COURSE DESCRIPTION:
As pictures became a central feature of the advertising message in the second half of the nineteenth century, they migrated from the pages of newspapers and magazines, and the posters on the sides of buildings, to such technologies as electrical spectaculards, film, and later, television. At the heart of this diffusion was an effort to make the pictorial sales message migrate not only across media but also into the minds of consumers.

This seminar explores the relationship between the material frameworks of picture-based selling and the immaterial, subjective fictions they were designed to activate. We offer a historically grounded approach to the visual operations and social effects of picture-based advertising (broadly conceived) in and between the U.S. and Europe since the nineteenth century and also consider historical practices that relate to contemporary ad techniques. The class is fundamentally interdisciplinary and will offer work in a variety of fields such as art history, business history, illustration and graphic design, marketing and consumer research, behavioral psychology, literature, and communication and media studies.

This class fulfills one of the requirements for the VSGC.
COURSE OBJECTIVES: To raise and answer the following questions:

- How were people expected to interact with visual layouts and displays in specific material frameworks and social situations?
- Who were the commercial agents behind these processes, e.g. advertising agencies, consumer research consultants, corporate marketing departments, magazine publishers, industrial and graphic designers, photographers and filmmakers, etc?
- What place did technology, art theory, scientific research, and models of corporate organization have in the development of particular pictorial techniques?
- When did priorities other than immediate sales—such as storytelling about a firm or product or community-building—complicate short-term economic concerns?

Readings and Seminar Participation: Readings are extensive. Our primary task as individuals is to read with care. As a group, our goal is to engage in a discussion that helps illuminate the readings. Seminar participation will be considered an essential component of the class.

Expectations and Requirements: Students are expected to complete all required reading prior to seminar meetings and to discuss the texts and critical issues at hand during each session. Readings are in a class Dropbox (https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s18g7n4p531x8k1/AAAgCfjiRT42mN_XW2Cb6Ace?dl=0) rather than on the Blackboard. Please check this regularly as we are adding readings as we go along as some authors are contributing work in progress.

Each student must also post a “response” to the week’s readings on the class website by no later than 5 am Wednesday morning, although earlier posts are welcomed. (https://www.usc-visual-studies-class.org) Students are also expected to read each other’s responses before class and thus we may need to adjust the deadline for submission based on the needs of the group. A response can be a critical summary of the readings, a series of questions, complaints, rants. The idea behind them is to ask each student to take some time to reflect on the week’s readings and to share those thoughts with the class before we meet as a starting point for discussion, which we will organize and lead.

Additionally, during the first six weeks of class, we will have a “research report” by one or two students (ten minutes each), in which they share research sources (digital or otherwise) for further development. The idea here is that each student will spend a few hours looking at available sources, sharing those with the class, and then posting a “report” after class to the website. One example is a dive into this source: https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/hartman

Special Events and Lectures: As part of this seminar, you are expected to attend at least three special events held outside class time sponsored by the VSRI, but it is preferable that you attend them all.

Grading:
Weekly Posts: 20%
Seminar: 30%
Final paper: 40%
Contribution to VSRI activities: 10%
Schedule of VSRI Activities: * denotes Commercial Pictures theme

Co-sponsored event
Wednesday, January 15, 2020
6:00 pm – 8:00pm
Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film (Duke University Press, 2019): a screening and discussion
SCA 110
Overlooked by most narratives of American cinema, the volume Screening Race in American Nontheatrical Film adds to the growing study of nontheatrical films by focusing on the ways filmmakers developed and audiences encountered ideas about race, identity, politics, and community outside the borders of theatrical cinema. Join us for an evening of screenings and discussion, featuring educational and sponsored films from USC’s own archives.

*Selling the Story: Commercial Pictures and Visual Persuasion.
Wednesday, January 29
2-3:30pm
VISS 599 Seminar Visit: Work!
Elspeth H. Brown, Professor of History, University of Toronto
SOS 250

*USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
Thursday, January 30
7-8:30pm; reception to follow
Book Talk: Work! A Queer History of Modeling
Elspeth H. Brown, Professor of History, University of Toronto
Respondent: Alexis Bard Johnson, Curator, ONE Archives at the USC Libraries
ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries

VSGC
Wednesday, February 5
12:30-2:00pm
Graduate Student Research Round-Up: Research Tips and Techniques
SOS 250

USC-LACMA History of Photography Seminar
Tuesday, February 25
6-7:30pm
Philip Brookman, Consulting Curator, Department of Photographs, National Gallery of Art
Santa Monica, address provided with RSVP

*Selling the Story: Commercial Pictures and Visual Persuasion
March 11
2-5pm
Workshop: Persuasion and American Images
Organized by VSRI Postdoc, Ellen Macfarlane
THH 309K

*Selling the Story: Commercial Pictures and Visual Persuasion
April 1
2-3:30pm
VISS 599 Seminar Visit: Container Corporation’s Art Direction
Alex J. Taylor, University of Pittsburgh
SOS 250

*Selling the Story: Commercial Pictures and Visual Persuasion
April 8
2-3:30pm
VISS 599 Seminar Visit: Background Artist: Art and Immigration in the Life and Work of Tyrus Wong
Karen Fang, Professor, Department of English, University of Houston
SOS 250

VSGC: Anne Friedberg Memorial Lecture
April 15
12:30-2:00pm
The Alternative Transnational: Migration, Media and the “Bridge-Work” of Malayalam Soft-Porn
Darshana Mini, Ph.D. Candidate, Cinema and Media Studies, USC
SOS 250

*Selling the Story: Commercial Pictures and Visual Persuasion
April 15
2-3:30pm
VISS 599 Seminar Visit: How do advertising pictures persuade?
Barbara Phillips, Rawlco Editor and Professor of Marketing, University of Saskatchewan
SOS 250

EMSI Visual and Material Culture: Big Paper Seminar
April 17
9am-4pm
April 18
9am-12:30pm
Conference: Big Paper: Large Designs in the Renaissance
Huntington Library, Smith Board Room

VSRI Lecture
April 20
12:30-2:00pm
The Rhythm of Hearts: Time in City Symphony
Ori Levin, Tel Aviv University, VSRI Post-Doctoral Fellow
Respondent: Partice Petro: UC Santa Barbara
SOS 250
SCHEDULE
Seminars and Reading

PART I: OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

Jan. 15: commodity fetishism: READ FOR FIRST CLASS AND POST COMMENTS

- “Life Goes to a Party with a New York café socialite named Cynthia,” Life (December 13, 1937): 84-7. [https://books.google.com/books?id=oT8EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA84&lpg=PA84&dq=life+goes+to+a+party+with+cynthia&source=bl&ots=mg5gHduayC&sig=ACfU3U34x0oDGzElpWPAP5Y7eHCBB6Sw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwijoze2s47AhUQs7A KhZaTACgQ6AEwEiwE0oECAoQA#v=onepage&q=life%20goes%20to%20a%20party%20with%20cynthia&f=false]
- Watch “Maidenform,” episode 6, season 2 of “Mad Men” (2008).

For further consideration:

Jan. 22: the individual and the crowd

- Walter Lippman, chs. 1, 6 in Public Opinion (1922), 3-34 and 79-104: [https://archive.org/stream/publicopinion00lippgoog#page/n12/mode/2up]
- Edward Bernays, chs. 1, 3, 4 in Propaganda (1928).

For further consideration:
- Walter Dill Scott, chs. 9-14 in The Theory and Practice of Advertising: A Simple Exposition of the Principles of Psychology in Their Relation to Successful Advertising (1904). [https://archive.org/stream/advertisphycho00scochradyptphycho00scochr_djvu.txt]

Research report 1: newspaper ads

Jan 29: desire and affect (Elspeth Brown visit)

- Screen: Diana Vreeland: The Eye has to Travel (2011)

For further consideration:

Research report 2: posters

Feb 5: psychotechnics

For further consideration:

Research report 3: ads in film

Feb 12: no class (professors at College Art Association conference).

PART II: TECHNOLOGIES OF SELLING

Feb 19: brands, logos, trademarks (Jennifer Black virtual visit to class)
● Jennifer M. Black, book chapter manuscript on mid 19th century newspaper display ads (title TBD).

Research report 4: jingles

Feb 26: signage, windows (Anca Lasc virtual visit to class)

For further consideration:
● Emily Orr, Designing the Department Store: Display and Retail and the Turn of the Twentieth Century (2019).
● Sandra Zalman, ”The art of window display: Cross-promotion at Bonwit Teller and MoMA,” in Anca I. Lasc, Patricia Lara-

Research report 5: multimedia signage (such as electrical spectaculars)

March 4: slogans, stories (WWII case study)

For further consideration:

March 11: Workshop: Persuasion and American Images
Organized by Ellen Macfarlane, VSRI Mellon Postdoctoral Scholar

This workshop brings together scholars of American visual culture to present new research in the area of visual persuasion. Exploring illustration, painting, and photography in artistic and commercial contexts, the workshop is an effort to critically evaluate the role of historical images in influencing public opinion and belief. The papers consider issues including labor and visibility, national identity, and public persona to explore how different forms of media have been enlisted to narrate knowledge for an American public.

Lauren Kroiz (Associate Professor of History of Art, University of California, Berkeley)
“Living Laundry Soaps: Unruly Animation and Invisible Labor in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Advertising Trade Cards (1891-1893)”

Cara Finnegan (Professor of Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
“The Candid Camera Presidents: Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt”

Sally Stein (Professor of Art History, emerita, UCI), “For Love or Money? Gisèle Freund’s Paradoxical Turn From Her Chromophobic, Marxist Study of The Rise of 19th-century Photography in France to her Pioneering Pursuit of photographic Portraiture in Color”

Final paper proposals due on Tuesday, March 10.

March 18: no class (spring break)

March 25: lights, animation and other novelties: Visit by Dydia DeLyser

PART III: ADVERTISING’S MANY FUTURES

April 1: Branding the corporation (Alex Taylor visit)
For further consideration:
● Monica E. Jovanovich and Melissa Renn, eds, essays by Jennifer Greenhill, Alex Taylor, and others in *Corporate Patronage of Art & Architecture in the United States, Late 19th Century to the Present* (2019).

**April 8 (Passover) special time, 12:30-3:20: Tyrus Wong at Hallmark and Disney (Karen Fang visit)**
● Horowitz, "Was Hollywood Too Jewish" Tablet: [https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/242464/was-hollywood-too-jewish-jack-warner-biography](https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/242464/was-hollywood-too-jewish-jack-warner-biography)

**April 15: Consumer research (Barbara Phillips visit)**

**April 22: advertising as art exhibition (Rebecca Morse visit)**
Morse (Curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department, LACMA) to discuss forthcoming exhibition, *Objects of Desire*
● Rebecca Morse, exhibition proposal

**April 29: presentations**

FINAL PROJECT: ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN CASE STUDY: Students will each choose a single ad campaign, a genre of advertising, or a single advertising motif or artist and write a twenty-page paper on it. Students must use primary sources and focus on the visual dimension of advertising.

*Final project due: May 8, 10 am*
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421 studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710 studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.
USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.