
ENGL 4001 - 301: Honors Seminar “Advertising and the Arts of Persuasion”

Instructor.	Dr. Darryl P. Domingo	Office Hrs.	Tues. 11:05-12:05
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Office.	Patterson Hall 407	Session.	Aug. 26 – Dec. 12, 2019

Course Description. Writing in the pages of *Advertising Age* in 1976, the media theorist Marshall McLuhan famously claimed that “advertising is the greatest art form of the twentieth century.” In this Honors Seminar, we will test the legitimacy of McLuhan’s seemingly hyperbolic claim and examine the degree to which we can think of advertising *as* art. Although we usually dismiss ads as crassly commercial, as a debased use of the imagination, or simply as annoying, McLuhan reminds us that considerable aesthetic skill goes into the creation of an effective marketing campaign. In this course, we will study the language, logic, and verbal-visual rhetoric of twentieth- and twenty-first-century advertising, pairing discussion of print ads, radio spots, television commercials, product placements, billboards, promotional merchandise, internet pop-ups and pre-rolls with analysis of modern and post-modern literary works that represent the advertising industry in complex and compelling ways. Given the emphasis in advertising on telling a good story, our primary focus will be on novels featuring characters who spend their time in marketing firms working as canvassers or copy-writers, or who spend their money in shopping malls, grocery stores, or e-commerce sites purchasing needless commodities—characters who either produce advertising or are consumed by it

An assumption of the course will be that the techniques employed by authors to engage readers have much in common with the rhetorical devices used by advertisers to persuade consumers *to buy* what they are selling. If rhetoric is the traditional art of persuasion, then advertising is the modern business of persuasion. How does advertising reconcile the conventional conflict between art and business? What kinds of appeals do advertisers make to consumers, and how do these compare to the relationship cultivated between author and reader? Why does advertising mobilize different languages to target different audiences? What is the ethics of advertising, and how does it relate to the ethics of fiction? Is all promotion self-promotion and is literature merely a luxury product to be bought and sold? “Advertising and the Arts of Persuasion” will attempt to answer some of these questions, while encouraging students to re-evaluate one of the most pervasive—if least respectable—aspects of their daily lives.

Tentative Reading List.

Wells, H.G. *Tono-Bungay* (1909). Eds. Patrick Parrinder and Edward Mendelson. New York: Penguin Books, 2005 / 9780141441115. *

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Ed. James L.W. West III. New York: Scribner, 2004 / 9780743273565. *

Margaret Atwood, *The Edible Woman* (1969). Toronto: Anchor Books, 1998 / 9780385491068.

Delillo, Don. *White Noise* (1985). Intro. Richard Powers. New York: Penguin Books, 2009 / 9780143105985. *

Ferris, Joshua. *Then We Came to the End: A Novel*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007 / 9780316016384. *

Kleeman, Alexandra. *You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine*. New York: HarperCollins, 2015 / 9780062388674. *

Twitchell, James B. *Twenty Ads that Shook the World: The Century's Most Groundbreaking Advertising and How It Changed Us All*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000.

Lawrence, Mary. *A Big Life in Advertising*. New York, 2002; Rpt. New York: Touchstone, 2003 / 978-0743245869.

O'Reilly, Terry and Mike Tennant. *The Age of Persuasion: How Marketing Ate Our Culture*. Toronto, 2009; Rpt. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2011 / 9781582437248. *

Essex, Andrew. *The End of Advertising: Why It Had to Die, and the Creative Resurrection to Come*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2017 / 9780399588518. *

→ The reading list for ENGL 4001 is still very much subject to revision. However, asterisked titles will definitely be on the course syllabus, so students are encouraged to purchase these books in advance and begin reading prior to the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester.



Lemon.

This Volkswagen missed the boot.
The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kroner did.

There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. 13,000 Volkswagens are produced daily; there are more inspectors

than cars!

Every shock absorber is tested (spot checking won't do), every windshield is scanned. VWs have been rejected for surface scratches barely visible to the eye.

Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Funktionsprüfstand (car test stand), take up 189 check points, gun ahead to the automatic

broke stand, and say "no" to one VW out of fifty.

This preoccupation with detail means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. It also means a used VW depreciates less than any other car!

We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.

