

The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

MIT 2151B (001)
Consumer Society: Advertising & Promotional Culture
Winter 2021



Time and Place: Thursdays 10:30am – 12:30pm Online via our OWL course site

Professor: Dr. Selma A. Purac (spurac2@uwo.ca)
Office Hours: TBA, online via Zoom
Or meetings by scheduled Zoom appointment

Course Description:

This course examines the complex role of advertising, promotion, and marketing in our culture. In our in-depth exploration of ‘consumer society,’ we will consider the connections between advertising and propaganda, the ways marketing may or may not be used for purposes other than profit, and how markets and marketing influence media.

This course will:

- survey the theoretical, historical, social, and cultural contexts of consumer society
- analyze and evaluate advertisements and marketing campaigns from a critical perspective
- consider the how the theory and practice of public relations intersects with consumerism
- explore how and to what purpose different media employ and disseminate ideologies of consumption
- encourage students to assess and analyze their own engagement with consumer culture

Course Format:

This class will run online through our OWL course site; it will therefore require students to have the technologies that will allow them to access and engage with the site on a weekly basis. Each week, lecture materials will be posted to coincide with our scheduled class time. Lectures will not be delivered live. Any additional exercises or discussions will be posted online, and their deadlines will coincide with our scheduled class time. While the majority of the course will run asynchronously, occasional synchronous sessions will take place during our scheduled class hours (the course midterm and occasional non-mandatory clarification sessions). Students will be informed in advance of any synchronous course delivery. Assignments will be submitted via OWL.

Required Texts:

READINGS:

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. NY: Norton, 1996.

- This book can be ordered online through the UWO Bookstore, or through an ecommerce site of your choice. Alternatively, Kindle editions or e-text versions can be purchased by students online.

All additional readings are either available online or posted on OWL

OTHER:

Students will also be required to listen to podcasts or watch videos that are available online

- You will need to stream/rent the *Sex and the City* episode “La Douleur Exquise” (Season 2, Episode 12) for our Week 9 class
- You will need to stream/rent Andrew Stanton’s 2008 animated film *Wall-E* for our Week 13 class

Evaluation:

Midterm Exam	35%	February 25th
Final Exam	35%	Date TBA
Online Reflections	2 x 15%	Date Assigned

WebCT OWL:

OWL will be our primary tool for class communication. Course materials will be posted on the site weekly, alongside various tools for online engagement which students will be expected to engage with on a weekly basis. Class announcements and assignments will be posted on our OWL site, including the midterm exam. Be sure to check the site regularly for updates.

Course 'Attendance'/Forum Postings:

This course will run online; however, we have been scheduled a weekly time-slot for the course. Though there will be no live lectures for this class, this scheduled time-slot will dictate:

- the weekly date/time when course materials will be posted
- the weekly deadlines for forum submissions
- the date/time for the timed midterm exam
- any scheduled non-mandatory clarification sessions

Thus, live attendance will not be necessary every week, but students will nonetheless have to log-in and participate in weekly forums, access to which will close before the next class – thus, it will be necessary to log in to our OWL section weekly.

University Senate policy clearly indicates expectations for regular attendance in class, and penalties for chronic absence. In our class, attendance is defined as logging in to the course site on a weekly basis, participating by posting to weekly forums (which are not graded but count as course attendance), and attending any mandatory synchronous class sessions (ie. midterm exam). A record of such 'attendance' will be kept by the instructor. A student who fails to login to the course OWL site on a weekly basis and fails to engage with the participatory components of the course, may be debarred from submitting the final reflection and/or writing the course examination. Such students will receive a written warning in the form of an email prior to the course drop date (March 14th, 2021).

Email Policy:

Students must regularly check the course website on OWL and possibly their UWO accounts for important announcements such as additional information regarding assignments or other changes.

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. Assignments must be submitted via OWL using the appropriate link and in accordance with the listed deadlines.

Email communication should be restricted to questions or concerns that can be quickly and easily addressed via email. If you need help with course concepts or would like detailed advice on assignments, then you are welcome to schedule a meeting with me during my Zoom office hours or set up a Zoom appointment. I cannot provide such feedback via email.

Email correspondence should have MIT 2151 in the subject headline. I will respond to emails sent to my UWO account within two working days; however, keep in mind that 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.

Late Assignment Policy:

Late reflections will not be accepted. You are required to upload your reflection to the course OWL site by the posted deadline. If you fail to do so, you will receive a grade of zero on the assignment; no exceptions will be made.

SRA:

According to the Student Academic Handbook, SRAs begin at midnight (12:00am) on the first requested day and end at 11:59pm on the following day. Thus, should you log an SRA for a course reflection, which is due on Thursdays at 10:30am, your SRA would expire on Friday at 11:59pm. With the SRA, your new deadline for the reflection would be Saturday at 10:30am. Please note, however, that you must email me about your SRA in advance (preferably on Thursday) so that I can set up a new submission link for you.

Make-Up Exam Session:

Our midterm exam will take place during our regular scheduled class time via OWL. By registering for a course that follows a weekly schedule, you are indicating that you are available to write the exam when it has been scheduled; you must plan accordingly.

As our midterm exam is worth 35%, students will not be able to use an SRA to excuse themselves from the exam; additionally, SRAs cannot be used during the final examination period. For those students whose official accommodations allow them to reschedule the exam, I will reschedule a single re-write session via OWL; the timing of that session will be determined by the soonest availability of the students writing the exam. Please note that the format of the make-up exam may not be the same as the official course exam.

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 March 12th, 2021. Students can find details about this academic policy here:

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.

See the posted “Notes from the Dean’s Office” on OWL for more information on FIMS grading policy.

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.”

Plagiarism

Please be sure to review the policy on plagiarism in the “Notes from the Dean’s Office” document posted on OWL. I will add that 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 will not be tolerated, and all plagiarised assignments will receive a grade of zero. Turnitin will detect the plagiarism for me, so the process is automatic. Note that Turnitin will flag any passages and/or phrasing that is lifted from online sources.

Copyrighted Course Materials

Please note that I own the teaching materials posted on our OWL site – this includes PowerPoints, notes, and recorded lectures. Students are prohibited from posting these materials or sharing these materials without my consent. Making copies or recordings of my posted teaching materials is prohibited.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
Week 1: Introduction	Jan 14	Read: -Twitchell's "Two Cheers for Materialism" (OWL) Optional Viewing: - <i>Mad Men</i> "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" S1E1 (stream/rent) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 2: The Psychology of Shopping	Jan 21 *1	Read: -Bernays' "The Psychology of Public Relations." (OWL) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 3: The Sociology of Shopping	Jan 28 *1	Read: -Lindstrom's "I'll Have What She's Having" (OWL) -excerpt from Thomas' <i>Deluxe</i> (OWL) Listen: - <i>Planet Money</i> podcast: Episode 672, Nov 10 2017 "Bagging the Birkin" (available online) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 4: The Geography of Shopping	Feb 4 *1	Read: -Gladwell's "The Science of Shopping" (OWL) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 5: The Psychopathy of Shopping	Feb 11 *1	Read: -Lindstrom's "Peddling Panic and Paranoia" (OWL) View: - <i>The Men Who Made Us Spend – Part 3</i> (YouTube)
Week 6:	Feb 15 - 19	READING WEEK
Week 7:	Feb 25	EXAM

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
Week 8: The Female Consumer I	Mar 4 *1	Read: -Rossetti's "Goblin Market" (OWL) -Veblen's "Dress as an Expression of the Pecuniary Culture" (OWL) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 9: The Female Consumer II	Mar 11 *2	Read: -excerpt from Kinsella's <i>Confessions of a Shopaholic</i> (OWL) View: - <i>Sex and the City</i> "La Douleur Exquise," S2E12 (stream/rent) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 10: The Male Consumer I	Mar 18 *2	Read: -Gladwell's "Listening to Khakis" (OWL) -excerpt from Ellis's <i>American Psycho</i> (OWL) -first half of Palahniuk's <i>Fight Club</i> (course text) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 11: The Male Consumer II	Mar 25 *2	Read: -second half of Palahniuk's <i>Fight Club</i> (course text) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 12: The Contemporary Kidult	Apr 1 *2	Read: -Barber's "Capitalism Triumphant and the Infantilist Ethos" and Sternbergh's "Forever Youngish" (both on OWL) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Week 13: Corporations and Consumers	Apr 8 *2	Read: -Forster's "The Machine Stops" (OWL) View: -2008 Pixar film <i>Wall-E</i> (stream/rent) Forum Question Posted (due before next class)
Examination Period		Please note that the date of the Final Exam will be posted by the Registrar's Office

*1 indicates when the first round of prompts for the online responses will be posted online (due the following week)
-students will be assigned one of the five listed prompt dates: January 21, 28, February 4, 11, or March 4

*2 indicates when the second round of prompts for the online responses will be posted online (due following week)
-students will be assigned one of the five listed prompt dates: March 11, 18, 25, April 1, or 8