

The University of Western Ontario  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

**MIT 3207G (001)**  
**Children, Advertising & Consumer Culture**  
**Winter 2021**



**Time and Place:** Tuesdays 2:30 – 4:30pm Online via our OWL course site

**Professor:** Dr. Selma A. Purac ([spurac2@uwo.ca](mailto:spurac2@uwo.ca))

Office Hours: TBA, online via Zoom

Or meetings by scheduled Zoom 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

**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. Additional exercises and forums 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, such as group presentations (which will be attended live by the presenters and the assigned respondents of both groups for that week) and the course midterm. Students will be informed in advance of any synchronous course delivery. Assignments will be submitted to me via OWL.

**Required Texts:**

Course readings are all either accessible online or posted on OWL

**Evaluation:**

Essay #1	20%	February 2nd
Exam	25%	March 2nd
Essay #2	30%	April 6th
Group Presentation	15%	Student Sign-Up
Presentation Response	5%	Date Assigned
Forum/Discussions	5%	Ongoing

**WebCT OWL:**

OWL will be our primary tool for class communication. Course materials will be posted on the site weekly, alongside forums and discussions 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 – and, as noted above – some mandatory live sessions will be scheduled through OWL. Be sure to check the site regularly for updates.

**'Attendance' and Participation Policy:**

This course will run online through our OWL site; however, we have been scheduled a weekly time-slot for the course, during which some synchronous course components will take place. These course components will consist of group presentations (which will be attended live by the presenters and assigned respondents of both groups for the week – not the entire class) and the midterm exam. Thus, live attendance will not be necessary every week, but students will nonetheless have to log-in and participate in weekly forums/discussions, 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/discussions, and attending any mandatory synchronous class sessions. 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 assignment 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 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

**Forums:**

We will have class 'discussions' in the "Forums" section of our OWL site. I will post discussion prompts here most weeks (dates are outlined in the syllabus), and you will post your response before the following week's class; extensions will not be offered on these postings. Most weeks, I will post a casual question or two about your own thoughts and experiences in relation to the children's market; your responses to these kinds of questions will not take all that long – nor will they require any kind of additional reading. Other weeks, however, I might ask for a brief analysis of something I have posted, which might take you a little longer to complete. Contributing to the Forum is mandatory for your participation grade; to keep things streamlined, you will not be required to respond to other student postings. See the information posted under the Assignments tab of our OWL site.

Because this is an online course, you are expected to check into the OWL site on a regular basis, to read the posted material, participate in online discussions, and to take part in any posted exercises. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements will result in deductions to your participation grade in the course.

**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.

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 meet up with me during my Zoom office hours or set up a Zoom appointment with me. I cannot provide such feedback via email.

Email correspondence should have MIT 3207 in the subject headline. 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.

**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 work, which would be due on Tuesday at 2:30pm, your SRA would expire on Wednesday at 11:59pm. With the SRA, your new deadline for that work would be Thursday at 2:30pm. Please note, however, that you must email me about your SRA in advance (preferably on Tuesday) 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. 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 you will not be writing the same exam as the rest of the class, and the format of the make-up exam will 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 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. 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.

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

**Late Assignment Policy:**

Please note that assignments need to be uploaded to OWL prior to the posted deadline. I do not accept 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 accommodations through their Academic Adviser. 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 assignment to be considered.

**Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording:**

Remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded; in our case, this will consist of the group presentation sessions, which will be posted to OWL barring any technical difficulties. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

**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.

**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 and requires very little work from me. 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.

## MIT3207G: Children, Advertising & Consumer Culture

### **GROUP PRESENTATION (worth 15%)**

In groups of three, you will prepare a 20-25 minute class presentation, followed by a discussion with your assigned respondents. The presentation dates are listed below – two groups of three students each will present on these dates. You can sign up individually for a presentation slot under the “Sign Up” tab of our OWL site.

Groups will deliver their presentation live via Zoom during our scheduled class hours; thus, I recommend that groups practice using Zoom and the ‘screen share’ function. These live presentations will not be attended by the entire class; they will be attended by the week’s presenters, me, and the week’s assigned student respondents for each group. Barring technical difficulties, recordings of the presentations will then be posted online on our OWL site so that the rest of the class can access them asynchronously.

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 related to the children’s market, 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 topic sign-up sheet (throughout the term, an updated version of the sign-up sheet can be found on our OWL site under the “Resources” tab). Also, keep in mind that your essay content cannot overlap with your presentation content. 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. However, if you wish to claim a topic/brand before anyone else in the class does, let me know as soon as possible and I will update your topic on the “Sign Up Sheet” posted under the Resources tab of our OWL site. Once you have claimed a topic, it belongs to you – no other group can infringe on your chosen subject.

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

#### 1. General Topic: Advertising and Infants (Feb 2)

-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

\*note: this presentation date coincides with the due date for the first essay; thus, students presenting this week will automatically receive a week-long extension on their essay.

#### 2. General Topic: Marketing Infiltration of the Education System (Feb 9)

-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 23)

-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 (Mar 9)

-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 16)

-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 23)

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

7. General Topic: Selling Food to Children (Mar 30)

-possible topics include: snack-food packaging and in-store-placement, cartoon-tie-ins in food advertising campaigns, school lunch programs, marketing after-school snacks, cereal

**MIT3207G: Children, Advertising & Consumer Culture**

**PRESENTATION RESPONDENTS (worth 5%)**

Presentation Respondents will drive the post-presentation discussion, asking questions of their assigned group and engaging with presenters as well as with the material outlined during the presentation. Thus, Respondents will be responsible for ensuring that they complete the readings for the week in advance of class, attending a live presentation session via Zoom (scheduled during class hours), listening carefully to the presentation, asking thoughtful questions after the presentation, and engaging with the discussion that follows. Respondents should contribute something meaningful to the discussion, and they will be marked according to the nature of their engagement.

You will be a Respondent for the other group presenting on the same day as your presentation. Thus, positions will be swapped: for the first half of the presentation session, Group 1 will present and Group 2 will respond, and we will then switch; Group 2 will present and Group 1 will respond. Please note, however, that Respondents will be marked individually rather than as a group.

Factors that I will take into consideration when grading the Respondent:

- Frequency (does the Respondent comment/ask questions?)
- Questions (are the Respondent's questions thoughtful and insightful?)
- Follow Up (does the Respondent continue to engage with the discussion?)
- Making Connections (does the Respondent demonstrate a wider knowledge of course materials?)

**NOTICE OF RECORDING**

As noted above, the presentation/question sessions will be recorded by the instructor and then posted to our OWL site. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals participating in the course for their private or group study purposes. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in the course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<p><b>Week 1:</b> Intro: The Kids are Alright?</p>	<p>Jan 12</p>	<p>Case Study: Goldieblox</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 2:</b> Buyers and Babies: Psychology and Advertising</p>	<p>Jan 19</p>	<p>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>)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 3:</b> Cradles and Consumers: Rethinking Childhood</p>	<p>Jan 26</p>	<p>Case Studies: Candyland and Froot Loops</p> <p>Readings: -Schor "The Changing World of Children's Consumption" (OWL) -Montgomery "Digital Kids" (OWL)</p>
<p><b>Week 4:</b> Mini-Me: Branding Our Babies</p>	<p>Feb 2</p>	<p>Case Studies: Baby Einstein and Teletubbies</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>Readings: -Gregory-Thomas "There's a New Mom in Town" (available online through Google Books) -Gregory-Thomas "It's Like Preschool on TV" (OWL)</p> <p><b>ESSAY 1 DUE</b></p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 5:</b> Getting Schooled: Commercializing Education</p>	<p>Feb 9</p>	<p>Case Studies: <i>Sesame Street/Blues Clues</i> and Crayola</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>Readings: -Gladwell "The Stickiness Factor" (OWL) -Roth "Flesh in Wax" (OWL)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 6:</b></p>	<p>Feb 15-19</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>READING WEEK</b></p>



<p><b>Week 7:</b>  <b>From Elmo to Emo:</b>  <b>The Terrible Tweens</b></p>	<p>Feb 23</p>	<p>Case Studies: cell phone marketing  Presentations  Readings:  -McDonnell "March of the Tweens" (OWL)</p>
<p><b>Week 8:</b></p>	<p>Mar 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EXAM</b></p>
<p><b>Week 9:</b>  <b>Kidfluence:</b>  <b>The Autonomous Child Consumer</b></p>	<p>Mar 9</p>	<p>Case Studies: Car Advertising and LEGO  Presentations  Readings:  -Sutherland &amp; Thompson "Kids Influencing Family Purchases" (OWL)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 10:</b>  <b>So Sexy So Soon:</b>  <b>Selling Sex to Children</b></p>	<p>Mar 16</p>	<p>Case Studies: Bratz/Barbie and Disney  Presentations  Reading:  -Linn "Sex as Commodity" (OWL)  -Murnen "Fashion or Action" (OWL)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 11:</b>  <b>Running with Scissors:</b>  <b>Marketing Violence to Kids</b></p>	<p>Mar 23</p>	<p>Case Studies: Toy Guns/NERF  Presentations  Reading:  -Bakan "Whack Your Soul Mate and Boneless Girl" (OWL)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<p><b>Week 12:</b>  <b>Childish Appetites:</b>  <b>Eating Our Way Towards Adulthood</b></p>	<p>Mar 30</p>	<p>Case Studies: McDonalds and Coke  Presentations  Reading:  -Linn "Through Thick and Thin: The Weighty Problem of Food Marketing" (OWL)</p>
<p><b>Week 13:</b>  <b>Are the Kids Really Alright?</b></p>	<p>Apr 6</p>	<p>Case Studies: Cream of Wheat and Lunchables  No Readings</p> <p><b>ESSAY 2 DUE</b></p>