations in this class must do so through the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office. See http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu for details. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss these accommodations with the instructor.

**Student Conduct and Academic Integrity**

Students are responsible for adhering to the policies of this course and of Rutgers University, which includes the Code of Student Conduct. Please see http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/docs/UCSC.pdf for more information.

**Schedule:**

Week One (1/17, 19): **Introduction/Early History**  
Sivulka, Part I

Week Two (1/24, 26): **History of Modern Advertising & Consumer Culture**  
Sivulka, Part II  
Marchand, "Advertisements as Social Tableaux"

Week Three (1/31, 2/2): **The Language of Ads**  
Fowles, "Deciphering Advertisements"  
Berger, “Analyzing Print Advertisements (Fidji Perfume)”  
(2/2): Begin GENDER

Week Four (2/7, 9): **Gender**  
Kilbourne, “The More you Add, the More you Subtract”  
Jhally, “Advertising, Gender, and Sex”  
*Video: Killing Us Softly 3*

Week Five (2/14): **During-Class writing assignment.**  
(2/16): **Race and Colonialism**  
Sivulka, “White Soap and Black Consumer Culture”  
McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire”

Week Six (2/21, 23): **Public Relations**  
Stauber and Rampton, Toxic Sludge [Excerpts]  
*Video: Toxic Sludge*

Week Seven (2/28): **Review/Catch up Day**  
(3/1): **MIDTERM**

Week Eight (3/6, 8): **Youth I: Children and Teen Branding**  
Quart, Branded: the buying and selling of teenagers. [Excerpts]  
Schor, “Born to Buy”  
*Video: Consuming Kids*
Week Nine (3/13, 15): SPRING BREAK

Week Ten (3/20, 22): Youth II: Subcultures and Cool Hunting
Frank, Conquest of Cool [Excerpts]

Week Eleven (3/27, 29): The Brand
Klein, No Logo, [Excerpts]
Videos: Merchants of Cool, Persuaders

Week Twelve (4/3, 5): The Space of Consumption: The Mall and the Supermarket
Rushkoff, “Atmospherics”
Videos: Packaging/Merchandising; Buyology—Malls.

Jenkins “Buying into American Idol”
Turow, “Rethinking Television in the Digital Age”

4/16: Last day to withdraw from class with “W” grade

Week Fourteen (4/17, 19): Interactivity: Affective Marketing, Social Media
Brabham, “Crowdsourced Advertising”
Sivulka, Ch. 10

4/22: Analysis of contemporary technique assignment due via Assignment section of Sakai by 11:55pm

Week Fifteen (4/24, 26): Culture Jamming
Lasn, "Spring"

MAY 9: FINAL EXAM, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (SCOTT HALL, ROOM 123)

NOTE: Now that you know when the final exam will take place, do not make plans to leave campus earlier and expect a makeup exam. If you have already made plans to leave campus by this date, I recommend you drop the course.
Final is cumulative, with approximately 70% of the exam taken from the second half of class, 20% taken directly from the midterm exam and 10% will be questions that span the whole course.