The Discourse of Advertising
English 408B
University of Waterloo
Winter Term 2012

Instructor:  Dr. Gordon Slethaug
Classroom:  RCH 206
Day & Time: Tues, Thur 11:30-12:50

Course Description:
This course takes a rhetorical approach to the study of advertising, emphasizing questions of purpose, audience, context, language, design, medium, and delivery. Students will study important contributors to theories of meaning in language and semiotics, will examine recent developments in advertising practices, and will learn techniques for critical analysis. You will be expected to develop the vocabulary and tools to critically analyze advertisements.

Assignments and Valuations
- Read the materials in advance to understand the concepts under consideration and contribute to class discussion (10%)
- Write two short exercises of 5 pages each on:
  - Semiotics theory applied to advertising (10%)
  - Research, describe and analyze your preferred strategy of advertising (10%)
- Submit and analyze a “remix” or subadvertisement of an existing ad campaign—7-10 pages (30%). That is, take a prominent ad campaign and, using the critical tools we’ve discussed, develop ways to improve upon it, shift it across mediums, repurpose it, or subvert its message.
- Develop, analyze, and reflect upon your own ad campaign—10+ pages (40%)
  You will be expected to move from a researched strategy to a creative brief, to a series of concepts, to a campaign portfolio, including a “long copy” advertisement and poster. You will also write a short reflection on your creative process.

Course Texts:
The basic text for the course is Barry, Pete. 2008. The Advertising Concept Book. New York: Thames and Hudson. Other readings for the course will be in the reserve section of the Arts Library.
Schedule

Jan. 3, 5: Week 1—Introduction to the Course

Jan. 10, 12: Week 2—Fundamentals of the Discourse of Advertising
http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html

PPT
Workshop: Apply semiotics theory to cartoons and/or ads

Jan. 24, 26: Week 4—Basic Tools of Advertising

• Write a short paper applying semiotics to advertising

Jan 31, Feb. 2: Week 5—Advertising and the Media

Feb. 7, 9: Week 6—The Campaign

• Submit a strategy statement

Feb 14, 16: Week 7—Rhetorical Views of Advertising


• Begin research on a specific campaign

Feb. 21, 23: Spring Break

Feb. 28, March 1: Week 8—Ideology and Advertising
- Remix and/or subertisement plus analysis of existing ad campaign

Mar. 6, 8: Week 9—Gender and Advertising

Mar 13, 15: Week 10—A Short History of Consumption
PPT “American and Global Consumerism”

Mar. 20, 22: Week 11—The Globalization of Advertising

Mar. 27, 29: Week 12: Conclusion
- Major campaigns due last day of class