

Critical Reasoning, PHIL105 Fall, 2009

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Office hours: T 10-11:30; Th, F 3:30-5:00 and other times by appointment

Instructions and Questions – Hi. On Monday, November 9, (section 005) and Tuesday, November 10, (sections 012 and 014) our class will not meet, and you are assigned to watch the film FRONTLINE: *The Persuaders*, online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/view/>. This film, made for the PBS series FRONTLINE, originally aired in 2004. It "explores how the cultures of marketing and advertising have come to influence not only what Americans buy, but also how they view themselves and the world around them. The 90-minute documentary draws on a range of experts and observers of the advertising/marketing world, to examine how, in the words of one on-camera commentator, 'the principle of democracy yields to the practice of demography,' as highly customized messages are delivered to a[n ever] smaller segment of the market."

This film is required viewing for the class. If you have any trouble viewing the film online, the Hagerty Library Reserve Desk has a copy of the DVD you can borrow to watch in the library. If you cannot view the film online or in the library, please let me know. I have VHS and DVD copies and will be happy to show it in the classroom for anyone who needs me to do so. But please don't wait until the last minute to let me know if you cannot watch the film online. Below are six questions to guide you as you watch the film. **You do not have to write out answers to these questions and hand them in**, but I recommend you at least take notes during the film so that you are able to answer these questions in a direct, clear, and detailed way. Some of these questions, or questions closely based on them, will show up on your **Final Exam Study Guide**. The next time class meets, we will devote some time to briefly discuss these questions together.

At our class website, I have posted additional materials related to the film, including articles and videos that can be viewed online. A complete transcript of *The Persuaders* can be found online here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/etc/script.html>.

1. Explain the approach to advertising that Naomi Klein calls "pseudo-spiritual marketing" and relate it to Douglas Atkins research into cults. What psychological and emotional needs account for the persuasive power of cults and brands? How does this relate to our discussion of rhetoric and arguments that are fallacies this term?
2. Explain how the alliance of "Madison and Vine" is supposed to work. How is this practice like and unlike "product placement"? What effects does Mark Miller say this form of advertising is having on film, music, and culture in our country?
3. Describe the advertising tactics of Clotaire Rapaille **or** Frank Luntz, using at least two examples from the film. Then carefully relate these tactics to our discussion of the meaning of the term "critical" in the title of this course.
4. Describe the advertising tactics of Frank Luntz, using at least two examples from the film. Then carefully relate these tactics to our discussion of the meaning of the term "bias" in the title of this course.
5. Describe the political advertising tactic known as "narrowcasting," and relate this tactic of persuasion to our discussion of the general ways inductive fallacies occur in chapter 3.
6. At the end of the film, how do Mark Miller and Douglas Rushkoff sum up the "ideology" of advertising in our era? In your opinion, do advertisers *actually* empower us, or are they really just trying to get us to believe that they do?