

Advertising the American Ideal

English 151.10 · Thursdays 3:00-5:30 · Barrett Library 216

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How do advertisements convey social, educational, and cultural ideals, and what values are inherent in those ideals? These two basic questions will guide our exploration of the role advertising plays in our society in general and in your life in particular. More specifically, we will consider how advertisements convey ideas about gender roles, race, and socioeconomic status as we explore different advertising markets (singles, kids, sports fans, college students) and different advertising venues (magazines, television, personal ads, and the Internet). How do advertisements get people's attention? What ideals do they suggest their product can offer consumers? What role do they envision their product playing in the world? And what rhetorical, visual, graphic, and aural means do they use to convey such values and ideals? As we explore these issues, we will read different styles and types of essays about advertising, and, of course, we will scrutinize the advertisements themselves. To deepen our understanding, we will analyze, probe, question, challenge, and experiment with the ideas we encounter.

Intertwined within these explorations of other people's writing about advertising and popular culture ideals will be opportunities to express your own thoughts and experiences and to develop and hone your writing skills in such a way that you can share your observations about advertising and popular culture articulately and effectively with others. A variety of writing projects will enable you to expand your ability to communicate well in different circumstances and with different audiences. The reading, critical thinking, discussing, and writing that you do in this class will prepare you to succeed in your other college courses.

Expectations

In order to explore the world and purposes of higher education fully, we must expose ourselves to different perspectives and analyze those perspectives by writing about them and discussing them. To that end, the three main components of this course are reading, discussing, and writing.

Reading

Most of our readings will come from *Signs of Life in the USA*, eds. Maasik and Solomon; and *Style: the Basics* by Williams, though I will occasionally supplement these readings with handouts from other texts. In addition, we will carefully examine the Rhodes viewbook later on in the semester; I will provide both the handouts and viewbooks for you in class when the time comes.

To understand the readings to the best of your ability, I encourage you to read actively. Allow time when preparing for class to read the selection(s) more than once, and engage your text in a conversation by writing your ideas and questions in the margins and by underlining or marking passages that you find interesting or problematic. Doing so will help you form an opinion about the reading and to articulate that opinion clearly to your classmates both in discussions and in your writing.

Discussing

Class discussions will help you sort through your reactions to the readings and expand your understanding of them as you engage with and learn from the perspectives of your fellow classmates. Our discussions will take different forms: sometimes we will discuss as a whole group, sometimes in small groups, sometimes using computers, sometimes using creative exercises. In every form of discussion, I encourage and expect you to voice your opinions, offer interpretations, and ask questions in a way that expresses your genuine interest and intelligence.

Writing

You will have the chance express your thoughts and analyze the works we read more thoroughly by writing about them. Because learning to write effectively takes a lot of time and practice, I will frequently ask you to reflect upon and to revise your own writing and to offer productive feedback to your classmates on their writing, often via in-class writing workshops that will help you explore different aspects of the writing process. You will frequently get to express and analyze not only through these writing workshops, your reading notes, and in-class writing, but also through informal written responses and formal papers.

Written Responses are short, evaluative papers responding to the reading assignment. Responses will help you prepare for class discussion, improve your writing, and come up with ideas for your formal papers. Your responses should not simply summarize the reading but should respond to it critically and thoughtfully. Consider it an opportunity to engage with the text in meaningful ways: do you have questions about the reading? What is it about the work that you find interesting? moving? puzzling? disturbing? weird? What significance or implications do you find in your observations? Your responses should be typed and double-spaced and should be at least a page in length. You should write 6 Written Responses over the course of the semester, but the dates on which you turn the responses in is up to you, as long as you don't wait until the end of the semester to turn them all in.

You will also get to communicate your interpretations and analyses and hone your writing skills through four formal papers and a radical revision of two of those formal papers, with your final paper being a research paper. I welcome you to revise any and all of your papers as many times as you would like. You will turn in your formal papers and revisions electronically via email. I will give you more details about the formatting of your papers and the process for turning them in before your first paper is due.

Respect

Beyond these three main components of our class—reading, discussing, and writing—I have additional expectations that encourage respect, both within our classroom and within our larger scholarly community.

Commitment

Since you (and/or your parents) are paying approximately \$411 per class session, it is in your best interest to attend all classes. Because the regular attendance of each class member is crucial for the rest of the class to learn, I expect you to respect the contribution you make to the class and to make a commitment to your classmates to attend class and to be here *on time*, except in the rare case of unforeseeable or uncontrollable circumstances. Anyone who misses class regularly or repeatedly cannot realistically expect to pass the course, and unexcused and unexplained absences will be interpreted as indicating indifference and may be weighed in determining a borderline grade at the end of the semester. I will award anyone with perfect attendance an extra point added onto his or her final average at the end of the semester.

Trust

I firmly believe in honesty: I will be fully honest with you in regards to every aspect of the course, including your progress, and I expect you to be honest with me and your classmates in kind. This honesty within our classroom creates trust, and trust enables a more positive learning experience.

Because academic dishonesty violates the sense of trust among colleagues that education seeks to foster, I have no tolerance for plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty. I promptly hand plagiarism cases over to the Honor Council, where a guilty ruling by the council can result in an automatic “F” for the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the University. We will discuss plagiarism more fully as the semester progresses, but a good rule of thumb is to always acknowledge your sources for any idea that is not your own since plagiarism does not just consist of paying for papers off the Internet but can also include the failure to cite a work properly or any attempt to represent someone else’s work (or any part of it) as your own. If you are unsure about whether something qualifies as plagiarism or not, please ask me.

Fairness

All students in this class will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, creed, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, or socioeconomic status. Hate speech or harassment of other students on these or any other grounds is not acceptable in my class.

If you have a learning or physical disability, or if you learn best utilizing a particular method, please discuss with me how I can best accommodate your learning needs. I am committed to making educational opportunities available to all students. In order for me to address properly the needs of students who have disabilities, though, it is necessary that such students approach me as soon as the semester starts, preferably on the first day of class.

Consideration

In order to be considerate of me, your classmates, and your education, please turn off or silence cell phones, pagers, MP3 players, and the like while class is in session.

Communication

I encourage you to see me at any time about anything pertaining to this course and your learning. If you are having a problem with the work, or even if you want to talk about something totally unrelated to the class, feel free to come by during my office hours or to contact me by phone or email to arrange a mutually convenient meeting time. If I do not hear from you, I can only assume that you are satisfied with how the class is going and with your development as a critical thinker and writer. I will make every effort to accommodate your interests and needs, but your growth in this class, as in the whole of your education, will largely be a product of your own desire and efforts.

Your Portfolio

One of my goals for this class is that you focusing on learning—on growing and developing as a thinker and writer—and not on grades. To that end, I will provide prompt and extensive formative feedback on your papers as you turn them in, but I will not assign grades to your work over the course of the semester. In the middle of the semester, you will submit a preliminary portfolio of your work, and you and I will then meet individually to discuss your progress in the course in terms of your analysis, writing, and class participation. At the end of the semester, you will submit a final portfolio of your best work from the course for review, and I will assess the components of your portfolio at that point, as well as provide either oral or written feedback for you to consider as you prepare for future courses in your college career. You can expect that 20% of your final grade will be class participation and 80% your portfolio, with your written responses (all together) and your three formal papers comprising 20% each.

Date		Topic and Reading	Assignments
January	11	Course Introduction and Syllabus Plagiarism Workshop Introduction to Advertising	
	18	Introduction to Advertising Brainstorming and Thesis Workshop	Read Introduction; finish reading Solomon; read Brik and Bryson (handouts)
	25	Advertising Gender Roles	Read St. John, Steinem, and Craig
	26		Paper 1 due
February	1	Advertising Gender Roles Peer Review Organization Workshop	Read Devor, Blum, Mayer, and Wolf Review 2 papers
	8	Advertising Race	Read Omi, Demott, and Algranati; read Allg and Naylor (handouts)
	9		Paper 1 Revision due
	15	Advertising Class	Read Price and Parenti
	22	Personal Ads Introductions and Conclusions Workshop	
March	1	Advertising to Children	Read Schlosser, hooks, Prager, and Cross
	2		Paper 2 due
	8	Advertising Food Peer Review	Read Schlosser, Liebman, Federman, and Critser (handouts)
	15	Spring Break	
	22	Sports Advertising	Read Messner, Nelson, and Jenkins
	23		Paper 2 Revision due
	29	Educational Advertising: Viewbooks Transitions and Style Workshop	Read the Rhodes viewbook; read Lubrano
April	5	Easter Break	
	12	Educational Advertising: Videos Visit from Admissions Official	
	13		Paper 3 due
	19	Educational Advertising: Websites	
	26	Presentations	
May			
	1		Research Paper due