

# Major Paper 2.5: Critiquing Everyday Media

engl 111 / sec. M / winter quarter 2006-07 / chang



Over the breadth and depth of your first sequence of assignments, we have considered, discussed, read, and written about different kinds of texts—different kinds of everyday media—about images and representations, about the construction of categories, identities, and meanings, and about the intersections of cultural and social locations such as race, class, nation, gender, and sexuality. Lister & Wells’ essay “Seeing Beyond Belief” offers a brief overview of cultural studies as a methodology, a lens for the analysis of the production, contextualization, codification, and identification of images. They contend that how an image is made, how an image is presented, how an image is seen, and how an image is understood is fraught with complexity and layers of meanings and that “Cultural Studies allows the analyst to attend to the many moments within the cycle of production, circulation and consumption of the image through which meanings accumulate, slip and shift” (459). They

argue that our understandings of identity, of culture, and of power can be excavated through the analysis of the images we create and consume. Your short papers have given you practice in generating claims about a range of everyday cultural artifacts. Now it is time to think about and to write an extended and researched analysis.

## Goal and Outcomes

For this **6- to 8-page** formal paper, you will locate and choose one “everyday media” artifact to close read, research, and to analyze and critique. You may choose a film, a website, a television show, a commercial, or an image. Consider well your artifact, its theoretical, material, visual, or cultural interest, and its overall context and exigence. You must clear your artifact with me before you begin any research or writing, and you will need to provide access to, a clean, high quality copy, or link to the artifact.

Armed with the theoretical and cultural studies concepts from the readings, previous assignments, class discussions **generate your own original claim, your own argument** about your artifact. In other words, your paper will investigate and analyze **an issue or question raised or revealed** by your artifact. For example, how does your artifact render, stereotype, complicate, or resist a particular “cultural logic?” Or, what does your artifact tell you about your world? Think about the following questions when you sit down to make your claim (pick and choose the best and most relevant questions to use as a way to generate ideas and subclaims):

- How does your artifact fit (or doesn’t fit) into our class’s critique of everyday media? Of the culture at large?
- What meanings does your artifact convey? Does it comment on identity, culture, or power? Are these comments overt or covert?
- What stereotype or cultural assumption (about race, gender, sexuality, class, or nation) does your artifact make? How is this stereotype or assumption construction and deployed?
- What is the importance of your artifact? What does it tell its audience? Who is its intended audience?
- How is its production, circulation, and consumption important to its meaning or meanings?
- How will you apply Lister & Wells’ methodology to your artifact?
- What are you trying to prove to your readers about the artifact? Why is your claim important?
- How might your artifact be in conversation with your short assignments? How is your artifact in conversation with the class’s readings? The class discussions?
- What is **at stake** in your analysis and reading of the text and your artifact?

Remember that the above questions **should not be a laundry list** for you to simply run down the answers. Be selective and focused about what you wish to write about and then generate your own claim about your artifact. You are required to include at least **ten outside sources** including the texts read for this class, scholarly journals, and credible newspapers and magazines and websites; the sources must be relevant and useful to your claim but all ten need not be cited in your paper.

Your paper by necessity will include a very brief description or summary of your artifact (assume your audience has at least encountered or seen the artifact) and will demonstrate your ability to **close read** both artifact and research. Remember that this paper is about **your claim, your analysis, your ideas** about what your artifact is arguing, doing, critiquing, saying, or showing. Like your previous papers, you will be expected to **critically analyze** your artifact and **persuasively articulate** how it reveals something significant about your culture with **direct quotes** from your research as support. Also, keep in mind the **course outcomes** as you work and write.

To summarize, you should be prepared to make a solid and relevant claim using a well-developed and clearly organized analysis of your artifact by situating it within a particular and meaningful context, with clear evidence to support your argument.

## Guidelines and Due Dates

**Audience:** You will write for an audience that includes a general academic community, which includes your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you'll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as the *Reading Contexts* anthology or e.g. website or a scholarly journal.

**Format:** This assignment is a formal, academic paper and should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the course policies:  
formal title page, appropriate title for your paper  
1 paragraph audience analysis  
6-8 pages, typed, double-spaced, with MLA citations, stapled  
bibliography, correct MLA format

**Targeted outcomes:** 1, 2, 3, 4

**Paper Proposal/Conference Memo:** Bring to your conference on \_\_\_\_\_ your Conference Memo (Short Paper 1.6 to be assigned), which identifies key concepts, your overall claim, chosen artifact, and a rough outline of your main ideas.

**Annotated Bibliography:** Bring to your conference on \_\_\_\_\_ your fully developed bibliography (Short Paper 2.4 to be assigned).

**First Draft:** Please bring an e-copy of your paper for peer workshopping to class on MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

**Final Draft:** Make revisions based on comments and responses from me and your peers and hand in the revised final draft at the start of class on WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28