

Short Paper 1.1: Photo Autobiography

engl 111 / sec. M / winter quarter 2005-06 / chang



The old adage (and now a cliché) says, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” And in this class, we will explore and analyze how cultural productions like an image or a TV show or a story or a film are imagined, created, understood, and deployed. We are interested in questions like: How is an image or artifact seen and apprehended? What meanings can a cultural artifact convey, evoke, or cover up? What do images, advertisements, videos, t-shirt logos, song lyrics, news stories, or narrative films tell us about our culture, our world? How can we critique and analyze these cultural productions and artifacts?

To start this critical sequence, you are asked to take an image with which you are already well acquainted and familiar—your own. **Find any photograph of yourself**, preferably one where you are doing something, in an interesting setting, or showing a part of yourself, your identity. If you do not have ready access to a self-photo, you can use your university ID. Using the photo as a jumping off point, as inspiration, write a **3-page autobiography** of yourself. Consider the following questions (but do not feel obligated to answer all of them like a laundry list):

- What is in the photo? Or what is the photo about?
- Why was the photo taken? Who took the photo? Who is the photo for?
- What does photo tell us about you? What doesn’t it tell us?
- What assumptions can be made about you via the photo? What stereotypes?
- What facts and inferences can be made about you? Why are they relevant?
- Most importantly, what will you select to tell us? Why?

Remember that this is an autobiography, a personal profile, which means you are telling your audience and me **something memorable about yourself**, your life, **who you are**, **what you do**, and **what is important to you**. Keep in mind that you only have three pages, less than a thousand words, to convey something of yourself. Use the photo as a way to **focus** your autobiography. Also keep in mind that this is an assignment, albeit informal, and will still require general formal paper conventions.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 3

Turn in: 3 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, stapled copy of photo

Due: Monday, January 8