Purpose of the Course

This course explores a variety of themes connected with commercial communication (via the media, entertainment, advertising, and the arts) in the contemporary culture of consumption (associated with the market economy in a society based on consumer capitalism). These themes emerge from three key distinctions based on (1) concepts, (2) methods, and (3) aims.

(1) Concepts. With respect to concepts, the course distinguishes between the micro and macro levels of analysis and considers communication phenomena that occur for individual consumers (engaged in experiences with various media of arts or entertainment) and for society as a whole (within the so-called "culture of consumption").

(2) Methods. With respect to methods, the course covers both sides of the split or continuum between relatively more neopositivistic and interpretive approaches by considering studies that draw on traditional laboratory experiments or other conventional empirical applications on the one hand as opposed to those that rely on more semiological or hermeneutic analyses on the other.

(3) Aims. With respect to aims, the course recognizes the difference between work that is motivated by the pursuit of intrinsic versus extrinsic value - as found, for example, in the contrast between basic research (on topics pursued for their own sake in the short run but with potential longer run managerial applications) and applied research (of immediate relevance to marketing managers or to public policy makers).
Combining these three distinctions suggests eight focal points for the course. These are structured according to eight thematic focuses that correspond to all possible combinations of the three distinctions just mentioned, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intrinsic (Basic)</th>
<th>Extrinsic (Applied)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro Neopositivistic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro Neopositivistic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These eight types of themes raise questions concerning such issues as:

1. the semiotics of message effects, aesthetic experiences, and product meanings
2. the cognitive / affective / behavioral effects of advertising
3. the introspective significance and subjective meanings of possessions
4. the hermeneutics of buying behavior: consumption as text
5. taste, nostalgia, and preference spaces for entertainers and artists
6. the market success of popular culture
7. the role of consumption symbolism in the meaning of artworks
8. the social criticism of commercial communication in the culture of consumption

Structure of the Course

The syllabus begins with introductory sessions devoted to providing an overview of the course in general and commercial communication in particular. (To avoid confusion with the eight topics just enumerated, these overview sessions are listed on the schedule as "Topic 0".)

The remaining sessions comprise the main body of the course and follow the numbering scheme introduced earlier (from Topic 1 to Topic 8). (These are listed on the schedule as "Topic 1" through
Guiding View of Commercial Communication

It should be clear from the comments offered thus far that this is not intended to be a course on media management. For example, the course does not pretend to offer systematic coverage of advertising management, media marketing, the business of entertainment, investing in works of art, or labor relations in Broadway theater productions. Those with an interest in these kinds of topics are encouraged to take the courses offered by the Business School in Advertising Management (B8602), Marketing Information Technologies (B9601-41), Industry Analysis of the Information and Media Economy (B8210), the Information Age and Management (B9462), International Communications and Media Networks (B9501), Strategic Management in the Entertainment Industry (B9301), etc., or by the University in Copyright Law (L6341), International Media and Communication (U8000), Telecommunications Network Control and Management (E6940), Arts and the Media (R6511), the Financing, Distribution, Marketing, and Exhibition of Films (R6004), and so forth.

By contrast, the present course is intended to cover various aspects of commercial communication in general - viewed as a complex system of interactions between producers (media, entertainers, artists) on the one hand and consumers (audiences, fans, patrons) on the other, in which the message or mediating link between the two consists of cultural commodities (programs, performances, artworks). In other words, the course adopts a view of communication as a chain of linkages from a source through a message to a receiver.

This perspective ties together a variety of phenomena such as those found in Lasswell's who-says-what-to-whom paradigm, in the stream of social psychological work by Hovland and his colleagues at Yale, in Jakobson's psycholinguistic formulation, in the stimulus-organism-response framework of psychological learning theory, in the Brunswikian "lens" or features-perceptions-affect model, in the source-message-channel-receiver perspective of information theory, in the cognition-affect-behavior theories of consumer behavior, in a view of art as involving a chain from artist to artwork to aesthetic reaction, in a producer-cultural commodity-consumer conception of material culture, and in a view of business as involving a chain of effects from managers to products to customers.

In other words, everything (including business) is communication!

Accordingly, the course material will encompass a broad consideration of how individual people and collective audiences respond to commercial communication, how such processes are studied, and what such studies imply for the growth of knowledge in general and for applications to solving managerial and social problems in particular.

Note, then, that the main thing distinguishing B9601-38 from
other courses is its primary focus on the audience(s) for media, entertainment, advertising, or the arts and on the general problem of how we can better understand these audiences. In this spirit, some aspects of the course (the left-hand portion of the matrix shown earlier) will deal with more basic (as opposed to more applied) research — that is, with various work, studies, or approaches whose "pay off" in the form of implications for business managers or public policy makers may be indirect rather than direct or may occur in the longer rather than the shorter run (in the same way that the basic sciences contribute, say, to improved health only after the design of applications in medicine, genetic engineering, etc.). In each case, however, we shall move in the direction of pushing from theory to applications. That is, we shall move from left to right in the aforementioned matrix — beginning with basic concepts but then asking how these can be applied to managerial problems.

Postmodern Perspectives on the Culture of Consumption

As indicated by reading assignments for the first day of class, this course will reflect a perspective that could be characterized as "postmodern." To coin some acronyms (which, one hopes, should be useful for mnemonic purposes), the course will describe the effects of a W.I.M.P. culture on a C.A.G.E.D. consumer from a perspective of P.O.S.T.M.O.D.E.R.N.I.S.M. The general terms of interest for each of these acronyms are as follows:

Culture of Consumption

W. - Western, White (Ethnocentric)
I. - Imperialistic, Individualistic (Free Enterprise System)
M. - Materialistic, Militaristic (Military-Industrial Complex)
P. - Patriarchal, Protestant Ethic, Profit-Oriented (the Paternalistic Dominant Ideology)

Consumption of Culture

C. - Class (Education, Occupation, Income...)
A. - Age
G. - Gender
E. - Ethnic Group (Nationality, Race, Religion, Other Subcultures)
D. - Demo-Socio-Psychographic Variables (other than those already mentioned — e.g., Romanticism/Classicism, Nostalgia Proneness)

Postmodernism

Modern Postmodern
Another way to set forth the basic characteristics of postmodernism involves what the instructor calls "the nine P's of Postmodernism" - Paradox, Parody, Pastiche, Playfulness, Pluralism, Proliferation, Promiscuity, Polysemy, and Panculturalism. (These are discussed in the reading assignments for Topic Zero.)

Readings

The course will make use of two kinds of reading assignments. First, a number of specialized books will convey key aspects of the eight focuses mentioned earlier. These books will be available at the Columbia University Bookstore and the Labyrinth Bookstore. The books have been carefully chosen to provide an optimal combination of excellence and inexpensiveness. However, buying all of them might still be somewhat costly for students on a tight budget. Hence, students are encouraged to make use of the library and/or to team up with classmates to buy-and-share books pertinent to various phases of the course. For example, a team of two or three students might decide to pool their resources, buy the full set of required texts, and then share them throughout the term.

The required books - which should be read by all students before coming to class on the day when they are discussed - are as follows:


Jackson, Sally (1992), Message Effects Research, New York: Guilford Press.


Optional books – which might be of use to students with special interests in the relevant areas – are:


Second, illustrative applications pertinent to each focus covered by the course will be taken from a book of readings based on the instructor's research on various aspects of the media, entertainment, advertising, and the arts. These are contained in a readings book available to all members of the class and include the following selections:

(A) "On Hatching a Program of Consumer Research: An Elephant's Faithful One Hundred Percent"
(B) "Artistic Creation, Artworks, and Aesthetic Appreciation: Some Philosophical Contributions to Nonprofit Marketing"
(C) "The Study of Signs in Consumer Esthetics: An Egocentric Review"
(D) "Integrating Compositional and Decompositional Analyses to Represent the Intervening Role of Perceptions in Evaluative Judgments"
(E) "Perceptual Veridicality in Esthetic Communication: A Model, General Procedure, and Illustration"
(F) "Detecting the Differences in Jazz: A Comparison of Methods for Assessing Perceptual Veridicality in
Applied Aesthetics

(G) "Aims, Concepts, and Methods For the Representation of Individual Differences in Esthetic Responses to Design Features"

(H) "Assessing the Real-to-Artificial Generalizability of Multiattribute Attitude Models in Tests of New Product Designs"

(I) "The Effects of Situation, Sequence, and Features on Perceptual and Affective Responses"

(J) "The Role of Emotion in Advertising"

(K) "Assessing the Role of Emotions as Mediators of Consumer Responses to Advertising"

(L) "Consumer Responses to Advertising: The Effects of Ad Content, Emotions, and Attitude toward the Ad on Viewing Time"

(M) "Romanticism, Introspection, and the Roots of Experiential Consumption: Morris the Epicurean"

(N) "I'm Hip: An Autobiographical Account of Some Consumption Experiences"

(O) "An Audiovisual Inventory of Some Fanatic Consumer Behavior: The 25-Cent Tour of a Jazz Collector's Home"

(P) "Understanding Consumer Behavior: The Linguistic Turn in Marketing Research"

(Q) "On the Scientific Status of Consumer Research and the Need for an Interpretive Approach to Studying Consumption Behavior"

(R) "The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Consumer Behavior: I Am an Animal"

(S) "The Spatial Representation of Responses Toward Jazz: Applications of Consumer Esthetics to Mapping the Market for Music"

(T) "Marketing Strategy and the Structure of Aggregate, Segment-Specific, and Differential Preferences"

(U) "Mapping the Market for Esthetic Products: The Case of Jazz Records"

(V) "Mapping the Market for Fashion: Complementarity in Consumer Preferences"

(W) "Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes"

(X) "Echoes of the Dear Departed Past: Some Work in Progress On Nostalgia"

(Y) "What's An Oscar Worth? An Empirical Estimation of the Effects of Nominations and Awards on Movie Distribution and Income"

(Z) "Using Connoisseurs to Predict Mass Tastes"

(AA) "The Role of the Humanities in Consumer Research: Close Encounters and Coastal Disturbances"

(BB) "The Semiology of Cinematic Consumption: Symbolic Consumer Behavior in Out of Africa"

(CC) "An Interpretation: Gremlins as Metaphors for Materialism"

/DD) "Semiotics in Marketing: Consumption Symbolism and Marketing Imagery in the Interpretation of Cultural Products"

(EE) "Seven Routes to Facilitating the Semiological Interpretation of Consumption Symbolism and Marketing Imagery in Works of Art: Some Tips for Wildcats"
Besides the required books and readings just described, each topic on the syllabus is accompanied by a list of recommended readings. These are intended as a helpful aid to students who wish to explore a particular topic in greater depth. It is not expected that students will have time to consult these recommended references as part of their regular classwork. However, those doing term projects in a particular area may find the list of recommendations to be of some assistance.

Class Requirements and Grading

To repeat the obvious, this is a course on communication. In line with that focus, the primary assignment for each student in the class is to communicate. Specifically, it is each student's responsibility to communicate to the instructor an experience of that student's ability, motivation, and accomplishment that will result in a grade for the course.

Clearly, this process of communication between student and instructor might take any one of various forms. In this connection, the instructor wishes to show a maximum degree of flexibility and openness to novel and creative ways of communicating as the basis for assigning a grade. However, he does have a couple of "biases" and should probably make these clear to all concerned.

First, the instructor regards class participation as one very useful type of message for communicating ability, motivation, and accomplishment. It would be unlikely that a student would win a high grade in the course without energetic and helpful class participation.

Attention: The preceding statement implies that coming to class on time and staying until the end is both noticed and appreciated – as is sitting reasonably close to the front of the room and getting visibly involved. The instructor definitely considers class participation in determining the final grade.

Second, the instructor would expect to see some sort of term project from each student, working either alone or in a small team of two or three people. That project might take any one of various forms. In this connection, the instructor wishes to remain open to a wide range of possibilities. However, it should be noted that a term paper of roughly fifteen-to-twenty pages has been a tried and true model for such term projects in the past.
It should be emphasized that all communication is to some extent a two-way process. The instructor expects to be involved in the process whereby the basis for grades is communicated to him. The degree to which this involvement occurs will be up to individual students or groups, according to their needs and preferences. The instructor will be readily available during office hours to discuss term projects or other matters with individual students or groups. He looks forward to this chance to interact with members of the class.

As already indicated, the instructor wishes to be flexible and to allow the greatest possible range for creative endeavor in doing the term projects or other work for the course. However, previous experience and requests by some students for specific deadlines suggest that some sort of schedule might be helpful in keeping the progress of work moving at a steady rate. Hence, all students are asked to observe the following due dates for the phases of their class projects:

1. A title, one-sentence description, and name(s) of author(s) is due on the fourth meeting of the class (September 29).

2. Each individual or group will make an n-minute presentation of his/her or their topic (where 5 min. < n < 10 min., to be determined by class size) on the sixth meeting of the class (October 13); this presentation should cover the nature of the topic, your reasons for selecting it, its potential relevance to others (e.g., managers, audience members, public policy makers, etc.), your planned approach to studying it, and the sorts of results or conclusions you might hope to reach.

3. A brief abstract or outline of one or two pages is due on the eighth meeting of the class (October 27).

4. The project itself is due one week after the twelfth and last meeting of the class (December 1) and must be placed in the instructor's school mail box (504 Uris Hall) or left with his home doorman (140 Riverside Drive, corner 87th Street, Apt. 5H) prior to that time (on or before December 8).

Notice that some students may wish to focus on topics covered later rather than earlier in the term. In order to meet the time schedule just described, such students should read ahead and should plan their time accordingly.

Please note: As just explained, all work must be submitted by the end of one week after the last day of class. Departures from this requirement could result in a temporary grade of incomplete. No exceptions, please.
Please also note: In order to permit the instructor to provide feedback in the form of written comments, all work must be accompanied by letter-sized self-addressed envelopes at the time when the work is handed in. No exceptions, please.

Please further note: To guard against loss and to make it possible for the instructor to keep his copy, class members must keep copies of their work for their own use. The instructor intends appreciatively to keep the copy that is handed in. No exceptions, please.

Attention: The three points just made are important. Please read them carefully.

As just indicated, the instructor wishes to leave the choice of how to "earn" a grade in the course entirely up to the individual student(s). However, he also realizes that some students might appreciate a bit of "guidance" concerning the nature of topics that might be considered suitable or appropriate as the basis for term projects of one sort or another. Hence, as a possible spur to creative ideas, consider the following list of topics explored by students from the past in projects memorable enough to be recalled by the instructor while flying back to New York and scribbling on a cocktail napkin. These examples might suggest the sorts of potential topics that might be worth exploring (among innumerable others that are not mentioned or even hinted at here):

- The Iconography of Architecture in Bugsy
- Consumption Symbolism in White Palace
- Advertising Strategy for a New Consumer Product
- Media and the (Mis)Representation of Women
- Hillary, Chelsea, and Socks as Consumption Symbols
- Americans and Japanese as Users of Karaoke
- Movie-Release Strategy and Box-Office Revenue
- Infomercials and Advertorials
- The Experience of Television Viewing
- Content Analysis of the Bush-Perot-Clinton Debates
- Marketing Strategy for a New Book Publisher
- Rap As Postmodern Music
- Multiculturalism and Bossa Nova
- The Role of Soviet Propaganda in the Ukraine
- Pre-Capitalist Advertising in Poland
- Howard Stern As Postmodern Icon
- Calvin, Hobbes, and the Culture of Consumption
- The Market for Interactive Multimedia
- In a Word, Seinfeld
- Film Animation in the Postmodern Era
- Meanings of Toys
- Targeting the Gay Market
- Marketing Analysis for a Children's Museum in Yonkers
- The Age of CD-ROM - Markets for Multimedia
- Commercialization in the Movie Industry
- Nostalgia in the Movies
- Why Records Sell
- Martha Stewart Living
Research Responsibility

It is likely that, at some point during the course of the term, the instructor will ask the members of the class for their help in conducting some aspect of his own research. This will involve spending about 45 minutes or so in an experiment, completing a questionnaire, or collecting data from some other respondent(s). Such an assignment will be intended to make connections between the concepts, methods, and aims discussed in the course and thereby to further the educational objectives of all concerned.

Prerequisites for Enrolling

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. All are welcome.
STREAMLINED VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS

Marketing B9601-38

COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE
CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION:
Media, Entertainment, Advertising, and the Arts
in the Market Economy

Professor Morris B. Holbrook
504 Uris Hall
Office: 212-854-3481; Home: 212-873-7324
mbh3@columbia.edu

Sept. 8 - 15

Topic 0: Introduction and Overview


Required Reading: (B) "Artistic Creation, Artworks, and Aesthetic Appreciation."

Sept. 22 - 29 (first part)

Topic 1: The Semiotics of Message Effects, Aesthetic Experiences, and Product Meanings (Micro-Neopositivistic-Basic)


Required Reading: (C) "The Study of Signs in Consumer Esthetics".

Sept. 29 (second part)

Topic 2: The Cognitive / Affective / Behavioral Effects of Advertising (Micro-Neopositivistic-Applied)

Read: Jackson, Sally (1992), Message Effects Research, New York: Guilford Press.

Required Readings: (K) "Assessing the Role of Emotions as Mediators of Consumer Responses to Advertising"; (L) "Consumer Responses to Advertising."
Oct. 6

Topic 3: The Introspective Significance and Subjective Meanings of Possessions (Micro-Interpretive-Basic)


Required Reading: (M) "Romanticism, Introspection, and the Roots of Experiential Consumption."

Oct. 13

Class Presentations: Brief reports on topics for class projects

Topic 4: The Hermeneutics of Buying Behavior: Consumption As Text (Micro-Interpretive-Applied)


Required Reading: (P) "Understanding Consumer Behavior."

Oct. 20, Oct. 27, & Nov. 3

Topic 5: Taste, Nostalgia, and Preference Spaces for Entertainers and Artists (Macro-Neopositivist-Basic)


Required Readings (second): (T) "Marketing Strategy and the Structure of Aggregate, Segment-Specific, and Differential Preferences"; (U) "Mapping the Market for Esthetic Products."

Required Readings (third): (W) "Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes"; (X) "Echoes of the Dear Departed Past."

Nov. 10

Topic 6: The Market Success of Popular Culture (Macro-Neopositivist-Applied)

Nov. 17

Topic 7: The Role of Consumption Symbolism in the Meaning of Artworks (Macro-Interpretive-Basic)


Watch: Gremlins I

Required Readings: (AA) "The Role of the Humanities in Consumer Research"; (EE) "Seven Routes to Facilitating the Semiological Interpretation of Consumption Symbolism and Marketing Imagery in Works of Art."

Dec. 1

Topic 8: The Social Criticism of Commercial Communication in the Culture of Consumption (Macro-Interpretive-Applied)


View: One episode of The Price Is Right (CBS, 11:00 a.m., any weekday).