

Fall 2009
Mw 2:30-3:50

J. G. Casey
PMH 315, x5183

AM376R: MAGAZINES AND MODERNITY

The number and variety of American magazines exploded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading historians to call this era the “golden age” of periodical development. This course will introduce you to this wealth of primary material and to the theoretical concerns of scholars who study the roles of magazines in reflecting and creating modern culture. We will read magazines as cultural documents in order to explore the rise of modern advertising; the shaping of gendered, classed, and racialized readerships; and the popular advancement, and occasional subversion, of dominant ideological perspectives (of nation, of domesticity, of labor, of consumption). We will also consider the enormous influence of certain turn-of-the-century editors and their business policies, including the sophisticated relations they created among internal magazine elements so as to streamline their cultural messages. In addition to substantial theoretical and historical reading and regular short research and writing assignments, each student will be responsible for a major semester-long project that will involve intensive study of a period magazine in the Scribner collection.

Texts:

Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (2001).

Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (2000).

Various weekly readings available on Blackboard. **Please make a copy for in-class use.

Please familiarize yourself as well with the website maintained by the Research Society for American Periodicals (RSAP), which is full of useful information and terrific links.

On Reserve:

Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*.

F. Luther Mott, *History of American Magazines*. Vol. 4 (1885-1905) and Vol. 5 (1905-1930).

Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity*.

Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and informed participation. This course will be conducted as a seminar, *not* a lecture class; its success, then, will depend upon polished student presentations and lively discussions. Please note that you are allowed to miss only one class session during the semester; further absences will compromise your final grade and may be considered grounds for failure.
2. Four short written pieces (4-6 pages each). One will provide a general descriptive overview of your chosen magazine (due 9/30); one will be an annotated bibliography in preparation for your final project (due 11/11). The other two will analyze your chosen magazine in light of a particular week's discussion topic; these will have varying due dates, and will require in-class presentations. [See separate handout.]
3. Occasional written homework as assigned.
4. Final research paper (15-20 pages). This paper may incorporate aspects of your short papers, but should also expand on those issues. A separate handout detailing this assignment will be distributed.

Discussion Schedule:**Unless otherwise indicated, readings are on Blackboard.**

- Sept. 9** Introduction; overview of requirements.
[For Monday: What do we look at when we read contemporary magazines?
Choose and report on one (1-2 typed pages).]
- 14** Magazines as cultural discourse
- 16** Historical contexts: defining the “Golden Age”
- Ohmann, “Where Did Mass Culture Come From?: The Case of Magazines”
 - Stinson, “McClure’s Road to McClure’s”
 - Alden, “Magazine Writing and the New Literature”
- 21** No class. Explore magazine choices for the research paper.
[Your top three choices are due in class on Sept. 23rd. I will make every attempt to honor first choices while also ensuring broad coverage of different magazines. You will know your magazine in time for the Research Session. If you do not submit preferences, you will be assigned a magazine.]
- 23** Historical contexts continued.
[Submit top 3 choices for final project. Check your Skidmore email on Thursday for final confirmation.]
- 28** Research Session—Scribner Library.
- Theodore Peterson, “The Logistics of Magazine Publishing”
 - Check out the Magazines Timeline at
wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/267/273900/Timeline/timeline03.html
- 30** Discussion: effective presentation techniques. Sign-ups for analytical papers/presentations. Brief discussion of magazines based on assignment below.
- ***Short Paper Due: General descriptive overview of your magazine (5-6 pages).
[Read at least three issues, at least one year apart from each other. Then write a report that provides a general overview. Identify and classify types of material within the magazines, note whether material is signed or unsigned, seek out and discuss evidence of who the intended audience is, note and investigate the publisher’s affiliations (business, religious, political). Use the standard histories of magazines to check basic facts such as circulation claims, length of time it was published and whether it bought out or was absorbed into other magazines; use biographical dictionaries to learn what you can about editors and/or regular columnists or authors.]
- Oct. 5 & 7** External Perceptions: The Magazine Cover
- Elspeth Brown, “Reading the Visual Record”

- Gerald Grow, “Magazine Covers and Cover Lines: An Illustrated History”
<<http://aejmcmagazine.bsu.edu/Testfolder/>>
- Carolyn Kitch, “The American Girl” in *The Girl on the Magazine Cover* (37-55)
- Eric J. Segal, “Norman Rockwell and the Fashioning of American Masculinity”
- For comparison purposes, check out MagazineArt.org, a free database of magazine cover art from the 19th and 20th centuries:
<<http://www.magazineart.org/>>

12 & 14 Internal Perceptions: Design and Layout

- Sally Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women’s Magazine, 1919-1939”
- Russ Castronovo, “Lynching, Aesthetics, and the *Crisis*”
- Nancy Holstead, “What’s Old is New: The Need for Historical Inspiration in Contemporary Magazine Design”

19 & 21 Editorial Visions

- Christopher P. Wilson, “Magazining for the Masses”
- Hanna Wallinger, “Pauline E. Hopkins as Editor and Journalist: An African American Story of Success and Failure”
- Edward Bok, from *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (autobiography)

26 & 28 Feature Articles (Nonfiction)

- Beth Dalia Snyder, “Confidence Women: Constructing Female Culture and Community in ‘Just Among Ourselves’ and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*”
- Archival materials related to write-in contests in *The Farmer’s Wife*

Nov. 2 & 4 Magazines and Femininity

- Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*
- Pamela Tyler, “The Ideal Southern Woman as Seen by *Progressive Farmer* in the 1930s.”

9 & 11 Magazines and Masculinity

- Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*
- Kenon Breazeale, “In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer”

***Annotated bibliography due Wednesday 11/11.

16 & 18 Fiction

- June Howard, from *Publishing the Family*
- Selections from *The Family*, published in *Harper’s*
- Janice Radway, from *Reading the Romance*

23 Advertising

- Christopher P. Wilson, “Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader”
- Richard Ohmann, “Advertising and the New Discourse of Mass Culture”

- Simone Weil Davis, “Adwomen and the Female Consumer”
- Roland Marchand, “Apostles of Modernity”
- Ellen Gruber Garvey, “Training the Reader’s Attention: Advertising Contests”

*****THANKSGIVING BREAK*****

30 Advertising continued.

Dec. 2 & 7 Race & Class

- Interactive edition of special “Harlem” issue of *Survey Graphic* (March 1925) (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/harlem/>)
- Revisit Pendergast, Chap. 3 (“From the Ground Up”)
- Susan Matt, “Frocks, Finery, and Feelings: Rural and Urban Women’s Envy, 1890-1930”
- Noliwe M. Rooks, from *Ladies’ Pages: African American Women’s Magazines and the Culture that Made Them*

9 Discussion of projects and final comments.

****FINAL PAPERS DUE IN MY OFFICE ON DEC. 16TH AT NOON****

Grade Breakdown: research paper 45%; short papers 35% total; weekly class participation (including homework) 20%. Please note that the short written assignments are designed to help you work toward successful completion of the research paper; hence a failing grade for the research paper will result in failure for the entire course.

Special Accommodations:

If you have a disability and believe you will need academic accommodations you must make requests for such accommodations to the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities, Meg Hegener (x8161; mhegener@skidmore.edu). You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request.