Rhetoric is the art … that deals with the use of discourse … to persuade … an audience… Ad-writers are some of the most skilled rhetoricians in our society.

Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors

Roberto Franzosi

Office Room No. 212 Tarbutton Hall
Email rfranzo@emory.edu
Lectures Tu–Th 4:00–5:15 Tarbutton Hall 218
Office Hours Tu–Th 2:30–4:00 or by appointment
(please, use email for contacts)

TA Katharine Tatum
Email kmtatum@emory.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to provide an introduction to the study of advertising. The course deals with contemporary societies, although it does trace the historical development of advertising and its role in consumer society. The course focuses on how to “read” advertisements (rhetorically, linguistically, semiotically). Students will put into practice what they learn in the course in individual presentations of specific advertisements (case studies) and in a group research project on a comparative analysis of a set of advertisements.

Learning outcomes

By the end of term, students are expected to be able to:

1. Interpret the role of colours, structure, and position of objects in space in an advertisement
2. Identify the relation between text and pictures
3. Identify the difference between open and closed texts
4. Spot intertextual frames
5. Interpret an advertisement in terms of both text and con.text (i.e., with text, Latin *cum*)
6. Spot ouvert and covert meaning in advertising messages
7. Identify and recount the story told in an advertisement
8. Identify the type of story told (e.g., tragedy, comedy)
9. Identify the rhetorical figures used in an advertisement
10. Recognize the possible sexist, racist, nationalist nature of an advertisement
11. Be aware of the historical embedment of advertising (and of the importance of history)
12. Be aware of the cultural embedment of advertising
13. Be aware of the ideological embedment of advertising
14. Find answers to the question: How else could it be?
15. Find answers to the question: Who benefits (cui prodest)?

In addition, students will learn:

1. To work in teams
2. To work with cases
3. To make public presentations before an audience
4. To view things from different perspectives
5. To develop critical thinking
6. To design and carry out a research project aimed to test specific hypotheses
7. To write a research report
8. To be aware of the implications of different rhetorical strategies for writing a text

More generally, you will also learn how to read and write, how to ask questions, how to behave in a classroom, to manage your time. Hadn’t I told you all the things you learn in this course you would have most likely missed them. In my days, no one told you these things in a syllabus and you spent an entire term learning absolutely nothing. What a waste of time universities used to be! Aren’t you lucky you came to Emory now? ☺

Welcome to the world of Max Weber’s bureaucratic rationalization. And, yes, by all means, add to the list: “students will learn the use of irony” (one of the fundamental tropes of rhetoric, something you will also learn in the course).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Requirements

The course requires students:
1) To attend and participate in the class;
2) to take an exam;
3) to carry out a group research project, present it in class, and write a project report.

Deadlines and important dates

First day of class January 10
End of Add/Drop/Swap: January 17
Group composition: List of participants due January 22, at midnight
Project description: Project description due February 5, at midnight
Spring break: March 6-10
Last day of class: April 24
Take-home exam: Exam due April 9, at midnight
Project presentations: April 18, 20, 20, 23 (20 mins each)

Grading

Grading will be based on the following items:

1. **Bonus points.** Extra points can be gained for students who want to present and discuss an ad in front of the class. To receive bonus points, ads must be selected according to the week’s topic and contextualized in the week’s readings. **Bonus points will only be used to help students who are borderline between final grades.**

2. **Take-home exam (45%).** Students are expected to take an exam based on the readings, lectures, in-class discussions, and documentaries. The exam is a take-home and will most likely require you to comment on a commercial or advertisement. **The essay should not exceed five double-spaced pages (excluding references and figures).** The advert should be discussed with references to the readings done for the course (and only those!). **10 to 20 scholarly citations are expected to be discussed coming from different weekly topics of the syllabus. Without a deep discussion of the scholarly literature your grade will not go above a C.**

3. **Participation (10%).** Students are expected to contribute to class discussions and will be evaluated on their participation.

4. **Group research project (45%).** Students are expected to work in groups (for a total of 10 groups of 4 students each) on a research project dealing with any of the topics covered in the course.
   a. **A one-page project description** detailing the problem, the contextual literature, and data (in particular, the ad sources) and methods used will be due at the end of week 4.
   b. **The final report should not exceed 10 double spaced pages maximum (excluding references and figures). Without a deep discussion of the scholarly literature your grade will not go above a C.**

For the group project, each group will need to submit a statement where they outline the contributions made by each member of the group (e.g., Paula: attended 1 meeting out of 4; read and summarized 3 journal articles; Kevin: attended 4 meetings out of 4; coded the data collected; Tracy: attended 4 meetings out of 4; wrote the first draft; Alexandra: never attended meetings; edited the final draft) and the percentage of effort expended by each in relation to other members (e.g., Paula 90%, Kevin 100%, Tracy, 100%, Alexandra 20%). Individual grades for the group project will reflect individual effort.
Attendance to project presentations at the end of term is mandatory. Failure to attend for any reason will lead to an automatic F in participation (10% of final grade).

Students who are not satisfied with a grade received are welcome to ask for re-grading for well-motivated reasons. The result of re-grading may be a higher grade, the same grade, or a lower grade.

Group research project

Students are expected to work in groups (consisting of approximately 4 students) on a project based on the comparative analysis of a set of at least fifty advertisements. Groups will make in-class presentations of their projects at the end of term and submit a final research report; 10 double spaced pages maximum (excluding references and figures). The research report should be of the type described in the journal articles that you have to read in the course. These articles typically take a comparative approach (e.g., across countries, over time, across magazines). Comparison will give you the best way to find different patterns in your data. For instance, you could study how male bodies (perhaps from different races) are represented in men’s and women’s magazines (or in magazines that target men and women of different age, social status, or race). Conversely, you could study the representation of female bodies. You could look at whether certain types of advertisements may prefer a comic emplotment (e.g., condoms). You could look at how different car manufacturers, which target different consumer markets, advertise their products. You could look at whether rhetorical strategies have changed overtime (comic or tragic story emplotment) in a set of adverts. Once you have zoomed in on a topic, you will need to draw a sample of at least fifty adverts that you will then analyze using content analysis as a technique for collecting your data. For this, you will need to design a coding scheme, based on a set of different coding categories that allow you to extract information from your adverts and, perhaps, to test specific hypotheses that you have in mind. You can put these coding categories in an Excel spreadsheet and apply this scheme consistently to each advert in your sample (putting each advert in a new column). Once you have completed data collection, you can analyze the data with simple Excel graphical tools (pie charts or bar charts, percentages). You will report your findings in a final research report. This report should have the basic structure of any of the journal articles assigned in the course, namely a statement of the problem (why you have chosen a specific issue to study), literature review (i.e., whether and how the problems has been studied already in the literature), data and method (here you report your coding scheme design and coding categories; each of the articles you read will give you an example of coding scheme); empirical results (where you report your findings), and conclusions. In discussing your findings and drawing your conclusions, please, make sure you use the concepts, articles, and tools learned from the readings.

The literature review section of the final paper is expected to have an extensive discussion of the scholarly literature available on the specific topic plus a more general discussion of the broader literature. At least 30 scholarly citations are expected to be discussed coming from different weekly topics of the syllabus.
Presentations. Groups are expected to make a presentation of their project at the end of term based on PowerPoint, illustrating the overall project and its findings.
   a. Presentations are not graded. Each presentation is allotted 20 minutes.
   b. Presence of all students at all presentations is mandatory. Points will be detracted from the final grade.

Hints at data sources

1. For a list of websites of advertisements, History Matters, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/ads/online.html
2. The ANA Educational Foundation (AEF) www.aef.com with a collection of advertisements
4. Archive of advertisements, American Marketing Association https://archive.ama.org/archive/Community/ARC/Pages/Additional/History/AdArchives.aspx
7. Coloribus archive https://www.coloribus.com/
10. Creativity http://creativity-online.com/
11. Adverlicious http://adverlicio.us/

Guest speaker

There are likely to be guest speakers in the course. Watch this space!

Honor code

The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you sign an exam or submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult the Emory website.

Readings

Readings for the course come from books and journal articles or book chapters. All reading material has been placed on reserve.

Readings have been separated in the syllabus into Required Readings and Suggested Readings. Suggested readings are only meant to provide a minimal bibliography. For the
purpose of your grade, you are not expected to read them (unless, of course, you are a glutton for punishment! Although … it is also true that the more you read, the more you know… and the better you would do in your presentations and written work).

**Required books**


**Highly recommended books** (out of print but available on the web as used books and placed on reserve at the Emory Library)


**Documentaries**


*Dove-Evolution* [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFPGa0pKyTg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFPGa0pKyTg) (3 mins.)

*Barry Schwartz: The paradox of choice* Ted Talk  
Considering a career in advertising? You may then consider taking advertising courses at SCAD Atlanta

For those of you who want to pursue a career in advertising, you may want to consider taking courses at SCAD Atlanta (Savannah College of Art and Design, Atlanta campus). SCAD is one of the leading art institutes in the country. SCAD’s program in advertising (http://www.scad.edu/advertising/) offers a range of courses in creative copywriting, strategic planning, business and integrated brand marketing.

Students at Emory can take courses at SCAD (e.g., in advertising) at no extra expense (as part of their tuition) and with full recognition of the credits taken at SCAD. SCAD and Emory are members of the ARCHE program, a cross-registration program sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education. You can find more information about ARCHE at http://registrar.emory.edu/students/arche.html For a list of all participating schools through ARCHE: http://www.atlantahighered.org/Collaboration/CrossRegistration/ParticipatingInstitutions/tabid/611/Default.aspx

Interested students should get in touch with the Registrar office at Emory. They have the appropriate forms and will work directly with the registrar at SCAD, Atlanta.
COURSE OUTLINE

1. Getting started: How to read advertisements (Week 1)
2. A first look at gender and race in advertising (Weeks 2-3)
   a. Gender portrayals in advertising (Week 2)
   b. The representation of race (Week 3)
3. Telling a story and telling it well (Weeks 4-6)
   a. Telling a story: Advertising and narrative (Week 4)
   b. Telling it well: The rhetoric of advertising (Week 5)
   c. Sexing it up: Sources of rhetorical appeal (Week 6)
4. The land (and system) of plenty: Advertising in historical perspective (Week 7)
5. Advertising the Self: Social Media and dating apps (Week 8)
   **Week 9 (March 7-9) SPRING BREAK**
6. Advertising in cross-cultural perspective (Week 10-11)
7. Getting them young: Children and advertising (Week 12)
8. Political advertising (Week 13)
9. Advertising: Selling more than just commodities? Back to gender and race (Week 14)
10. Group project presentations (Weeks 15-16)
Week 1 (January 10-12)

1. Getting started: How to read advertisements

Required readings:


Suggested readings:


Weeks 2-3

2. A first look at gender and race in advertising

Week 2 (January 17-19)

2.a. Gender portrayals in advertising

Required readings:

Suggested readings:


Documentaries


Available on Youtube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svpMan9cWyo&feature=PlayList&p=AFABCDC996E90362&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=2 (Part 1, 10 mins.)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbFvCXd667 (Part 4, 4:14 mins.)

Dove-Evolution http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFPGa0pKyTg (3 mins.)

Week 3 (January 24-26)

2.b. The representation of race

Required readings:


Suggested readings:


Weeks 4-6
3. Telling a story and telling it well

Week 4 (January 31 - February 2)
3.a. Telling a story: Advertising and narrative

*Required readings:*


*Suggested readings:*


Week 5 (February 7-9)
3.b. Telling it well: The rhetoric of advertising

Required readings:


Suggested readings:


Week 6 (February 14-16)
3.c. Sexing it up: Sources of rhetorical appeal

Required readings:


Suggested readings:


**Week 7 (February 21-23)**
The land (and system) of plenty: Advertising in historical perspective

**Required readings:**


**Barry Schwartz: The paradox of choice** (Ted Talk)
[https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_on_the_paradox_of_choice](https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_on_the_paradox_of_choice)

**Suggested readings:**


**Week 8 (February 28-March 2)**

**Advertising the Self: Social Media and dating apps**

*Required readings:*

Smith, Aaron and Monica Anderson. 2016. “5 facts about online dating.”


*Suggested readings:*


Week 9 (March 7-9) SPRING BREAK !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Weeks 10-11
Week 10 (March 14-16)
Week 11 (March 21-23)

6. Advertising in cross-cultural perspective

Required readings:


*Suggested readings:*


**Week 12 (March 28-30)**

**5. Advertising: Selling more than just commodities? Back to gender and race**

**5.a. Gender**

*Required readings:*


*Suggested readings:*


5.b. Race

Required readings:


Suggested readings:


Week 13 (April 4-6)

7. Getting them young: Children and advertising

7a. Gender & race

Required readings:


*Suggested readings:*


### 7b. Food and obesity


**Week 14 (April 11-13)**

6. Political advertising

*Required readings:*


*Suggested readings:*


**Week 15 (April 18-20)**
Group project presentations

Week 16 (April 23)

Group project presentations