

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Dr. Kevin D. Thomas | kevin.thomas@utexas.edu | BMC 4.374 | Office Hours: MW 1:00-3:00 PM
ADV 378 (05975) | AFR 372E (30367) | WGS 340 (47743) | Fall 2013 | MW-10:00-11:30AM | CMA 3.124

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Course Website: <https://utexas.instructure.com/> (Canvas)

Course Description:

The “browning of America” brings with it fundamental shifts in the marketplace landscape. Today, approximately half of all young people in the U.S. are of color, and by the year 2040, people of color will comprise the majority of the total U.S. population. In addition to addressing dramatic alterations in the racial and ethnic configuration of the U.S., advertisers must also attend to significant cultural transitions that are transforming the marketplace. Advances in technology and healthcare have enabled children and older U.S. citizens to participate in consumer culture at unprecedented levels. Additionally, the growing visibility and collective buying power of LGBTQ and differently-abled consumers has solidified their status as market segments worthy of advertising expenditures.

This course will explore the economic, social, and cultural implications of multicultural advertising. Through an interdisciplinary investigation of theories and constructs from the fields of Marketing (Advertising), Communication Studies, Media/Cultural Studies, Queer Studies, Law (Critical Race Theory), Social Psychology, and Sociology we will engage with a range of topics that will further our understanding of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Specific areas to be explored include the following:

- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender and Sexual Identity
- Social Class and Mobility
- Generational Cohorts
- Nationhood and Globalization
- Differently-abled Bodies

Subject areas will be discussed in accordance with how they are lived – intersecting and overlapping. Broadly, this course will interrogate the social and cultural value of advertising, and examine the ways in which advertising helps structure how we view ourselves and the world around us. Through interdisciplinary investigation, this course will provide students with the ability to critically examine advertising as social communication. This course will direct its attention to those who produce and consume advertising. It will also explore how technological advances have blurred the line between producer and consumer. Throughout the course the presence of power and inequity will be critically examined.

Required Textbook:

Title: Undressing the Ad: Reading Culture in Advertising
Authors: Katherine Toland Frith (ed.)

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Evaluation:

Participation and Attendance.....	15 points
Elevator Pitch Video.....	5 points
Culture Jamming Project (Group).....	20 points
Peer Assessment.....	10 points
Ad Critique Journal (Individual).....	20 points
Quiz 1.....	10 points
Quiz 2.....	10 points
Quiz 3.....	10 points
TOTAL.....	100 points

Grade Distribution:

<i>Point Total</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Point Total</i>	<i>Grade</i>
93 or more	A	77 – 79.99	C+
90 – 92.99	A-	73 – 76.99	C
87 – 89.99	B+	70 – 72.99	C-
83 – 86.99	B	60 – 69.99	D
80 – 82.99	B-	Below 60	F

Elevator Pitch Video: An elevator speech is as essential as a business card. You need to be able to say who you are, what you do, what you are interested in doing and how you can be a resource to your listeners. Crafting and presenting an effective elevator pitch is a fundamental business communication skill. You will need to develop and upload a 90 second elevator pitch that speaks to your personal background, your current skill set, and career aspirations. Your elevator pitch will serve as an “interview” for group selection. **NOTE:** Your pitch should be as close to 90 seconds as possible – pitches that are considerably less or more than 90 seconds will receive a severe point deduction.

Culture Jamming Project: In this assignment groups of 5-6 students will develop an ad campaign that subverts problematic dominant meanings found in advertising. The assignment specifies two ways in which your group can jam culture. Option 1 involves subverting a 30 second television commercial. Using video editing software and original content, the group reinvents the 30 second spot in a manner that subverts the original message. Option B involves subverting the message of a print advertising campaign. Using photo editing software, the group reinvents a total of four (4) print advertisements (from the same campaign). Groups will present their work at the end of the semester. During their presentation groups will need to deconstruct what they did by specifying the dominant meanings they sought to subvert, explaining why those meanings were problematic, and the political statement embedded in culture jam.

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Ad Critique Journal: We are inundated with pop culture by way of advertising every day. From traditional modes such as television, to new media formats like Facebook -- we act as both recipient and instigator of advertising's pop culture messages. Your assignment is to document and critically analyze forms of multicultural marketing communication that you find interesting. As you go about your day remain aware of the advertising messages that surround you; when you come in contact with a message directed at a multicultural audience that grabs your attention, use the format below to document and analyze it.

Sample Journal Entry

Documentation of Advertising Message	Critical Analysis of Advertising Message
<p>Use this space to visually document the advertising message. You may use any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing• Color Photocopy• Cut & Paste of Actual Ad	<p>Provide the following</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Surface Reading <i>(What is physically present?)</i>2. Intended Reading <i>(The sales message the advertiser is trying to get across)</i>3. Cultural/Ideological Reading <i>(The social and cultural meanings embedded in the ad)</i>

Minimum Number of Journal Entries: 20

Your journal will be equally graded on the following factors (each accounts for 1/3 of the grade):

- Creativity of presentation
- Variety of advertising mediums and messages featured
- Thoroughness of analysis (use of concepts from lecture & readings)

Quizzes: There will be a total of three (3) quizzes administered to gauge your understanding of pertinent course material. Quizzes will consist of a combination of multiple choice, True/False, and short answer questions. Quizzes will take place on Wed, September 25; Wed, October 23; and Wed, Nov 20. The Monday session preceding each quiz we will have a Jeopardy-style in-class quiz prep. Additionally, a study guide will be provided approximately 2 weeks prior each quiz.

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Assignments/Readings
Week 1		
Wed, Aug 28	Course Introduction	
Week 2		
Mon, Sep 2	Reading Culture in Advertising	Elevator Pitch (upload video) Labor Day (No Class)
Wed, Sep 4		Textbook – Chapter 1 Check Canvas for readings
Week 3		
Mon, Sep 9	Semiotics and Advertising	Check Canvas for readings
Wed, Sep 11		Textbook – Chapter 2 Quiz 3 Study Guide (Canvas)
Week 4		
Mon, Sep 16	Gender in Advertising	Video: Codes of Gender
Wed, Sep 18		Textbook – Chapter 4 Check Canvas for readings Group Discussion
Week 5		
Mon, Sep 23	Exam 1	Prep: Exam 1
Wed, Sep 25		Exam 1
Week 6		
Mon, Sep 30	Children in Advertising	Video: Consuming Kids
Wed, Oct 2		Check Canvas for readings Group Discussion
Week 7		
Mon, Oct 7	Promoting the Greater Good? Reading Culture in PSAs	Textbook – Chapter 7 Discussion Board (Canvas)
Wed, Oct 9		Textbook – Chapter 8 Quiz 2 Study Guide (Canvas) Group Discussion
Week 8		
Mon, Oct 14	Social Class in Advertising	Check Canvas for readings
Wed, Oct 16		Textbook – Chapter 10 Group Discussion

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Week 9		
Mon, Oct 21	Exam 2	Prep: Exam 2
Wed, Oct 23		Exam 2
Week 10		
Mon, Oct 28	Race in Advertising	Check Canvas for readings
Wed, Oct 30		Check Canvas for readings Group Discussion
Week 11		
Mon, Nov 4	Differently Abled in Advertising	Check Canvas for readings
Wed, Nov 6		Check Canvas for readings Quiz 3 Study Guide (Canvas) Group Discussion
Week 12		
Mon, Nov 11	Globalization in Advertising	Video: No Logo
Wed, Nov 13		Textbook – Chapter 3 Check Canvas for readings Group Discussion
Week 13		
Mon, Nov 18	Exam 3	Prep: Exam 3
Wed, Nov 20		Exam 3
Week 14		
Mon, Nov 25	Group Presentations	Groups 1 -3
Wed, Nov 27		
Week 15		
Mon, Dec 2	Group Presentations	Groups 4-6
Wed, Dec 4		Group 7 Course evaluation

Canvas

Canvas will serve as our online informational hub. Canvas is a learning management system (LMS) similar in scope to Blackboard. However, most users prefer the design and functionality of Canvas in comparison to Blackboard. Those of you that are new to Canvas may find the following information useful.

- [What is Canvas](#)
- [Canvas for Students](#)
- [Canvas Glossary](#)

Advertising as Social Communication: Discourse and Diversity

Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-6441 (TTY). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Please read more information at: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php.

KEVIN D. THOMAS, PhD

Biographical Information

PhD, University of Texas at Austin, Advertising, 2011

MBA, California State Polytechnic University - Pomona, Entrepreneurship, 2005

BBA, Loyola Marymount University, Marketing, 2000

Dr. Thomas investigates the socio-cultural impact of marketing communication and consumer behavior. His primary research interest pertains to understanding the relationship between marketing communication, consumption practices, and notions of self and community. Using a consumer culture theory (CCT) perspective, Dr. Thomas explores the ways in which identity markers (i.e. race, gender, class, and sexuality) are represented in marketing communication and experienced in the marketplace. Other areas of research interests include multicultural advertising, issues of diversity and marketplace discrimination, and entrepreneurship and marketplace empowerment.