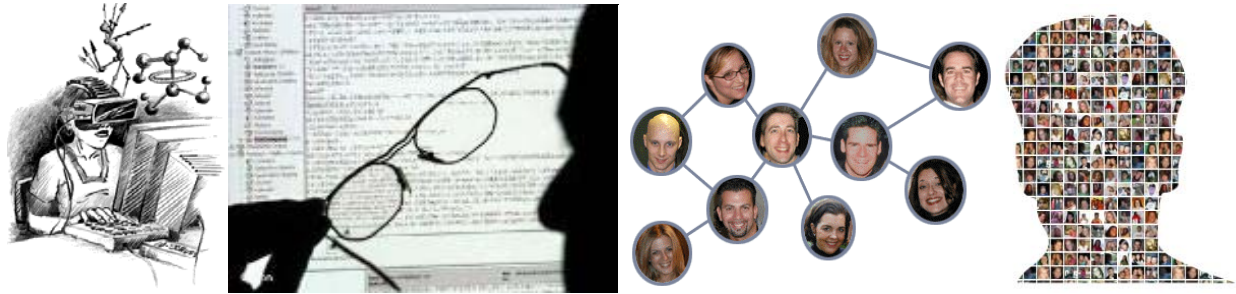


Short Paper 1.1: MySpace Autobiography

engl 111 / sec. Q / fall quarter 2006-07 / chang



The old adage 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 story or a film or a website are imagined, created, understood, and deployed. We are interested in questions like: How is an artifact or cultural production seen? How is it used? What meanings can a cultural artifact convey, evoke, or cover up? What do these artifacts tell us about our culture, our world? How can we critique and analyze these cultural productions and artifacts?

For example, what do online social networks like MySpace or Friendster or Facebook say about you, your culture, or your world? MySpace, in particular, describes itself as “an online community that lets you meet your friends’ friends” and has garnered an unprecedented number of users as well as praise and criticism. What are the features and functions and ramifications of this cyberspace phenomenon?

To start this critical sequence, you must imagine creating a MySpace profile (if you are already on MySpace, consider revising your profile). You need **not** create an actual MySpace page. You will begin with an image with which you are already well acquainted and familiar—your own. **Find any photograph of yourself.** If you do not have ready access to a self-photo, you can use your university ID. Using the image as the inspiration, the starting point for your profile, write a **3-page autobiography** of yourself as if you were completing the ‘About Me’ section. Use the following questions as a way to generate telling details (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?
- What does photo tell us about you? What doesn’t it tell us?
- What assumptions or generalizations can be made about you via the photo?
- Who is your photo and profile for? Who else might see your photo and profile?
- 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: Tuesday, October 3