

coms370 - class 12

images of students here

course description

Advertising, in its varied forms, is a pervasive and dominant influence in contemporary societies.

It informs and structures our quotidian choices, penetrating the mundane and intimate spaces of our lives.

Living in a consumer culture has significant implications for our values, lifestyles and social relations.

This course offers a critical investigation into the parameters and meanings of our culture of consumption.

We examine the different ways in which advertising influences, informs and reproduces our culture of consumption. In particular, we trace the ways in which advertisements “speak” to us, promising to satiate our desires while at the same time, shaping the very nature of those desires.

As well, we explore mechanisms by which the persuasive nature of advertising can be ruptured, even momentarily, so that we become more critically aware of its power to camouflage, divert or erase issues that require societal attention and intervention.

Our focus is on how people become and perform as ‘consumers’, and the subsequent repercussions.

objectives

***Students should note that this is not a course on “how to do” advertising. Rather, it is a critical exploration of the appeal of advertising and its power to transform citizens into consumers.*

- Understand the origins of contemporary consumer culture in the Euro-American context
- Develop a creative and critical approach to reading and engaging with advertisements
- Evaluate advertising messages in terms of their ideological import
- Investigate how the ethos of consumerism influences different aspects of social life
- Develop presentation skills in public speaking and online posting

face work

Erving Goffman *Interaction Ritual* 1967

Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants. In each of these contacts, he tends to act out what is sometimes called **a line**—a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation— and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself. The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.

A person tends to experience an immediate emotional response to the face which a contact with others allows him; he cathects his face; his feelings become attached to it. If the encounter sustains an image of him that he has long taken for granted, he probably will have few feelings about the matter. If events establish a face for him that is better than he might have expected, he is likely to “feel good”; if his ordinary expectations are not fulfilled, one expects that he will “feel bad” or “feel hurt.”

the mediated self

Amelia Jones (1998): “How does the image relate to the self?”

How are imaging technologies linked to ideological conceptions of seeing and knowing that, in turn, define the subject in Euro-American culture?”

As Katherine Hayles also argues, “technology not just mediates but produces subjectivities” (qtd in Jones, 2006, p. 44).

In other words, how our these new image based social networks such as Instagram, Snapchat, tumblr, etc. linked to the ideological conception of seeing and, in turn, defining subjectivity?



branding the self

the self

The self is an associative total of our relations

it is produced by society and the more broad cultural notions of the 'body', which are constantly changing

Grosz (1994) "bodies are always a product of the culture that produces them" (p. 23)

the body is something we must live



branding the self

branding

the associative total of your symbols, logo, codes (maps of associated meaning that form you and make you distinguishable to the public, to the Other).

The landscape of capitalism is materialized in the brand and what the brand does and is able to achieve as a commodity-sign

In this way, branding becomes a 'core activity of capitalism'

BRANDING does 2 things at the same time:

It produces sets of images and immaterial symbolic values in and through which we engage in meaning-making of the world AND also works to contain and direct the meaning-making capacities in ways towards its benefit



branding the self

self branding

Self-branding “involves the self-conscious construction of a meta-narrative and meta-image of self through the use of cultural meanings and images drawn from the narrative and visual codes of the mainstream culture industries” (Hearn, p. 198).

Self-branding turns us into commodities.

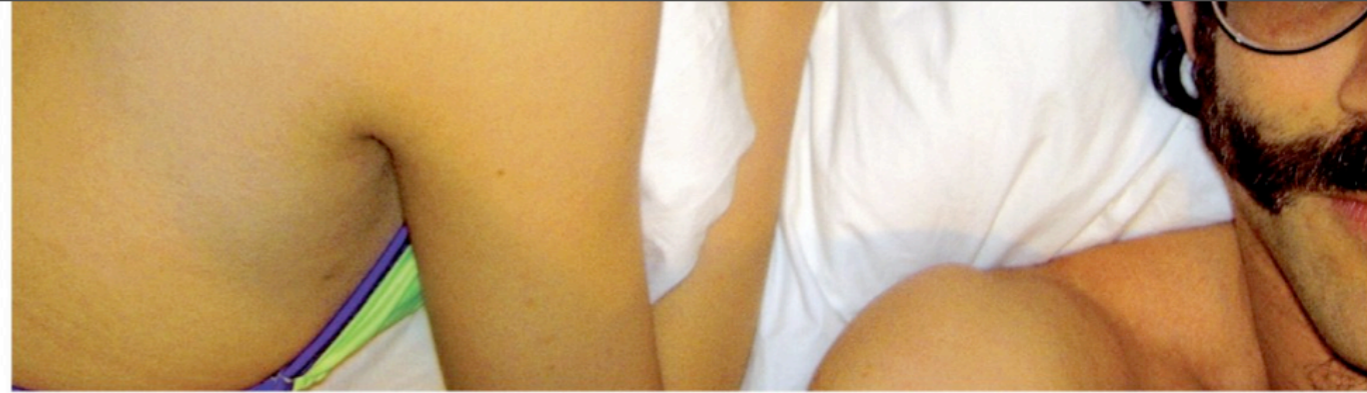
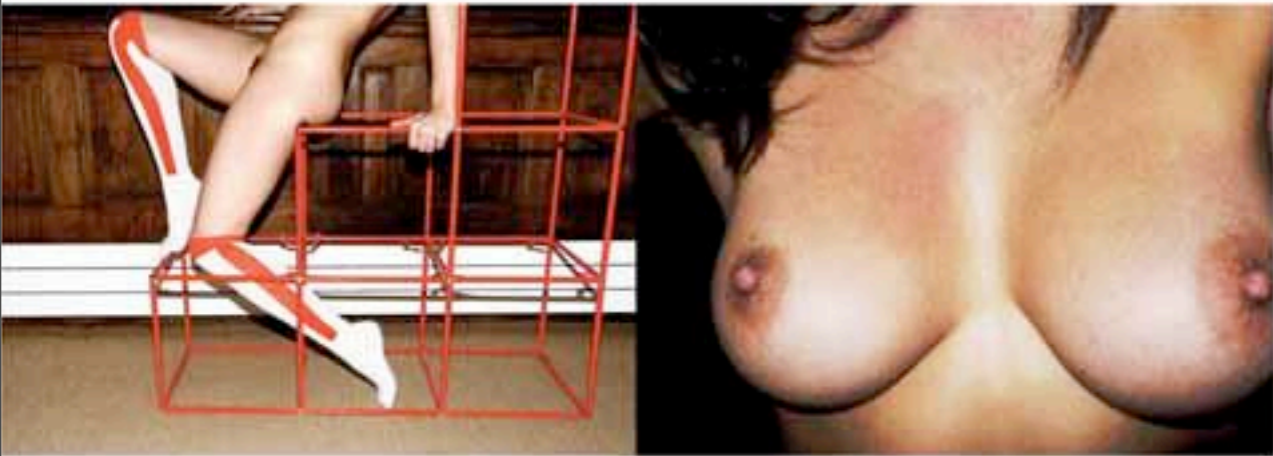
Logic of brand culture is:

for people to define themselves both through brands and as brands.

for us to see and produce ourselves as commodity-signs.



Stirrup Socks



American Apparel is 3,200 people.

Designers, marketers, engineers, knitters, sewers, and administrators all working together out of a vertically integrated, 800,000 sq ft design and manufacturing lab in downtown Los Angeles.

Thirty-five stores worldwide with more on the way.

Forty thousand wholesale clients, part of the family.

One million garments served up each week.

Taking on the system. One T-shirt at a time.

American Apparel is capitalism—working.

To learn more about our company, to shop online, or to find store locations, visit our web site: www.americanapparel.net

American Apparel™

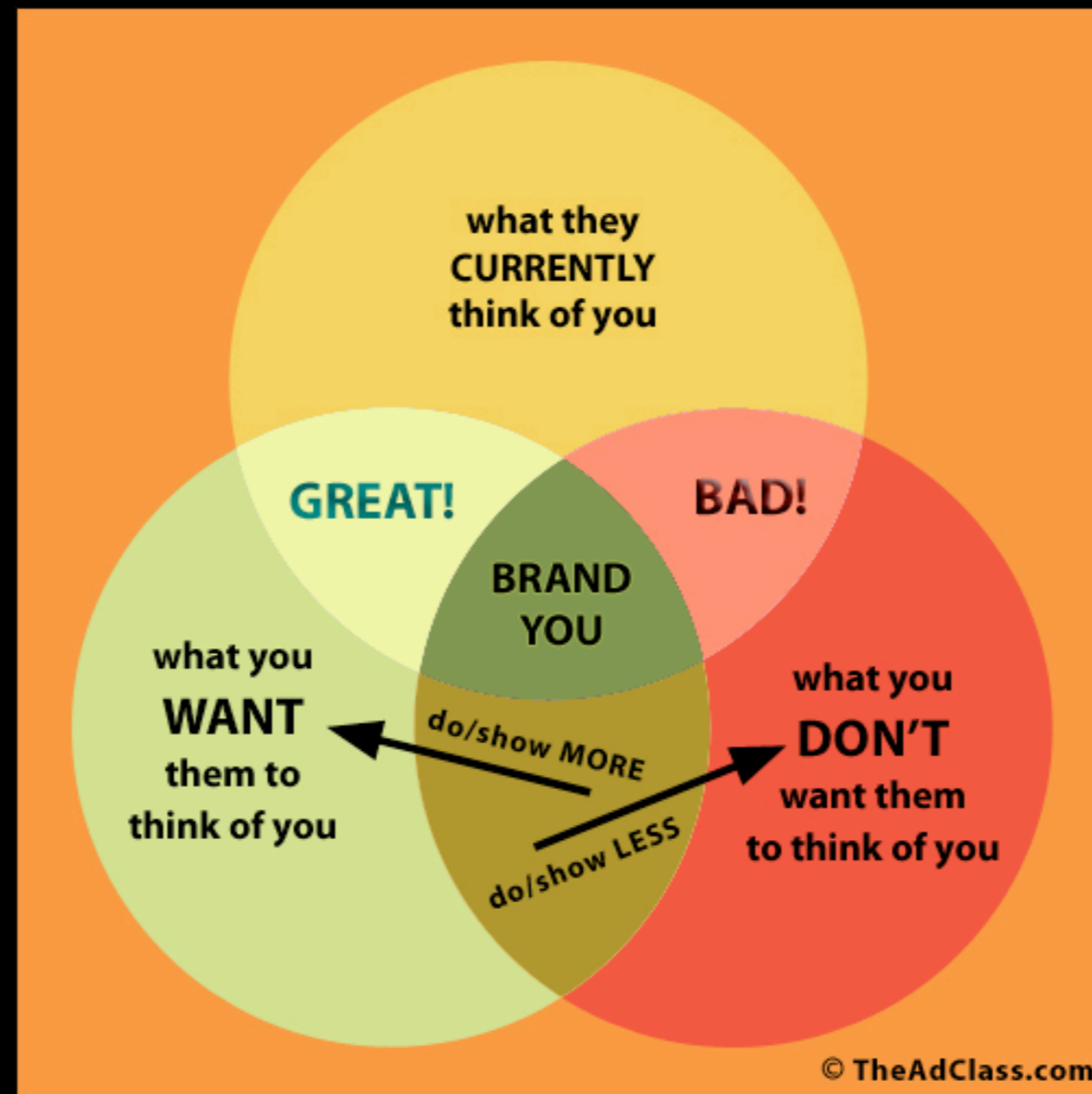
Made in Downtown LA
Sweatshop Free—Brand-Free Clothes



American Apparel®

labour

Labour is an activity that produces value, and use-value to objects/services/ideas. This use-value must be translatable, and (material or not) things must be able to be converted into a form that can be realized on the market (a commodity)



immaterial labour

the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity

informational content

as regards to the "informational content" of the commodity

it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers' labor processes in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving tech- and computer- control (and horizontal and vertical communication).

cultural content

as regards to the activity that produces the "cultural content" of the commodity

it involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work"—in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion.

emotional labour

that which requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others — Arlie Hochschild

Emotional labor is thus a type of performance where care or attention to others is integrated into the nature of the job itself.

Immaterial emotional labour » the practices we engage in to boost our popularity online

This is **immaterial** in that it is digital and not direct labor, and it is **emotional** in that it involves self-presentation and interaction which has real emotional affects. — Marwick, 2010



media refusal

Laura Portwood-Stacer:

refers to the conscious disavowal of media, which can take the form of rejecting a specific platform, technology, or corporation. In popular discourse, such rejection is often termed “opting out.”

A choice not to participate in a particular mode of communication

Non-use + *resistant motivation* = refusal

a tactical response to the perceived harms engendered by a capitalist system in which media corporations have disproportionate power over their platforms’ users, who, it may be said, provide unpaid labor for corporations whenever they log on





HOW TO SPOT AN

INSTAGRAM JUNKIE


Now 40 million users strong, digital photo-sharing app **Instagram** has taken advantage of the photoblog trend and transformed into something of an **overnight global success**.


With the startup earning press for expanding its product to **Android** users and being snatched up by **Facebook's** powerful grasp, the tech world is wondering what kind of users are downloading the app and catapulting the brand to the top. Below is a guide on how to recognize the obvious signs of a die-hard **Instagram devotee**.

 IPHONE NEVER FAR FROM EYE-LEVEL.

 BRUISES FROM WALKING INTO LAMPPOSTS WHILE TAKING "ARTSY" SNAPSHOTS OF MONTH-OLD GUM ON THE SIDEWALK.

 CRAMPED THUMB FROM SCROLLING THROUGH GRAINY PHOTOS ALL DAY.

 STRESS SWEAT FROM PRESSURE TO CAPTURE THE PERFECT SUNSET FOR THE "PHOTO A DAY" CHALLENGE.

 TURNED-UP NOSE IN DISDAIN FOR ALL NOVEL INSTAGRAMMERS (LOOKING AT YOU, ANDROID USERS).



“Communities of resistance are replaced by communities of consumption” - bell hooks

A choice of brand is a gateway to sociability.

We constantly engage in a consumption of identity-creating goods.