



Nanchang University
FILM327: Advertising and Consumer Culture
(Last Updated in 2025)

Credit: 6

Contact Hours

This course is composed of 24 lecture sessions, 3 tutorial sessions and 9 office contact hours. Each lecture session takes 2 contact hours in length; each tutorial session takes 3 contact hours in length; There will be a Q-A review session (3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours) at the end of this term. This course has 72 contact hours in total.

Course Description

The presence of advertising is something that we take for granted. This course aims to challenge students' preexisting perceptions of the notion of advertising as a means of communication, as a cultural practice, as a material practice, and as a social choice for the subsidization of media—even as the advertising “subsidy” is borne by the consumers of the very products advertised. My objective is to present the marketing imperative as continually contested terrain in relation to the production of media.

Required Textbook

- Leiss, William, et al. (2005). *Social communication in advertising. 3rd Edition*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Sivulka, Juliann. 2012. *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising. 2nd Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Grading

Participation 15%
Reflection Essay: Advertising in Everyday Life 25%
Response Questions Essays (x2) 20%
Research Essay Proposal 15%
Research Essay 25%

Letter Grade	Grade Points
High Distinction	85-100
Distinction	75-84



Credit	65-74
Pass	50-64
Fail	0-49

Course Schedule

The course has 24 class sessions in total. All sessions are 2 contact hours in length. At the end of this term, there will be a Q-A review session(3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours).

Note: the course outline and required readings are subject to change.

Topic 1: Introduction and Course Guidelines

Topic 2: Historical Perspective

Readings:

Williams, Raymond. (2009). Advertising: The Magic System. In Matthew P. McAllister & Joseph Turow (Eds.), *The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader* (13-24). London: Routledge.

Strasser, Susan. (2009). The Alien Past: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective. In Matthew P. McAllister & Joseph Turow (Eds.), *The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader* (25-38). London: Routledge.

Screening: Adam Curtis, *The Century of the Self* (2005)

Topic 3: The Political Economy of Advertising

Readings:

Hackley, Christopher. (2002). The Panoptic Role of Advertising Agencies in the Production of Consumer Culture. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 5(3), 211-229.

Ohmann, R. M. (1996). *Selling culture: Magazines, markets, and class at the turn of the century*. London: Verso. (Ch. 6 Advertising: New Practices, New Relations, 106-117).

Topic 4: Semiotics & Representation

Readings:

Barthes, Roland. (1972). *Mythologies*. New York: Noonday Press. (MYTH Today to "The Signification", 109 – 126)

Hall, Stuart. (1997). The Work of Representation. In Stuart Hall (Ed.), *Representation* (15 – 26). London: Sage Publications. (until top of first para. 26)

Recommended Reading

Hall, Stuart. (2008). Encoding/Decoding. In Neil Badmington & Julia Thomas (Eds.), *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (234-244). London: Routledge.

Topic 5: Culture Jamming & Appropriation

Readings:

Guy Debord. (1959) 'Détournement as Negation and Prelude', Bureau of Public Secrets. <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/3.detourn.htm>

Situationist Manifesto (1960) <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html>



Harold, Christine. (2004). Pranking rhetoric: "culture jamming" as media activism. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21, 3, 189-211.

Topic 6: **Advertising & the gendered body I**

Readings:

Bordo, Susan. R. (2003). *Unbearable weight*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Ch. "Reading the Slender Body" start from Slenderness and the Social Body, 198-212).

Heiss, Sarah N. (2011). Locating the Bodies of Women and Disability in Definitions of Beauty: An Analysis of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 31(1), 1-12.

Recommended Readings:

Banet-Weiser, Sarah (2012). "Free Self-Esteem Tools?" Brand Culture, Gender, and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign." In Roopali Mukherjee & Sarah Banet-Weiser (Eds.), *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neoliberal Times* (39-56). New York: NYU Press.

Screening: Jean Kilbourne, *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women* (2010)

Topic 7: **Advertising & the gendered body II**

Readings:

Messner, Michael. A., & Montez de Oca, Jeffrey. (2005). The Male Consumer as Loser: Beer and Liquor Ads in Mega Sports Media Events. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30, 3, 1879-1909.

Recommended Readings:

O'Barr, William M. *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising*. (A Visitor's Guide to African Americans in American Advertising: A Twentieth-Century Retrospective, 113-129 – it's all images!).

Topic 8: **Consuming the Exotic Other**

Readings:

hooks, bell. (1992). *Black Looks: Race and representation*. Boston: South End Press. (Ch 2. Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance, 21-40).

Brace-Govan, Janice, & de Burgh-Woodman, Hélène. (2008). Sneakers and Street Culture: A Postcolonial Analysis of Marginalized Cultural Consumption. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 11(2), 93-112.

Recommended Reading:

Hall, Stuart, "The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, 89-93.

Mulvey, Laura. (1975). "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." *Screen*, 16(3), 6-18.

Topic 9: **Lifestyle Consumerism** — tweet any questions/comments at [Laura Portwood-Stacer](#) with #coms370

Readings:

Portwood-Stacer, Laura. (2013). *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism*. New York: Bloomsbury Press. (Ch 2. The anti-consumption lifestyle: The cultural work of activist practices, 25-50).

Topic 10: **Participation in Consumer Culture**



Readings:

Lury, Celia. (2011). *Consumer Culture*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Ch.1 Material Culture and Consumer Culture, 9-31).

Recommended Readings:

Canclini, Nestor. G. (2001). *Consumers and citizens: Globalization and multicultural conflicts*. Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press. (Consumption is Good for Thinking, 37-47).

Topic 11: Brands

Readings:

Arvidsson, Adam. (2005). Brands: A critical perspective. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), 235-258.

Kniazeva, Maria, & Belk, Russell W. (2007). Packaging as a Vehicle for Mythologizing the Brand. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 10(1), 51-69.

Recommended Reading:

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. (2012). *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: NYU Press. (Introduction: Branding the Authentic, 1-14)

Screening: Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (2003)

Attending Policy

Regular and prompt attendance is required. Under ordinary circumstances, you may miss two times without penalty. Each absence over this number will lower your course grade by a third of a letter and missing more than five classes may lead to a failing grade in the course. Arriving late and/or leaving before the end of the class period are equivalent to absences.

Policy on "Late Withdrawals"

In accordance with university policy, appeals for late withdrawal will be approved ONLY in case of medical emergency and similar crises.

Academic Honesty

Nanchang University expects all students to do their own work. Instructors will fail assignments that show evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, and will also report the student's name to the University administration. A student reported to the University for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

General Expectations:

Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all materials covered in class and otherwise assigned;
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class;
- Review the previous day's notes before class and make notes about questions you have



about the previous class or the day's reading;

- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time;
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during the class period;
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.

Special Needs or Assistance

Please contact the Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material. Our goal is to help you learn, not to penalize you for issues which mask your learning.