

**University of Pittsburgh**  
**COMMRC 1126: Media and Consumer Culture**  
**Spring 2010**

Ms. Candi Carter Olson  
Office: CL 1101E  
Phone: 412-404-2041 (home)

E-mail: csc19@pitt.edu or  
ccartero@gmail.com  
Office hours: Tues. 3-5 p.m., and by  
appt.

This course will examine consumer culture in the twentieth and twenty-first century US. It examines advertising, the rise of the brand, and their roles in the commercialization of mass media. Of particular importance will be the role that race, class, and gender have played in shaping consumer culture (and vice versa), as well as the significance of the shift from a society based on an understanding of citizens based on democratic practices to one based on consumerist practices. One lens through which we will examine these issues is youth culture, and how youth identity formation is impacted by consumer culture.

**Required Readings:**

1. Kilbourne, Jean. Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel. New York: Touchstone, 2000.
  - This book has been listed under various publishers. Make sure that you buy the most recent paperback version with 368 pages.
  - Please feel free to shop around and get this book as affordably as possible. Because it is not a brand-new book, it should be easy to find used copies.
2. Palahnuik, Chuck. Fight Club. You may purchase any edition you like.
3. We will also have a great deal of readings that I will put up online.

**Grades:** will be based on the following points

Media Diary Assignment	100
Group Presentation One	100
Group Presentation Two	100
Group Presentation Three	100
Online Discussion feedback	75 (25 per group presentation)
Midterm Exam:	100
Final Exam:	200

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Total possible: 750

Grade Breakdown:

A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76 <b>All Communication majors must have at least a C to “pass” the class!</b>
C-	70-73

## Course Policies

**Class participation:** I expect every student to help keep class interesting by adding his or her own perspective and research to class time. All students must do their homework and be prepared to contribute during class time. I enjoy hearing what you have to say, and I'm sure your fellow students will appreciate your participation also, since it means hearing less of your professor's voice.

**Ground Rules for Class Discussion and Participation:** Class discussion relies on students feeling comfortable expressing a variety of viewpoints, and sometimes those viewpoints may be controversial. Therefore, in order to build a supportive class environment that encourages student participation and camaraderie, please observe these ground rules:

1. Please show respect to both me and your fellow classmates by avoiding offensive language.
2. Please offer your input for class discussions when it is appropriate. This will help the class to see different viewpoints.
3. Be an active listener and respectfully listen to viewpoints that you both agree with and disagree with.
4. Remember that we do not need to agree at all points in time. Sometimes we can agree to disagree.
5. You may question your fellow students in a respectful manner if you want to understand their standpoint better.
6. You do not need to answer any question if it makes you uncomfortable.
7. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class, it is your responsibility to speak with me outside of class time.

**Attendance and tardiness:** Because this class hinges on your involvement, attendance is mandatory. You are allowed four absences without penalty, with no questions asked. After the fourth absence, your final grade will begin to go down by ½ letter grade for each additional absence (i.e. A- to B+, B-to C+, etc.). Absences that are excused per university policies require written notice from an activity/athletics advisor in advance of the absence. More than four absences (the equivalent of two weeks of class) could be grounds for automatically failing the course. Please also be considerate and show up for class on time. **If you miss a day of class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another member of the class. Please find a class partner whom you can contact in the event that you must miss a class period.**

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** According to University policy, "Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity [<https://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>]. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity."

More specifically: Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism is a form of academic theft. It is defined as using another person's unique words or ideas without giving that person credit. Academic dishonesty is a slightly broader category encompassing a range of issues, including double-dipping without instructor approval, cheating on an exam, fabricating information or sources, or helping another student to cheat (aiding and abetting).

**This class has a no-tolerance policy on plagiarism. The first time a student is caught in either plagiarism or academic dishonesty, he or she will receive an automatic F in the course. If you have questions about anything you think might be a grey area, please talk to me immediately. I'm happy to discuss anything you think is unclear before it becomes a problem for your grade.**

**My disclaimer:** Please be aware that I want you to follow simple rules. Deadlines and specifications are part of my grading system. When I say “5 minutes,” I want to see students deliver a 5-minute speech—not a minute and a half or 10 minutes. Please refer to your assignment sheets for information on what I expect and feel free to contact me about anything that is unclear. Please refer to my grading rubric for more information on what I expect out of your speeches and writing.

**Late Work:** All work is due at the beginning of the class period on the day for which it is assigned, and presentations must be delivered on the day you are scheduled. Presentations may not be missed for any reason except documented illness or family emergency.

Standard grade deductions for missed assignments are as follows: Any assignment that is missed without a documented illness or family emergency will receive an automatic deduction of 10 points per 24 hour period until the student comes to my office hours with the assignment. The first deduction is taken immediately after the class during which the assignment was due. The next deduction is then taken at the time class might begin the next day. (For example, if you’re in a Monday 9 a.m. section, your next grade deduction will be taken Tuesday at 9 a.m.) The deductions continue every 24 hours as outlined above. **An assignment will not be accepted if a student has not come to my office hours or arranged a makeup time within a week after the original due date.**

It is your responsibility to get homework assignments for any class you miss. An excused absence does not excuse a late homework assignment. Also, all homework must be in a format that I can accept. I cannot accept your laptop computer because your printer died an hour before class (Yes, this has actually been tried.), nor will I accept computer discs.

**Homework:** Handwritten homework is not acceptable. Please submit all homework in 12-point Times New Roman font, and remember that double spacing is important for written work. Homework will not be accepted via e-mail. It must be submitted in hard copy during class.

**Grade Grievances:** If you would like to dispute a grade, please allow at least 24 hours after receiving the grade sheet. All disputes must be addressed in person during my office hours or at another time that we arrange.

**Cell phones and laptops:** As you enter the class, please turn off your phone as a courtesy to your fellow classmates. A student whose phone rings during class will have to endure either myself or a fellow class member answering the phone and taking a message. If you don’t know how to turn your cell phone off, please either leave it at home or read the owner’s manual.

Please remember that having a laptop in class is a privilege. Laptops can be a useful educational tool, but they’re often misused. On an average day, you should not need a laptop in this class. If you find that you need one on a particular day, you’re welcome to use it. However, I will feel free to frequently check that you are not surfing the net, doing homework for other classes, e-mailing, or IMing friends. If I catch anyone doing any of these activities, I will revoke the privilege of laptops on average class days for everyone. (Laptops will still be allowed for presentations.)

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability for which you may need or want accommodations, you will need to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 (telephone), 412-383-7355 (TDD), or 412-624-3346 (Fax). DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. NOTE: Your instructor cannot make accommodations for your disability unless you contact DRS and receive instructions from

that office. You must accomplish this within the first two weeks of class, or your instructor may not be able to accommodate your disability to your satisfaction.

**Office hours:** Please think of my office hours as your time to discuss your concerns with me. My office hours are free and no appointment is required. Please feel free to drop by. I'd love to speak with each of you. Remember, it's easier to discuss something before it becomes a crisis than it is to troubleshoot a problem after it has become a major issue.

**E-mail policy:** Please allow me 24-48 hours to respond to your e-mail. I will usually get back to you before that time. If I have not responded within that time, assume that I have *not* received your e-mail and resend it.

**Final notes:** Have fun! I want this class to be a place where you learn to write fantastic speeches, wow an audience, and enjoy yourself all at once. If you're having fun and contributing, I guarantee we'll have a great class.

## Campus Resources

**The Oral Communication Lab:** Offers assistance with speech anxiety, delivery, organization, choosing topics, and other speaking-related issues.

1109 Cathedral of Learning.

Call 412-624-6570 or e-mail [mbannon@pitt.edu](mailto:mbannon@pitt.edu)

**The Writing Center:** Offers writing consultation services for undergraduates, graduates and faculty. Papers in all stages, from brainstorming to "final" product, are welcome.

[www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter) 412-624-6556

**Disability Resources and Services:** Offers assistance to students who need documentation of and accommodations for disabilities of any kind.

[www.drs.pitt.edu](http://www.drs.pitt.edu) 412-648-7890

**The Office of International Studies:** Offers support for international students and students studying abroad. <http://www.ois.pitt.edu/>

## Writing and Citation Resources

**The University of Pittsburgh RefWorks training:** Pitt provides its students with a free, online citation tool that allows students to build and maintain their own reference dictionaries. To sign up for training, go to [http://www.library.pitt.edu/services/classes/infoliteracy/refworks\\_training.html](http://www.library.pitt.edu/services/classes/infoliteracy/refworks_training.html).

**The Purdue University OWL:** One of the most comprehensive citation and writing resources available on the web. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

**Duke University Library Citation site:** My favorite citation Web site because it puts five citation styles side by side. <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/>.

### Schedule of Readings, Spring 2010

This schedule is subject to change at any time. It is your responsibility to keep up with these changes by attending class and reading the emails I will send out to update you.  
All readings are due on the date on which they are listed.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Thursday 1/7	Introduction to the class
Tuesday 1/12	Introductory exercise – bring a couple of magazines to class today!
Thursday 1/14	Sut Jhally “Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture” p 249-257  Juliet Schor “The New Politics of Consumption: Why Americans Want So Much More than they Need” p 183-195  Tim Kasser from <u>The High Price of Materialism</u> p 364-373
Tuesday 1/19	Kilbourne “Buy this 24-Year-Old and Get All His Friends Absolutely Free: We are the Product” p 33-56  Kilbourne “In Your Face... All Over the Place: Advertising is Our Environment” p 57-75
<b>SPECIAL DATE 1/19</b>	Last Day of Add/Drop
Thursday 1/21	<b>Media Day 1:</b> Watch Frontline Video “The Persuaders” in class  <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/">http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/</a>  <b>Media Diary Assignment Due Today</b>
Tuesday 1/23	Finish and discuss the video
Thursday 1/26	Lindstrom, Martin from <u>Brandchild</u> p 1-25
Tuesday 2/2	Naomi Klein “New Branded World” p 3-26  Alison Quart “Branded” p 3-16  Damien Cave “The Tyranny of ‘Abercrappie’” p 196-201

Thursday 2/4	<b>Group Presentation 1 Presentations Today</b>
Tuesday 2/9	<b>Group Presentation 2 Presentations Today</b>
Thursday 2/11	<p><b>Media Day 2: Plus-sized meets the Gun Show: Body and Identity in Mediated Images</b></p> <p>V Magazine's Spring "Plus-Size" issue:  <a href="http://jezebel.com/5439851//gallery/gallery/1">http://jezebel.com/5439851//gallery/gallery/1</a></p> <p>Dating and beauty:  <a href="http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/personal/01/04/dating.site.overweight/index.html">http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/personal/01/04/dating.site.overweight/index.html</a></p>
Tuesday 2/16	<p>Naomi Klein "Patriarchy Gets Funky: The Triumph of Identity Marketing" p 107-128</p> <p>Pat Kirkham and Alex Weller "Cosmetics: A Clinique Case Study" p 268-273</p> <p>Diana Crane "Gender and Hegemony in Fashion Magazines: Women's Interpretations of Fashion Photographs" p 314-332</p>
Thursday 2/18	<p>Joan Jacobs Brumberg "Sanitizing Puberty: The American Way to Menstruate" p 27-56</p> <p>Kilbourne "The More You Subtract, the More You Add: Cutting Girls Down to Size" p 128-154</p> <p>Alison Quart "X-Large and X-Small" p 129-142</p> <p>Gloria Steinem "Sex, Lies, and Advertising" p 223-229</p>
Tuesday 2/23	<p>Jackson Katz "Advertising and the Construction of White Masculinity: from Eminem to Clinique for Men" p 349-358</p> <p>Kenon Breazeale "In Spite of Women: <i>Esquire Magazine</i> and the Construction of the Male Consumer" p 230-243</p>
Thursday 2/25	<p>Kilbourne, "In Life There are Many Loves, but Only One Grande Passion" p. 234-250.</p> <p>Second reading on fandom TBA.</p> <p><b>I will post the take-home midterm on Courseweb today.</b></p>
Tuesday 3/2	<p><b>MEDIA DAY 3: Product Placement in the Movies</b></p>
Thursday	<b>NO CLASS – turn your completed midterm into my office (1117 F Cathedral of</b>

3/4	<b>Learning) by 12:30 today – I will not accept late tests!!</b>
Tuesday 3/9	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK!
Thursday 3/11	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK!
Tuesday 3/16	<p>Fred Fejes “Advertising and the Political Economy of Lesbian/Gay Identity” p 212-222</p> <p>Katherine Sender “Selling Sexual Subjectives: Audiences Respond to Gay Window Advertising” p 302-313</p> <p>Sean Griffin “You’ve Never Had a Friend Like Me: Target Marketing Disney to a Gay Community” p 204-211</p>
Thursday 3/18	<p>Sanjukta Ghosh “‘Con-Fusing’ Exotica: Producing India in US Advertising” p 274-282</p> <p>Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez “Advertising and People of Color” p 137-168 (their book)</p>
Tuesday 3/23	<b>Group Presentation 2 Presentations Today</b>
Thursday 3/25	<b>Group Presentation 2 Presentations Today</b>
Tuesday 3/30	<p>John Leo “The Selling of Rebellion” p 229-231</p> <p>Kilbourne “Relax, and Enjoy the Revolution: Redefining Rebellion” p 292-314</p>
Thursday 4/1	<p>Sarah Banet-Weiser “We Pledge Allegiance to Kids: Nickelodeon and Citizenship” p 209-240</p> <p>Consumer Citizenship websites (these are also listed under the “readings” button on our Blackboard site):</p> <p>1) Consumer Citizenship Network: <a href="http://www.hihm.no/concit/">http://www.hihm.no/concit/</a> (This is out of Norway, but spans many countries.)</p> <p>2) T-CAP, The Consumer Activism Project: <a href="http://web.whittier.edu/academic/politicalscience/tcap.htm">http://web.whittier.edu/academic/politicalscience/tcap.htm</a></p> <p>3) Ethical Consumer Magazine: <a href="http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/">http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/</a></p> <p>4) Buying Influence: <a href="http://www.buyinginfluence.com/">http://www.buyinginfluence.com/</a></p>



	<p>5)Ethical Corp: <a href="http://www.ethicalcorp.com/">http://www.ethicalcorp.com/</a></p> <p>-- How do these websites define "consumer citizenship" differently from Banet-Weisner?</p> <p>-- Which form of consumer citizenship do you find more compelling? Why?</p> <p>-- Do you think consumer citizenship stands alongside, replaces, or has nothing to do with political citizenship?</p> <p>-- Do you think consumer citizenship can actually make positive social change occur?</p>
Tuesday 4/6	<p>Alison Quart “Unbranded” p 189-201</p> <p>Naomi Klein “Culture Jamming: Ads Under Attack” p 279-310</p> <p>Adbusters website: <a href="http://www.adbusters.org/home/">http://www.adbusters.org/home/</a></p> <p>Adbusters Magazine: <a href="http://adbusters.org/the_magazine/">http://adbusters.org/the_magazine/</a></p>
Thursday 4/8	Read p. 11-106 of <i>Fight Club</i>
Tuesday 4/13	Watch <i>Up in the Air</i> ; read p. 107-208 of <i>Fight Club</i> .
Thursday 4/15	Finish watching <i>Up in the Air</i> Discuss <i>Fight Club</i> and <i>Up in the Air</i>
Tuesday 4/20	<b>Group Presentation 3 Presentations Today</b>
Thursday 4/22	<b>Group Presentation 3 Presentations Today</b>