

**MIT 3207G (001)**  
**Children, Advertising & Consumer Culture**  
**Winter 2020**

**Time and Place:** Tuesdays 2:30 – 5:30pm FNB 1200

**Professor:** Dr. Selma A. Purac (spurac2@uwo.ca)  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30pm – 2:00pm FNB 4120  
Or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course provides a critical survey of issues related to children's advertising, marketing, and consumer culture. The historic rise of children's marketing, the value advertisers place on children, and contemporary controversial debates will be investigated and located within broad theoretical, cultural, social, and institutional contexts.

This course will:

- Survey the theoretical, historical, social, and cultural contexts of children's marketing
- Examine the processes and institutions involved in the creation and dissemination of children's advertising
- Analyze and evaluate children's advertisements and marketing campaigns from a critical perspective
- Analyze the role that children's marketing plays in relation to ideology and identity formation
- Encourage students to assess and analyze the way in which the marketplace has infiltrated their own childhoods and continues to inflect the next generation of consumers

**Required Texts:**

Please note that our course text is published under two different titles; either publication is acceptable:

Linn, Susan. *Consuming Kids: Protecting Our Children from the Onslaught of Marketing and Advertising*. NY: Anchor, 2005. OR

Linn, Susan. *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. NY: New Press, 2004.

Additional readings will be posted on OWL

**Evaluation:**

Essay #1 (Jan 28)	20%
Exam (Mar 3)	25%
Essay #2 (Mar 31)	35%
Presentation	20%

**Attendance Policy:**

University Senate policy clearly indicates expectations for regular attendance in class, and penalties for chronic absence; see p35 of the Western Calendar. In accordance with this policy, attendance in MIT 3207 is mandatory, and a record of attendance will be kept by the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he or she signs the attendance sheet each class. A student who misses a substantial portion of class may be debarred from submitting the final reflection and/or writing the course examination; however, marks will not be awarded for attendance. Please note that this policy is rigorously applied in our course.

**Email Policy:**

I do not accept assignments via email. If you email me an assignment, I will delete the file without opening it, and your assignment will not count as being submitted.

I will respond to emails sent to my UWO account within two working days. I do not respond to emails over the weekend. Please note that UWO instructors can respond only to UWO email addresses, and that grades cannot be communicated via email.

Email communication should be restricted to questions or concerns that can be quickly and easily addressed via email. While I am happy to discuss your work in person, I will not provide such feedback via email. Thus, do not email me drafts of your assignments; please see me during my office hours or schedule an alternative appointment with me. Consequently, such inquiries need to be made in a timely manner.

**WebCT OWL:**

Class announcements and assignments will be posted on our OWL site; thus, students are expected to check the site regularly for updates.

**Late Assignment Policy:**

Please note that assignments are due in class, but they must also be uploaded to our OWL site prior to the posted deadline. I do not email submissions. If you email me an assignment, I will delete the file without opening it, and you will continue to accrue late deductions.

Late assignments will lose 5% per day, unless the student has a documented medical or family emergency. At the discretion of the instructor, a request for an extension may be granted for a legitimate reason; such requests must be made at least ONE WEEK before the due-date of the paper to be considered.

**FIMS Grading Policy:**

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a Winter semester course is Wednesday, March 4th 2019. Students can find details about this academic policy here: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf).

Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses. Students who receive academic accommodation for the assignments on which these grades are based may not receive feedback in time to meet this deadline.

The MIT program now has the following class average policy:

- All 1000-level MIT required courses (i.e., 1020E, 1025F/G, 1050A/B) will have a class average of between 67 and 72%.
- All 2000-level MIT required courses (i.e. 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) will have a class average of between 70 and 75%.
- All 3000-level MIT required courses (i.e. 3000, 3100) will have a class average of between 72 and 77%.

- Elective courses and 4<sup>th</sup> year seminar courses have no class average requirement.

Please note that students can access information regarding MIT grade range guidelines and the appeals process via the “Appendix A” document posted on our OWL site.

#### **Prerequisites:**

University Senate regulations state: “Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

#### **Anti-requisites:**

MIT 3402F if taken in 2009-10 or 2010-11, MIT 3404F if taken in Intersession in 2010, or MIT 3402G in 2011-12.

#### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices:**

The use of laptops is permitted in class; however, students must use such technologies in a manner that is respectful to both their fellow students and their instructor. Cell phone use is not permitted in class.

#### **Academic Accommodation:**

##### **Academic Consideration for Missed Work**

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic\\_Consideration\\_for\\_absences.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf) are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

#### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Additional information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

**Midterm Examination Accommodation**

Please note that FIMS will be holding a set of makeup exam dates during the midterm examination period in order to accommodate those students who miss their exam due to an unforeseen medical or compassionate emergency (see the guidelines above). These department-wide makeup sessions are scheduled to take place on the following Fridays from 1 – 4pm: February 14, 28, March 6, 13, 20, and 27. To qualify to write a makeup exam, students must submit the appropriate documentation to their academic counsellor. If approved, the professor will determine on which Friday the student will write the makeup exam. No unapproved makeup exams are possible.

**Statement on Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Plagiarism**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Thus, all sources must be cited BOTH in the bibliography AND in-text. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all plagiarised assignments will receive a grade of zero. All student work in this course will be submitted for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Turnitin will flag any passages and/or phrasing that is lifted from online sources.

**Support Services at Western:**

Office of the Registrar: [www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)

Services for Students with Disabilities: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

Accessibility Information: [www.accessibility.uwo.ca/](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/)

Writing Support Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

Learning Skills Services: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

Indigenous Services: [indigenous.uwo.ca/](http://indigenous.uwo.ca/)

International and Exchange Student Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int)

Career Centre at Western: [www.success.uwo.ca/careers/](http://www.success.uwo.ca/careers/)

## MIT3207G: Children, Advertising & Consumer Culture

### GROUP PRESENTATION (worth 20%)

In groups of three, you will prepare a 20-25 minute class presentation, which will incorporate an additional 5 minutes of discussion. The presentation dates are listed below. Only two groups can present on each general topic, so slots on the sign-up sheet will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Each week, the presentations will reflect upon the general topic of discussion. Listed below are some suggestions and possible topics; keep in mind, however, that these are simply loose guidelines – you will be expected to present on *specific* campaigns, products, or companies, etc. You CANNOT, however, present on the case studies that are listed in the course schedule, companies or products covered in our readings, or any topic that has already been claimed by another group on the sign-up sheet (throughout the term, an updated version of the sign-up sheet can be found on our OWL site). Also, keep in mind that your essay content cannot overlap with your presentation content. Please note that your topic must be passed by me via email at least one week prior to your presentation date; failure to do so will result in a grade penalization for all members in the group.

Guidelines and a grading rubric for the assignment are posted on OWL.

1. General Topic: Advertising and Infants (Jan 28)

-possible topics include: “Preparing for Baby” checklists, marketing to new fathers, analysis of Mom & Baby programs in Ontario, “Mom Groups” in Ontario, the market for infant-related technologies

2. General Topic: Marketing Infiltration of the Education System (Feb 4)

-possible topics include: the gendering of educational toys, analysis of toys designed for future career paths, STEM toys, FatBrain Toys, the marketing of Bill Nye the Science Guy

3. General Topic: The Tween (Feb 11)

-possible topics include: toy trends such as fidget spinners, analysis of trends at the New York Toy Fair, the marketing of beauty products to tweens, the often neglected male tween market, analysis of marketing guidelines for reaching tweens

4. General Topic: The Independent Child Consumer (Feb 25)

-possible topics include: creative play in advertising, replicating adult roles in children’s play, Nature Valley’s “Get Outside” campaign, adult brands that sell lines for children, Free-Range Parenting (\* please note that Build-a-Bear is off limits as a topic)

5. General Topic: Sex, Children, and Advertising (Mar 10)

-possible topics include: the role that young males play in a discourse that usually revolves around young females, ads that challenge heteronormative roles, unisex advertising to kids (\* please note that Calvin Klein is off limits as a topic)

6. General Topic: Violence and Children’s Advertising (Mar 17)

-possible topics include: marketing contact sports to children, gender and the marketing of dangerous toys, representations of conflict in advertising past vs present

7. General Topic: Selling Food to Children (Mar 24)

-possible topics include: snack-food packaging and in-store-placement, cartoon-tie-ins in food advertising campaigns, the evolution of school lunches, marketing after-school snacks

8. General Topic: Selling Food to Children continued (Mar 31): see above for possible topics

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week 1:</b> <b>Intro:</b> <b>The Kids are Alright?</b>	Jan 7	Case Study: Goldieblox
<b>Week 2:</b> <b>Buyers and Babies:</b> <b>Psychology and Advertising</b>	Jan 14	Readings: -Walter D. Scott "The Psychology of Advertising" ( <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1904/01/the-psychology-of-advertising/303465/">http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1904/01/the-psychology-of-advertising/303465/</a> ) -Derek Thompson "Thinking vs. Feeling: The Psychology of Advertising" ( <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/10/thinking-vs-feeling-the-psychology-of-advertising/247466/">http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/10/thinking-vs-feeling-the-psychology-of-advertising/247466/</a> )
<b>Week 3:</b> <b>Cradles and Consumers:</b> <b>Rethinking Childhood</b>	Jan 21	Case Studies: Chevrolet and Froot Loops Readings: -Schor "The Changing World of Children's Consumption" (OWL) -Montgomery "Digital Kids" (OWL)
<b>Week 4:</b> <b>Mini-Me:</b> <b>Branding Our Babies</b>	Jan 28	Case Studies: Baby Einstein and Teletubbies Presentations Readings: -Gregory-Thomas "There's a New Mom in Town" (available online through Google Books) -Gregory-Thomas "It's Like Preschool on TV" (OWL)  <b>ESSAY 1 DUE</b>
<b>Week 5:</b> <b>Getting Schooled:</b> <b>Commercializing Education</b>	Feb 4	Case Studies: <i>Sesame Street/Blues Clues</i> and Crayola Presentations Readings: -Gladwell "The Stickiness Factor" (OWL) -Roth "Flesh in Wax" (OWL) -Linn "Students for Sale" (course text)
<b>Week 6:</b> <b>From Elmo to Emo:</b> <b>The Terrible Tweens</b>	Feb 11	Case Studies: G.I.A. and cell phone marketing Presentations Readings: -Quart "From the Mall to the Fall: Teen Consultants" (OWL) -McDonnell "March of the Tweens" (OWL)

<b>Week 7:</b>	Feb 17 - 21	<b>READING WEEK</b>
<b>Week 8: Kidfluence: The Autonomous Child Consumer</b>	Feb 25	Case Studies: Car Advertising and LEGO Presentations Readings: -Schor "Empowered or Seduced" (OWL) -Linn "Notes from the Underground" (course text) -Sutherland & Thompson "Kids Influencing Family Purchases" (OWL)
<b>Week 9:</b>	Mar 3	<b>EXAM</b>
<b>Week 10: So Sexy So Soon: Selling Sex to Children</b>	Mar 10	Case Studies: Bratz/Barbie and Disney Presentations Reading: -Linn "From Barbie to Ken and Britney, the Bratz and Beyond: Sex as Commodity" (course text)
<b>Week 11: Running with Scissors: Marketing Violence to Kids</b>	Mar 17	Case Studies: Toy Guns/NERF and <i>Power Rangers</i> Presentations Reading: -Linn "Peacekeeping Battle Stations and Smackdown!: Selling Kids on Violence" (course text)
<b>Week 12: Childish Appetites: Eating Our Way Towards Adulthood</b>	Mar 24	Case Studies: McDonalds and Coke Presentations Reading: -Linn "Through Thick and Thin: The Weighty Problem of Food Marketing" (course text)
<b>Week 13: Are the Kids Really Alright?</b>	Mar 31	Case Studies: Cream of Wheat and Lunchables Presentations No Readings  <b>ESSAY 2 DUE</b>