

HIST 118A: THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ADVERTISING
SUMMER 2021



"It's not advertising anything, damn it!"

Charles E. Martin, "It's not advertising anything, damn it!"
The New Yorker, September 24, 1966

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In today's world, American advertising is an embodiment of consumerism, capitalism, and mass culture—a phenomenon that started locally but accelerated globally over the course of the twentieth century. But is advertising only about providing information about new products for selling? What role do ads play in forging the behavior and strategies of business corporations, consumer protection and rights, or the national identity of citizens? In this course we will consider American advertising from the eighteenth century to the present to understand the growing role of consumerism in our lives. We will begin by examining how the professionalization of advertising and a rise of a new occupation, the advertising agent, created the national market and assisted in the transition of American society from a rural to urban society in the nineteenth-century U.S. We will follow this discussion by identifying the role of advertising in shaping the normative foundations of American identity in terms of race, class, and gender. Finally, we will use advertising as a starting place for researching the ways popular protests emerge under consumer and corporate capitalism. This course will foster the development of incisive analysis and advanced digital literacy skills by exploring a range of primary sources, engaging in structured forum discussions, and conducting independent research. There are no prerequisites for this course.

LEARNING GOALS

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a working basic knowledge of the history of American advertising and of shifting understandings of American politics, society, and the economy within that history;
- Think critically about the relationships between capitalism and American class, racial, and gender identities;
- Discover, create, analyze, present, and reason about large sets of digitized historical records and evaluate the validity of digital sources;
- Communicate ideas in multiple formats, including written (essay, paper, form post) and visual (VoiceThread, Padlet) media.

CREDIT HOURS

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 18 hours per week for class-related activities (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for the final project, etc.).

COURSE CONTENT

This course will be conducted entirely online using Brandeis' Latte site. The site contains the course syllabus, assignments, discussion forums, and learning materials. The course will run from Tuesday through Monday for 10 weeks.

Primary sources in this course may document imagery and language that reflect racist, ableist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise offensive and harmful beliefs and actions in history. I am engaged in ongoing efforts to address and responsibly present evidence of oppression and injustice in this class. If you are concerned about the materials presented here, please contact me at any moment during this course or afterward.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012), ISBN: 9781133311133 (print); ISBN: 9781133752189 (e-book).

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Quizzes: Each quiz, consisting of three IDs, will be based on a respective textbook chapter.

Response papers and Forum discussions: Each week students will read, analyze, and discuss a set of primary sources and secondary readings. First, students will write a 500–600-word response paper on a weekly discussion topic and will post their papers on a Latte discussion forum. Then, students will be asked to read their peers' papers and respond to them by asking thoughtful questions or providing substantial comments.

Final research projects and Presentations: Students will conduct an independent research project on a topic of their choosing and present it to the class. Each presentation should be based on research that involves original primary sources. To help students complete this assignment, the instructor will organize a workshop to discuss detailed outlines of prospective presentations.

Extra credit: I understand that unpredictable circumstances can interfere and hinder your performance, but I am determined to see that you succeed in this course. To raise your grade, you will have an option of taking an additional quiz and writing an extra response paper; both will be posted on Week 10. The top nine grades for quizzes and response papers will be used in calculating the course grade.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy constitutes an essential component of this course. Students will work with a variety of digital databases containing historical records that represent different types of primary sources: print ads, TV commercials, historical newspapers, and magazines, etc. Each week students will be asked to explore a particular database, to locate 2–4 pieces of relevant primary sources, and to incorporate their findings into their weekly response papers. The search for digital primary sources and their analysis is an important part of coursework. The final research project will provide an opportunity for students to apply the digital skills they learned during this course to their own research projects. Laura Hibbler, a Brandeis research librarian, and I have prepared a research guide and a series of tutorials to hone students' digital research skills.

GRADES

<i>Class elements</i>	<i>Grade Percentage</i>
Weekly Quizzes (9 @ 1.67%)	15%
Response papers and Forum discussions (9 @ 6%)	55%
Final research projects and Presentations	30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course is asynchronous with no live Zoom classes. A typical week consists of two units: an overview unit and a discussion unit.

Unit 1 provides an overview of a particular historical period that covers major processes in advertising. Students are asked to read a respective chapter from the Sivulka textbook and then to take a short quiz (three ID's). To prepare students for a quiz, I will provide a review sheet of potential ID's, three of which will appear in a quiz. A quiz will remain open until the end of a week, but students are encouraged to finish Unit 1 as soon as possible and to proceed to Unit 2.

Unit 2 represents a discussion session that focuses on one case study. Each case study is a chance to explore one topic in depth, to engage with primary sources, and to reflect on the role of advertising in shaping specific aspects of American politics, society, and culture. Students will be asked to read, watch, and analyze a set of primary and secondary sources, and then to write a response paper, to post it on a Latte forum, and to comment on each other's work. A response paper is due on Saturday. The last two days of a week are reserved for a forum discussion moderated by me.

WEEK 1: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY, UP TO 1880

JUNE 1–7

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Printing press, mass communication, the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, department stores, the advertising agent as a new occupation, first advertising agencies (N. W. Ayer & Son), advertising for patent medicines, penny papers and the development of newspaper advertising.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 1.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

ADVERTISING AND SLAVERY

To explore relationships between slavery, advertising, and print capitalism, students will analyze two types of newspaper ads in eighteenth-century North America: ads of slave sales and runaway ads.

Readings:

David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1999): 243–72.

Jordan Taylor, “Enquire of the Printer: Newspaper Advertising and the Moral Economy of the North American Slave Trade, 1704–1807,” *Early American Studies* 18, no. 3 (2020): 287–323.

Primary sources:

Runaway advertisements on Latte.

Digital database: Freedom on the Move.

WEEK 2: THE NEW CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION, 1880–1900

June 8–14

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

The emergence of the national market and national advertisers, New York City as the advertising center, the packaging revolution, trademarks and brand names, marketing to women at the turn of the century, first illustrated ads and magazines for the middle-class women, *Printers’ Ink* as a first professional journal for ad makers.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 2.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

This discussion focuses on a new technological device, the Kodak photographic camera, and its implementation in advertising.

Readings:

Jessica Lake, *The Face That Launched a Thousand Lawsuits: The American Women Who Forged a Right to Privacy* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016), 19–35; chapter 2.

Primary sources:

“‘Kodak’ Manners,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* 17, no. 3 (February 1900): 16.

Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis, “The Right to Privacy,” *Harvard Law Review* 4, no. 5 (1890): 193–220.

Kodak advertisements on Latte.

Digital database: ProQuest Women’s Magazine Archive (*Ladies’ Home Journal*).

WEEK 3: THE NEW CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION, 1900 TO WORLD WAR I

June 15–21

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Ford’s Model T as mass production and mass consumption, first chain stores, the truth in advertising movement, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 3.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

HEALTH, HYGIENE, AND AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

Students will analyze ads for medicine and hygienic products to understand the Progressive Era’s new ideals of cleanliness and health.

Readings:

Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), chapters 7 and 8.

Primary sources:

Earnest Elmo Calkins, “The Amelioration of the Housewife’s Lot,” in *Business, the Civilizer* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), 12–19.

Advertisements for hygienic products on Latte.

Digital database: John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History at Duke University.

WEEK 4: THE ROARING TWENTIES, 1920–1929

June 22–28

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Economic prosperity, first self-service stores, women’s suffrage and the New Woman flapper, modern home and electrical appliances, radio broadcasting and radio advertising, selling the cigarette habit, advertising and psychology.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 4.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

THE GREAT MIGRATION, RACE, CLASS, AND A POLITICS OF APPEARANCE

Students will analyze newspaper ads from the Chicago Defender and New York Amsterdam News that promoted skin bleaching cosmetics and hair straightening products for Black women in the 1920s.

Readings:

Jacob Dorman, "Skin Bleach and Civilization: The Racial Formation of Blackness in 1920s Harlem," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 47–80.

Susannah Walker, *Style and Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), chapter 2.

Andrea Benton Rushing, "Hair-Raising," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 325–335.

Primary sources:

"Betrayers of the Race," *The Half-Century Magazine* 8, no. 2 (1920): 3.

Digital databases: ProQuest Historical Newspapers (ads from the Chicago Defender and New York Amsterdam News).

WEEK 5: THE DEPRESSION AND WAR YEARS, 1930–1945

June 29–July 5

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

New Deal, muckraking journalism and the consumer protection movement, functional design, national radio networks, photojournalism, scientific advertising, George Gallup's opinion polls, WWII patriotism in ads and War Advertising Council.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 5.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISM OR IMPERIALISM?

The discussion will focus on the Pan American airline's promotional materials to understand the nature of the American foreign policy in this period.

Readings:

Jenifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1–13; chapter 2.

Primary sources:

Manuel Ugarte, *The Destiny of a Continent* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1925), 139–146.

Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, February 17, 1941.

Pan American Airways promotional film and ads.

WEEK 6: THE POSTWAR BOOM, 1945–1960

July 6–12

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

The post-war “baby boom,” the “golden age” of capitalism and the American dream, suburbanization and shopping malls, middle-class values, automobile culture, the Cold War, average Americans, television for the masses.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 6.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

THE POST-WWII GENDER ROLES AND POLITICS OF LABOR

Students will work with TV commercials from the 1950s to explore gender roles in American society after the Second World War.

Primary sources:

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963), chapter 1.

Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), chapters 1 and 2.

Digital database: Classic TV Commercials.

WEEK 7: THE CREATIVE REVOLUTION AND COUNTERCULTURE, 1960–1975

July 13–19

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

The Civil Rights movement and its consumerist spirit, hippies, the Vietnam War and political protests, second-wave feminism, the Creative Revolution in advertising, the Black market.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 7.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

RACE AND (ANTI-)RACISM

Students will work with the *Life* magazine and the *Ebony* magazine to compare how advertising professionals featured Black people there.

Readings and films:

Marlon Riggs, *Ethnic Notions: African American Stereotypes and Prejudice* (California Newsreel, 1987).

M. M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), chapter 3.

Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 206–209, 228–237, 242–251, 254–258.

Primary sources:

Google Books collections of fully digitized magazines (ads from the *Life* and *Ebony* magazines).

WEEK 8: BIG BUSINESS AND MARKET SEGMENTATION, 1975–1990

July 20–26

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Post-industrial service economy, Reaganomics, mega-mergers of advertising agencies, the domination of big corporations, market segmentation of consumers, new computer technologies, subcultures, and resistance against consumerism.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 8.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

HIJACKING THE POPULAR PROTEST; HIJACKING THE CORPORATE CAPITALISM

Students will discuss how advertising contributed to a backlash against feminist and other progressive achievements in equality in the 1980s and how consumers-citizens could possibly resist that.

Readings and films:

Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), chapter 11.

Jill Sharpe, *CultureJam: Hijacking Commercial Culture* (Icarus Films, 2002).

Research proposals are due at 11:30 pm EDT, Saturday, July 24th

WEEK 9: THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION, 1990–1999

July 27–August 2

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Globalization of the advertising industry, digital advertising and consumer interactivity in the Internet age, new gender and sexual norms, gay market, Generation X, green marketing.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 9.

UNIT 2: DISCUSSION

MARKETING FOR THE CAUSE IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

Students will analyze promotional materials of ExxonMobil, an American multinational oil and gas company, that actively builds its corporate image around the idea of environmental stewardship through sustainable development.

Readings:

Timothy W. Luke, “Environmentality as Green Governmentality,” in *Discourses of the Environment*, ed. Éric Darier (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 121–51.

Primary sources: ExxonMobil website.

Detailed outlines are due at 11:30 pm EDT, Saturday, July 31st

WEEK 10: THE DIGITAL AGE

August 3–9

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW

Economic downturns of the early 2000s and income inequalities, New Feminists and gender-free advertising, media oversaturation, consumer generated content in advertising.

Readings:

Sivulka, chapter 10.

UNIT 2: PRESENTATIONS

Final projects are due at 11:30 pm EDT, Saturday, August 7th

Discussion of student projects.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student’s own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work via TurnItIn.com or similar software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

STUDENT SUPPORT

ACCOMMODATIONS

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability of requesting accommodations, please contact [Student Accessibility Support \(SAS\)](#) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

RESEARCH AND SOFTWARE HELP

[The Brandeis Library](#) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. These include workshops, consultations, collaboration, materials and instruction on emerging trends in technologies such as machine learning, emerging trends in research such as data visualization, and emerging trends in scholarship such as open access. Librarians at the Circulation Desk, Research Help Desk, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you.

OTHER CAMPUS RESOURCES

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. The following resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that contribute to student success (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the many links on this [Support at Brandeis](#) page to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides to help you and your classmates to achieve success.

PRIVACY

To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use a pseudonym or alias. You must share the pseudonym or alias with the instructor and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to the instructor.