Welcome to Com 243G: On-Line

*Life Begins at Consumption: How advertising infiltrates our personal, cultural, global, and environmental landscapes*

## **Instructor**: Kristine Cabral

**E-mail**: [cabral@uri.edu](mailto:cabral@uri.edu) (I check my e-mail several times per day, thus you will always hear back from me within hours). I am also happy to exchange phone numbers, as well as set up Zoom office hours.

**Course Overview**: We will be analyzing advertising as a medium through which corporate economic interests are advanced. Both the prevalence and the strategies of today’s advertising industry require new ways of seeing and new ways of thinking about what we are seeing…we have to be ready as viewers to not only see the images but to see through them.. This course is designed to be a cultural studies course, which will examine the representations, discourses, and images presented within mass media. One of the challenges of this course will be to question what we have become within this mediated system of consumer oriented messages and to give some thought to the health, validity, and consequence of these messages. Rampant consumerism promoted by relentless advertising campaigns has profound consequences on each of us. This course asks us to confront our society's unrelenting focus on economic growth, its insatiable appetite for consumer goods and the personal, social, global, and environmental challenges that await if we don't begin to do so.

**Course Objectives**:

1. Gain broader critical-sociological perspectives on media’s influence on self, culture, and the environment
2. Identify strategies through which advertisers influence our understanding of the world
3. Strengthen critical thinking skills
4. Foster critical self-reflection
5. Pose moral and ethical questions raised by contemporary mass media
6. Demonstrate an understanding of our role as American consumers in a global society and formulate a personal philosophy that furthers individual, cultural, and global change

**Course Requirements:**

**Reading responses (75%)**

Students will be assigned 5 readings over the course of our 5 weeks together, for which you will write a reaction paper. To understand how to format responses, see the Assignments tool within BrightSpace.

**Documentary viewing (25%)**

Students will be required to view 5 documentaries over the course of our 5 weeks together. Student should summarize the documentary content as well as share personal reflections about what they have seen. Details found within the Assignments tool.

\*One of the above assignments can be submitted late (without penalty). If more than one assignment is late, I will still accept it but there will be a 15-point deduction from the grade. If you do submit something late, I must have it within **one week** of the original due date.

**\*\*A message regarding academic integrity: Any student found plagiarizing a former student’s work (I have copies of all student work on previous semesters BS pages) or plagiarizing in any form whatsoever, including use of artificial intelligence), will automatically fail this course and I will submit notification to the Dean of your College for further action. I have a zero-tolerance policy. Please, take me seriously because I am serious.**

### **What will you need to be successful in this course?**

**1**. **Self-discipline**: To be a successful online learner, you must be able to motivate yourself to log in, be attentive to deadlines and assignments, and do the work. If possible, designate a time and place in which to complete the assignments. It is helpful to dedicate certain hours of the day, as well as a find a place where you can read and work relatively undisturbed.

**2**. **University level writing skills**: *Effective writing skills are a requisite for this course.* Reading responses should be well structured; include an effective summary of the material; a well-articulated analysis of the author’s argument(s); quotes from within the reading; and an appropriate conclusion (including your thoughts and questions about the material). *If responses are poorly written, you will only receive partial credit for the assignment.*

**3**. **Time:** this is a 14-week course, condensed to 5 weeks.There will be weekly reading, writing, and documentary viewing. Plan to spend 15 hours per week on this class. Consider it a part-time job.

**4**. **Confidence:** You are a university student. You are smart and strong. You are entirely capable of succeeding in an online 3-credit, five-week course. Don't forget that.

**Weekly Schedule**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Due** |
| **Week 1**  5/22-5/26 | **Assign Reading: *The Spectacle of Accumulation* & Documentary #1: *Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse*** | *Answers to The Spectacle of Accumulation* questions  Documentary response due: *Advertising at the Edge* |
| **Week 2**  5/30-6/2 | **Assign Reading: *Affluenza, How the world embraced consumerism* &**  **Documentary #2 *Shopping for Freedom*** | Reading Response: *Affluenza chapters 14 & 15 and* [*https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-history-of-consumer-culture/*](https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-history-of-consumer-culture/)  Documentary response: *Shopping for Freedom* |
| **Week 3**  6/5-6/9 | **Assign Reading: *Sugar-Coating Science &* Documentary *#3 Feeding Frenzy*** | Reading Response: Sugar-Coating Science  *Documentary response: Feeding Frenzy* |
| **Week 4**  6/12-6/16 | **Assign Reading: *Affluenza***  ***&* Documentary #4**  ***Poisoned Lives*** | Reading response: *Affluenza* chapters 6,8,9  Documentary response #4  *Poisoned Lives* |
| **Week 5**  6/19-6/23 | **Assign Reading *Affluenza***  **& Documentary #5 *I AM*** | Reading response: *Affluenza* chapters 18,20,24,25  Documentary response #5 |