

“Advertising has done more to cause the social unrest of the 20th century than any other single factor.”

-- Clare Boothe Luce

HIST 463: American Consumerism
Winter 2016
Mondays & Wednesdays 10-11:20pm
175 Lillis Hall

Professor Jamie Mayhew Bufalino
Office: 340W McKenzie Hall
Office hours: Mondays 4:00-5:00pm (my office) & Wednesdays 3:30-4:30pm in the GSH cafeteria (& by appt)
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Course Overview:

This course will examine the emergence of a consumer culture in the United States in the 1880s and trace its development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Students will examine and discuss primary documents including advertisements, political propaganda, and social commentary as well as secondary sources chronicling the historical significance of consumerism. Topics of discussion will include the development of the infrastructure of a consumer-based economy, the modernization of the advertising industry, the rise of a culture of consumption, the role of government in the consumer-based economy, consumer activism, and the role of branding as a key component of the neoliberal consumer economy by the 21st century. The course will also consider the impact of consumerism on notions of class, race, gender, sexuality, politics, & individual identity.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) To demonstrate a detailed knowledge regarding rise of consumerism as a central facet of American business, its influence on the U.S. economy & its role in the modernization of American culture over the course of the 20th century**
- 2) To evaluate major arguments regarding the role of government in the consumer economy**
- 3) To engage in historical analysis of primary documents from the late 19th through the 21st centuries including articulating & contextualizing various marketing strategies with special emphasis on advertising**

Teaching Method:

This is a reading intensive discussion-based course. It is vital that students come to class prepared to discuss the day's reading assignments. Most of our class time will consist of large and small group discussion. There will be occasional short lectures to provide necessary context for course readings. Discussions will be focused on analysis of primary and secondary documents related to the history of U.S. consumer culture.

Required Texts:

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Robert Goldman & Stephen Papon, *Nike Culture: The Sign of the Swoosh*

Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*

*Additional readings on course website on Canvas located under "Modules" & organized by class meeting

Attendance Policy & Participation:

As class participation is vital to the success of this course, attendance is mandatory and will be recorded for each class period. **More than three absences from class will result in failure of the participation component of the course.** Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the day's readings. Once per week students are required to post an analysis of the reading assignment and invited to respond to the posts of fellow students. (See course assignments below). Thoughtful responses will contribute positively toward each student's participation grade.

Discussion Etiquette:

You are permitted to take notes using a computer. However, I will alter this policy if I find that either I or other students are disturbed by the improper use of electronic devices during class. Please silence devices & remain quiet during class unless called on by instructor. Arrive and depart the classroom on time so as not to distract others. In both online and classroom discussion, students are encouraged to provide alternate view points on course readings. However, please respect the views of others by responding with alternative arguments rather than personal remarks.

Course Assignments:

Student grades will be determined on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Weekly Reading Analysis Papers** – (2 pages per week). See assignment instructions on Canvas under “Discussions.” (20% of course grade)
2. **Participation in Classroom Discussions & Activities** (20% of course grade). Participation will be assessed in numerous ways throughout the term including overall quality and quantity of participation in large group discussion, participation in small group analysis in class, brief in-class individual image analysis exercises, & responses to fellow students’ analysis papers. *More than 3 absences from class will result in automatic failure of this portion of the course.*
3. **3 Essays** – 5 pages each (20% of course grade each) Prompts will be available on Canvas under “Assignments.”

Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Academic Dishonesty:

Incompletes will be given in rare cases such as serious illness but must be discussed with me prior to the end of the term. Late assignments will be docked at a rate of one-third grade level per day following the due date (for instance an A- paper would earn a B+ if one day late, a B if two days late and so on). It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that I receive the late paper. Academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action and potential assignment/course failure. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism of published works including online sources and passing off the work of another student as one’s own. For guidelines see <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagarism/students/>.