

MEJO 490.004 – Advertising, Media & Society

Fall 2023

Instructor: Lee McGuigan, PhD

Assistant Professor

Hussman School of Journalism and Media

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Carroll Hall – Room 355

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Meeting Times: Monday & Wednesday 9:30-10:45am

Meeting Place: Carroll Hall – Room 143

Office Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30pm, Wednesday 3:15pm-4:15pm, and by appointment

Course Overview: Advertising is an institution in American life. From the rise of popular national magazines to the current age of algorithms, apps, and influencers, advertising has been a formative element in U.S. culture, politics, business, and technology for well over a century. The advertising industry is a key structural component of the media that inform and represent public and private affairs. Advertisements themselves tell stories about society—about who and what is normal, desirable, and important. Advertising is also a field of knowledge production, involved in constructing and classifying different identities and populations—and sometimes tracking and profiling people in ways that raise concerns about privacy and discrimination. Put simply, advertising has been a distinctive part of the American experience, with all its possibilities and problems. Understanding media and society today requires a close look at the history and future of U.S. advertising. This course provides a holistic view of advertising, from its modern origins in the development of mass media, to the role of cutting-edge adtech in the internet economy.

Learning Objectives: In this class, students will learn:

- Why the modern advertising industry emerged when and how it did
- How advertising's historical and contemporary relationships to print, broadcasting, and online and mobile media shape the public sphere and personal life in the United States
- How advertising's patterned representations of race, gender, class, and "the good life" shape and reflect the realities of popular culture and politics
- How digital adtech affects privacy, discrimination, and the economics of news and entertainment
- How public policies have enabled and responded to advertising practices

Course Materials: We will read a mix of academic research, news coverage, and essays in popular and literary publications. All readings will be posted to Sakai, unless otherwise noted. Students will also view video and photographic materials, both independently and in class.

*Please complete the readings **before** class.*

Coursework and Grading: The graded coursework will consist of a final group project, an individual essay, shorter written analyses of readings and creative materials, and in-class quizzes. Attendance and participation will also be graded.

Final Group Project:

Students will work in groups of four (4) to prepare a multimedia project characterizing either an era of history or a paradigm in advertising (e.g., a particular style or business strategy) and the developments that preceded and followed it. Detailed instructions will be provided on Sakai and in class.

Individual Essay:

Students will work independently to write an argumentative essay about a topic related to advertising, media, and society. Detailed instructions will be provided on Sakai and in class.

Short Writing Assignments:

Throughout the semester, students will complete short writing assignments in response to assigned readings/videos or other topical prompts. Instructions will be provided for each assignment.

Quizzes:

Six (6) pop quizzes will be administered in class throughout the semester to test comprehension of assigned readings and/or video materials. The student's five (5) best scores will comprise their grade.

Participation:

Students are expected to participate in class sessions by asking and answering discussion questions, offering thoughtful comments, and actively engaging with course content. Students should use these forms of participation to demonstrate that they have completed the assigned readings and are making an effort to understand and think about the content of those readings and other relevant concepts introduced in lecture. Participation can also include discussions with the instructor in office hours or via email.

Assignment Weights:

Final group project	30%
Individual essay	25%
Short writing assignments	15%
Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Attendance	10%

Grade Scale: Your final grade will be calculated using the University's grading scale: A, B, C, D, F.

A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82,
C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- 70-72, D = 60-69, F = 59 or below

For detailed descriptions of the grading scale, please see this website: <https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>

Attendance:

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

Class Policy:

If unavoidable circumstances prevent you from attending, please notify me as soon as possible. Please do not come to class if you feel sick or if you think you have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19. *Let me know as soon as possible if you will need to miss class so that we can make the necessary accommodations.* If you miss a session with a quiz or other graded assessment, you will need to [obtain a University Approved Absence authorization](#).

Useful Resources:

“[Hartman Center Digitized Collections](#),” large archive of ads and other materials at the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History, Duke University (see especially [Ad*Access](#) and [AdViews](#))

“[J. Walter Thompson: Advertising America](#),” curated archive of ads and agency documents held at Duke's Hartman Center

[ADText](#) (online textbook about advertising and society)

[Advertising Age](#) (trade publication)

[Adweek](#) (trade publication)

Class Schedule:

PLEASE check Sakai frequently throughout the semester, as the schedule may change, and new items or information may be added.

Week 1

August 21

Welcome and introduction to the course

No readings

August 23

Overview of advertising and society

Read:

William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, Jacqueline Botterill, and Kyle Asquith, "Introduction," in *Social Communication in Advertising*, 4th edition (2018), pp. 1-21. (stop reading at page 18, but look at all five of the pictures)

Roland Marchand, "Introduction," in *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (1985), pp. xv-xxii.

Melissa Aronczyk, "Advertising and Its Adversaries," *Media Theory* 5, no. 2 (2021): 123-140.

Week 2

August 28

The contemporary advertising industry

Read:

Mara Einstein, "The Business of Advertising," in *Advertising: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2017), pp. 25-53.

John Sinclair, "Cracking Under Pressure: Current Trends in the Global Advertising Industry," *Media International Australia* (2019): 3-16.

August 30

The contemporary advertising industry (cont.)

Read:

Tim Hwang, "Introduction" and "The Plumbing," in *Subprime Attention Crisis: Advertising and the Time Bomb at the Heart of the Internet* (2020), pp. 9-31.

Donald Mackenzie, "[Cookies, Pixels and Fingerprints](#)," *London Review of Books*, April 1, 2021.

OPTIONAL:

Tiffany Hsu, "Why Are You Seeing So Many Bad Digital Ads Now?" *New York Times*, February 11, 2023.

Week 3

September 4 (*No class – Labor Day***)**

September 6

Advertising and material culture

Read:

Susan Strasser, "American Pie," in *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (1989), pp. 3-28.

Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (1976), pp. 23-39, 44-48.

OPTIONAL:

Susan Strasser, "The Alien Past: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," in *The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader* (2009), pp. 25-29. (this is a condensed version of the points about material culture made in Strasser's assigned chapter; despite being shorter, I think it's harder to read)

Week 4

September 11

The emergence of modern advertising

Read:

Daniel Pope, "Introduction: The Age of Advertising," in *The Making of Modern Advertising* (1983), pp. 3-16.

James R. Beniger, "Communication and the Control Revolution," *OAH Magazine of History* 6 no. 4 (1992): 10-13.

Watch:

[*Sell and Spin: A History of Advertising*](#) (1999)

OPTIONAL:

Richard Ohmann, "Advertising: New Practices, New Relations," in *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (1996), pp. 81-117. (this is a detailed attempt to explain why and how modern advertising took shape when it did)

James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (1986), pp. 344-356. (this has a handy chart with a timeline of developments in modern advertising)

September 13

Advertising as a profession

Read:

Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (1985), pp. 1-9, 25-32.

Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (1994), pp. 196-203, 218-221.

Week 5

September 18

Social communication in advertising

Read:

Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (1978), pp. 11-14, 17-18, 24-39.

Devon Powers, "Advertising, Branding, and the Promotional Future," in *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture* (2023), pp. 360-368.

Watch:

[*Consuming Images*](#) (1989)

September 20

Creative styles and modes of address

Read:

Leiss et al., "The Structure of Advertisements," in *Social Communication in Advertising* (2018), pp. 119-169.

Watch:

Mad Men, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" (season 1, episode 1)

Week 6

September 25 (*No class – Well-being day***)**

September 27

Advertising and mass media—sponsorship and cultural production

Read:

Matthew P. McAllister and Litzy Galarza, "The Relationship Between US Advertising and Popular Culture," in *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture*, 2nd edition (2023), pp. 35-47

Cynthia B. Meyers, "From Sponsorship to Spots: Advertising and the Development of Electronic Media," in *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method* (2009), pp. 69-80.

Week 7

October 2

Advertising and "new" media

Read:

Matthew Crain, "[How Capitalism—Not a Few Bad Actors—Destroyed the Internet](#)," *Boston Review*, August 3, 2022.

Joseph Turow, "The Past, Present, and Future of Internet Personalization in Service of Advertising," in *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture* (2023), pp. 63-73

October 4

Industry restructuring—conglomeration, globalization, financialization

Read:

William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, and Jacqueline Botterill, "Full Service Agencies: Globalization and Unbundling," in *Social Communication in Advertising*, 3rd edition (2005), pp. 369-401.

Week 8

October 9

Advertising and the construction of identity

Read:

Arlene Dávila, "Introduction," in *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (2001), pp. 1-17.

Anthony Danna and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "All That Glitters is Not Gold: Digging Beneath the Surface of Data Mining," *Journal of Business Ethics* 40 (2002): 373-386.

Adrián Astorgano, “[From ‘Heavy Purchasers’ of Pregnancy Tests to the Depression Prone: We Found 650,000 Ways Advertisers Label You](#),” *The Markup*, June 8, 2023.

October 11

Social media influencers

Read:

Alice Fisher, “[Social Media Analyst Emily Hund: ‘We Can Never Know the Truth Behind an Influencer’s Seeming Authenticity’](#),” *The Guardian*, April 2, 2023.

Sophie Bishop, “[Influencer Creep](#),” *Real Life Mag*, June 9, 2002.

Sapna Maheshwari, “[For Gen Z, Playing an Influencer on TikTok Comes Naturally](#),” *New York Times*, May 17, 2023.

OPTIONAL (RECOMMENDED):

Emily Hund, *The Influencer Industry: The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media* (2023), pp. 12-35.

Week 9

October 16

Advertising controversial products

Read:

Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (1997), pp. 13-19. (see section on patent medicines)

Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), pp. 171-187.

Corinne Ramey, James Fanelli, and Imani Moise, “Celebrities Who Endorsed Crypto, NFTs Land in Legal Crosshairs After Investor Losses,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 2023.

Madhumita Murgia and Alice Hancock, “Online Gambling Sector’s Ad Tracking in Spotlight,” *Financial Times*, August 5, 2022.

October 18 (No class meeting**)**

Advertising, consumerism, and climate crisis

Watch (independently at home):

Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse (2017)

Week 10

October 23

Advertising, art, and activism

Read:

Naomi Klein, “Culture jamming,” in *No Logo* (2001), pp. 278-309.

“[Keith Obadike’s Blackness](#)” (net art piece)

Coco Fusco, “[All Too Real: The Tale of an On-Line Black Sale—Coco Fusco Interviews Keith Townsend Obadike](#)”

Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Branding Politics: Shopping for Change?” in *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (2012), pp. 132-143.

Watch:

“[AdNauseam – Clicking Ads So You Don’t Have To](#)”

October 25

Group work

No readings

Week 11

October 30

Understanding adtech

Read:

Shoshana Wodinsky, "[The Butt Pajamas Will Follow You Forever](#)," *Gizmodo*, December 22, 2020.

Joel Eastwood, Gabriel Hongdusit, and Jon Keegan, "[How Your Attention is Auctioned Off to Advertisers](#)," *The Markup*, June 23, 2023.

Donald Mackenzie, "[Blink, Bid, Buy](#)," *London Review of Books*, May 12, 2022.

November 1

Understanding adtech (cont.)

Read:

Craig Silverman and Ruth Talbot, "[Porn, Piracy, Fraud: What Lurks Inside Google's Black Box Ad Empire](#)," *ProPublica*, December 21, 2022.

Natasha Lomas, "[On Meta's 'Regulatory Headwinds' and Adtech's Privacy Reckoning](#)," *TechCrunch*, February 4, 2022.

Michael Veale, "[Adtech's New Clothes Might Redefine Privacy More Than They Reform Profiling](#)," *NetzPolitik.org*, February 25, 2022.

OPTIONAL:

Global Disinformation Index, "Ad-Funded Disinformation: Misogyny—Narratives, Affected Brands and Ad Tech Companies" (2023) and "Ad-Funded Climate Change Disinformation: Money, Brands and Ad Tech" (2021)

Week 12

November 6

Using digital ad archives

No reading

November 8

Group work

No reading

Week 13

November 13

Advertising and AI

Read:

Sonia K. Katyal, “Artificial Intelligence, Advertising, and Disinformation,” *Advertising & Society Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2019).

Suzanne Vranica, “How AI Has the Advertising Business Excited—And Worried,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2023.

Mac Schwerin, “A.I. and TV Ads Were Made For Each Other,” *New York Times*, June 27, 2023.

November 15

Advertising, digital platforms, and the future of the press

Read:

Victor Pickard, “Can Journalism Survive in the Age of Platform Monopolies? Confronting Facebook’s Negative Externalities,” in *Digital Platform Regulation* (2022), pp. 23-41.

Amanda Coletta, “Google, Meta Fight with Canada Over Law Forcing Them to Pay for News,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 2023.

Damian Radcliffe, [“Retail Media: The Hot Trend Media Execs Can’t Afford to Ignore,”](#) *Digital Content Next*, February 2, 2023.

Week 14

November 20

Group work

No readings

November 22 (No class – Thanksgiving Day break**)**

Week 15

November 27

Group work

No readings

November 29

Group work

No readings

Week 16

December 4

Group presentations

No readings

December 6

Group presentations

No readings

Final Exam Timeslot: TBD (**No exam**)

Additional University and Class Policies

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code (<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/>) forms a bond of trust among students, faculty, and administrators. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill operates under a system of self-governance, as students are responsible for governing themselves. As such, our University is transformed into a powerful community of inquiry and learning. The Honor Code embodies the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship, and governs the performance of all academic work a student conducts at the University. Acceptance of an offer of admission to Carolina presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in our century-old tradition of honor and integrity.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

SEEKING HELP

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on [prohibiting harassment and discrimination](#). In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

ACCREDITATION:

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>. No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. The values and competencies associated with this course include being able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientations and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications, professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;