



# Analyzing and producing advertisements

## Ad Analysis

Every day we are surrounded by a relentless barrage of advertisements, and most of the time we just try to do our best to ignore them. Rarely do we think seriously about what the ads are trying to accomplish and the strategies they use in doing so. For this assignment, I want you to get together in groups and analyze how magazine ads make meaning in the minds of their readers, using the following list of questions as a guide:

- What is the product being advertised? What does it do? What does it realistically offer to the reader? Apart from “buy this product,” what is the central point the ad is trying to make?
- What is the audience for that ad? How can you tell? What assumptions does the ad make about what is “appealing,” “good,” or “desirable” to that audience? By extension, what is “unappealing,” “bad,” or “undesirable” to that audience? How does the ad use these values to achieve its goal?
- What are the images in the ad? How does your eye scan the page, and how does that affect your “reading” of the ad? Does the ad use any special visual techniques to grab your attention? Does the ad use any sort of visual “trickery”? What mental associations do you make when you look at the images—what do you think of or feel? What ideas do these images convey? How does it convey them? What are the values behind those ideas, that is, what makes them “good” or “bad,” particularly in the minds of the target audience? Does the ad use any widely-recognized symbols (apart from trademarks)? What do these symbols mean?
- Which elements of the ads employ logos, ethos, or pathos appeals?
- In what ways does the ad depart from the reality of the product it is selling? Why does it do this? Does it do this in a believable or convincing way?
- What sense does the ad convey about the company? How does the ad or ad campaign fit into the company’s larger marketing strategy?
- How does the ad fail to achieve its purpose? What could be changed in the ad to make it more effective?

For Wednesday, I want you, as a group, to prepare a presentation to the rest of the class on what you have found in your ad analysis. Your presentation should diagram how the ad “works”: it should identify the purpose of the ad (again, beyond simply “selling the product”), and it should demonstrate how it goes about achieving that purpose (or not). Please defend your assertions using the ad itself.

## **Ad Design Activity**

Last week you practiced reading advertisements that used the visual to connect with their audience and to convey their message. This week you will take the same critical approach to advertisements as you did last week, but instead of reading ads, you will be writing them. In teams of four or five you will design and produce a campaign of print ads for a product.

You must choose your product from the list below, but you are responsible for coming up with the name and brand identity of that product. Although you can take inspiration from existing products, your product should be fictional. In addition, you must choose three magazines from the list below, and design and produce an ad for each one. While you should tailor your message to the specific audiences of the specific forums, keep in mind that your ads are part of a campaign, and you need to be sure that your ads fit together. Your three ads should be similar to each other, and they should project a consistent brand identity. In addition, because your ad should emphasize visual communication, you are allowed to use at most 12 words in your ad.

By the end of class today I will need a very brief and informal overview of your product and campaign. On Friday you will have time in class to further develop and produce your ads. Next Monday, you will present your ads to the class for critique.

### **Products to choose from:**

Dishwashing liquid • Soda • Aspirin • Fruit juice • Chocolate bar • Mattress • Deodorant • Motor oil • Beer • Washing machine • Internet service • Cereal

### **Forums to chose from:**

Good Housekeeping • Fortune • Sports Illustrated • Cosmopolitan • Parenting • Time • Martha Stewart Living • Scientific American • Seventeen • Nick Jr. Magazine

# A comparative news analysis of one news story as it is reported on various national and international news sources

## Why do this?

We've been talking about bits and pieces of arguments and other persuasive texts in class, and you've also been looking at and writing letters to the editor. Because we've been considering the rhetorical work of single texts, I'm asking you now to see what you can learn by comparing texts on the same topic. By seeing how different writings on the same topic shape how they present the news — including what they emphasize, include, or leave out — you'll gain a sense not only of a still wider range of persuasive strategies you can use in your own work but also a sense of what news sources treat you with the respect you believe is right.

## What to do

### FIRST, COLLECT YOUR INFORMATION

- 1 Meet with your partner at a computer with a reasonable Internet connection.
- 2 Go to the following US newspaper websites, and pick an international news story (political or economic) that is featured on at least three of the sites the day you meet. (Be sure to scroll the full length of the pages—and it is okay to see what further news is listed under National and International links. You may need to register on some of these sites to read the articles.)

The New York Times • The Washington Post • The Los Angeles Times • The Christian Science Monitor • The Miami Herald • USA Today • The Atlanta Journal-Constitution [these were all active links]

- 3 From three of the websites on which the story was featured, print out the coverage on the news story you picked. (Print out a copy for each of you.) Choose three sites that approach the news differently, if possible.
- 4 Collect at least 6 other versions of the story, choosing two from each of the three following categories. Under each category, pick sites that approach the news story as differently as you can find. Print out each version of the story that you find, one copy for each of you.

#### International news sites (in English)

The Globe and Mail (Canadian) • India Daily • BBC News (British) • The Mail and Guardian (South Africa) • China Daily • The International News (Pakistan) • The Observer (UK) • The International Herald Tribune

#### TV news sites/online magazines

CNN • CBS News • Fox News • MSNBC • ABC News

blogs that are (primarily) about political issues

(you might have to do some searching to find what you need; blogs approach the news, um, a bit differently than 'traditional' news sources)

War and Piece • Andrew Sullivan • Crooked Timber • Obsidian Wings •  
Instapundit • Body and Soul • Tacitus • The Washington Monthly • Power  
Line

## **SECOND, ANALYZE YOUR INFORMATION**

Together or alone, analyze the various stories, considering the following for each version:

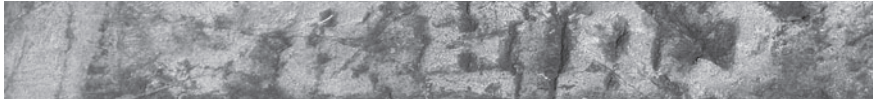
- How would you characterize the ethos of the writer(s) of this story? How do you come to this characterization?
- What is the emotional tone of the story — and what emotional attitudes are you asked to take on toward the story, and the people and events involved? What specific features of the writing suggest this characterization to you?
- How does the ordering of events in the story ask you to consider what happened? (This is easiest to see when you compare one story with another.)
- How do you think the writer(s) of the story think of you, as they write? Are you smart and able to think for yourself, or do you need to be told everything, or...? Based on what features of the writing do you make these judgments
- How do any photographs accompanying the story shape your understanding of the story?

## **THIRD, WRITE UP YOUR ANALYSIS**

Turn your analysis into a judgment about what characteristics of a story make it seem fair (or not) to you.

On your own, without your partner, write a 4-5 page (1000-1250) word paper, in which you define the features of writing that make the writing seem fair and thoughtful to you, such that you feel respected as a smart thoughtful person by the writing and such that you can think well about the story. Use the questions from step 2 to help you determine which features of the writing to emphasize.

Start your writing with a statement summarizing the features you think are most important, and then use the rest of the paper to give evidence from the stories. (At the end of your writing, be sure to cite your sources, using the MLA or APA format.)



## **Nonfiction digital media project**

This project asks you to invent and create a nonfiction project in a digital space. This project will be about a subject of your choice, but it must seek to capture original material, giving your project an element of documentary work. You will conduct “research” (fact finding, interviews, original photographs/audio/video, creation of “documentable” situations) that will enable you to create a short, nonfiction piece that adopts an angle that is new, interesting, and refreshing to your audience. Your project, when applicable, can also be reflective in nature, meaning that it can explore the intersection of documentary and personal narration/reflection.

You should begin this assignment by considering the following requirements:

- You can conduct archival work for this project, but you must also conduct “research” that consists of artifact finding, interviews, observation, and original photographs/audio/video. This research will become the essence of your project. Your goal is to end up with much more material than you will use in the final project.
- Your project must include “original” documented material. I am looking for projects that include a significant number of original photographs, images, video, and/or audio files. These texts would be incorporated extensively into your project. This text should be carefully and purposefully crafted with an intentional mode of documentary representation.
- The final project must be in a form that can be “distributed” to an audience. In most cases, I have imagined “fix media”—something, for example, that might be burned to a CD or DVD—but there is no need to limit yourself to that. Your project can also be multi-modal in nature, meaning that it might include separate audio files, still images, video files, etc., that would be collected in an web site, for example. You do not need to think of seamless, unified texts.

Collaborative projects (two students per team) are encouraged. Except in extreme cases, both students will receive the same grades on all elements of the project.

# rhetoRICAL analysis of a web site (paper two)

**For this 4–5 page report, you will choose a specific web site to analyze and prepare a rhetorical analysis of it.**

*due Wednesday, October 13; 300 points*

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Start by selecting a site to analyze; I encourage you to choose a site that links to your final project (as you are imagining it thus far) or that links to your professional interests. This might be the online portfolio of a student or working professional, or the web site of a company you're interested in working for, or the web site of a governmental body or branch, or the web site of the local branch of a nonprofit organization.

As you choose the site you wish to analyze, also start thinking about ways to shape your analysis. For instance:

- If you choose to analyze the online portfolio of a student or working professional, you might shape your analysis around how the designer negotiates displaying his/her professional identity *while* expressing individual personality (that is, how the designer runs the bandwidth of the professional and the personal).
- If you choose to analyze the web site of a company for which you're interested in working, you might explore the company's mission and goals, then deeply read how the content (textual *and* visual) of the site helps to illustrate the mission and goals.
- If you choose to analyze the web site of a nonprofit organization, you might analyze both the national web site *and* the web site of a local branch of the organization. You might shape your analysis on what elements are shared between the national and local sites.

■

Next, create a heuristic for yourself for assessing the site you've chosen to analyze. Essentially, this is a framework you will apply to the site to structure your analysis and to shape your claims and conclusions. You might select a framework such as:

- Focusing on **audience**: Assessing the audience for the site and the appropriateness of the site to its audience (you might, for instance, do some background reading and digging to identify the core audience for the site, such as that audience's demographics).
- Focusing on **purpose**: Establishing the purpose of the site and assessing its appropriateness in achieving that purpose (you might, for example, carefully review the mission statement of the organization and use the mission statement as a starting place for your evaluation).
- Focusing on **ethos, pathos, and logos**: Analyzing the "feel" and character/personality of the site articulated by the different writing- and design-related dimensions of the site; assessing the appeals to reason or logic demonstrated throughout the site; exploring the appeals to emotion illustrated in the site.
- Borrowing and reworking concepts suggested in our readings and using it as a lens for your analysis; for instance, you might apply Hart's framework of **content, structure, and relevance**; you might apply Kilian's review criteria: **purpose, audience, content, appearance, accessibility, and organization**.

# rhetoRical analysis of a web site (paper two)

no	kind of	yes	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has the author chosen an interesting and/or appropriate site to analyze?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the introduction of the report serve to acclimate the reader to the web site? To the <b>focus and purpose</b> of the analysis?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has the author presented an <b>appropriate and critical frame</b> from which to analyze the web site?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the report provide enough <b>details, description, and examples</b> <i>throughout</i> to support the main focus and the analytical approach?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the report <b>well-focused</b> ? Are the transitions between ideas strong and clear? Does the report stay on track?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there an element integrated that does a good job of concluding the report? Lending it a <b>sense of closure</b> ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall, does the report demonstrate that the author has done a deep but <b>carefully and attentively focused analysis</b> of the web site?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the work, if and when applicable, draw upon the course readings and/or course topics?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there any grammatical, typographic, or spelling errors in the paper?

## POINTS

## OVERALL COMMENTS



The poster above was made by Käthe Kollwitz, a German artist who lived 1867-1945. She was the first woman to be elected professor at the Prussian Academy, but she lost her position as soon as Hitler came to power. The poster above translates to “The Survivors —War against War!”

## *composing a poster*

### *purpose of this assignment*

Have you ever produced a poster as a way of thinking about a social issue? Because the medium and context for viewing posters set certain limitations and expectations on what you can produce — such as requiring (for example) a visually compelling but comparatively short text — you will have to think about the argumentative potential of your issue differently than you did with your letters or speech. This will help you think not only about how a medium — and its particular contexts — can shape thinking, but also how you can use a medium to get a differing perspective for your thinking.

### *how this assignment is structured*

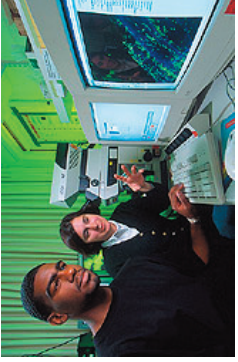
First, you will bring to class a design plan and a sketch of your poster for initial feedback — and to help us as a class develop a grading rubric for the final poster. A week later, a first draft of your poster is due, to which we will give feedback, using the rubric. The final draft of your poster and a reflection statement will be due in the following class.

### *what to do*

We’ve looked at lots of examples of posters in class, of many different kinds. You are going to produce a poster that makes an argument about the social issue you’ve been researching this semester, so you will need to draw on what we examined but also modify what you saw in order to make it fit your context and audience.

- In designing your poster, use one of the three argumentative arrangements described in our textbook: use visual accumulation, visual analogy, or visual symbol.
- Your final poster can be black-and-white or color, but it must be 11” by 17” (unless you have access to larger printers, or unless you want to make a poster with no white edges, in which case you will need to trim the edges from an 11” by 17” page).
- **For our next class**, develop a full design plan for your poster. Follow the steps of Chapters 2-3 of our textbook to make such a plan (but do not worry about describing testing; we will set that up for you in class). You will need to decide on and do a little research into your particular audience and context; your particular purpose will depend on how you define your audience and context. Your medium is already chosen for you — but you will have to decide what particular strategies are appropriate for your particular purpose (which means that you need to describe the visual elements —including typography —you will include).

**Bring in a typed design plan for feedback. Include a sketch of your proposed poster.**



## online scavenger hunt

### **purpose of this assignment**

Looking about online for websites on the issue you've chosen to research in our class will help you consider your issue from different perspectives and will help you see how others approach thinking about the issue. Also, this is a form of research — which we will be discussing in class. In addition, by looking at different kinds of websites, you can consider the reliability of the information on the sites.

### **what to do**

Using your favorite search engine, I want you to find 9 different websites on the issue you have chosen. Find the following kinds of websites:

- Find three organizations that do work related to the issue you have raised — but that take differing positions relative to the issue.
- Find three websites by individual people where at least some of the website focuses on your issue — and where the positions offered differ.
- Find three online articles related to your issue — but make sure the articles take different positions on the issue.

### **for Tuesday**

Type up — to turn in — 2-3 pages in which you do the following:

- List the websites you found, and describe how you found them.
- For each site, describe whether you think the information on the site is dependable, and why.



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## **Making a very ugly, unreadable, unfriendly webpage**

### **THE PURPOSE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment might also be a little bit of review for you, in terms of using color and backgrounds on a webpage. But I also want it to be a first step in thinking about the relationships you establish with your audience through the shapes of what you make. In this case, I want you to make something that turns its back on its audience — if not screams at them — as a way of starting to show, by negation, the kinds of design strategies that ought to help your audiences feel that you are a designer to be trusted and respected.

This is an informal assignment, meant to help you reflect on the how the design choices you make influence the relationship you establish with your audience. This assignment will therefore not receive its own grade, but will be counted as part of your overall homework grade.

### **WHAT TO DO**

Read chapter 13, pages 185-216, of Web Design Workshop, and then make a webpage that will completely alienate your audience; in this case, your audience is each other. Use the same topic that you used in the previous assignment—

- turbo dancing
- space drumming
- egg music
- liquid imagination
- comfort TV
- swarm logic
- extreme tourism
- packet monkeys

—but now make a page that will make your audience think you hate them, don't care about what matters to them, and have no time to give to developing thoughtful relations with others.

### **AN IMPORTANT NOTE!!**

Only use text editors to make this page. Do not use Composer or Dreamweaver or any other software to make this. I want to be sure you are comfortable with the very basics of working with html so that you can use other software with more control and knowledge.

### **TO TURN THIS IN**

Make a link to your “bad” page from the homepage whose URL you sent me from the last class.



# Composing with Video

## The Assignment

For your video assignment, you will explore the concept of style in writing and in everyday life. Your goal (in small groups of 3 or 4) is to produce/compose a 3-5 minute video that helps to illuminate something about writing/style. You can approach the video composition in a number of ways:

### 1 Documentary

#### Option 1a.

Investigate ideas about style by interviewing different people regarding their approaches to style in their lives and in their writing. What ideas carry over from the realm of personal style into the realm of writing? Or, where is the disconnect between the way people think about style as personal expression and style as a form of expression in writing?

Don't be afraid to expose the contradictions that emerge as people wearing Gap jeans and Abercrombie and Fitch t-shirts tell you about how dress is a matter of personal choice, but writing style is all about the rules and conventions.

#### Option 1b.

Interview other teachers or faculty about how they approach writing style in the classroom. What is style in writing? Can it be taught? How do you help someone find their style? Ask teachers to describe what characterizes a "sophisticated" writing style or other concepts related to style that will encourage detailed storytelling and unique responses.

It's essential to connect these views in some way. What story about writing style do these interviews tell when taken as a whole and how can you use the medium to help you tell that story? More about this when we discuss editing.

### 2 Critical Analysis

Examine your own ideas about style in writing and style in other areas of life. You could document how your writing style and personal style have changed over the years. You could film yourselves (or some of the people in the group) discussing style or exchanging views on it. You might focus on your response to style in another medium as compared to writing (for example musical style)? (You could do the same thing with art, fashion, or other aspects of self presentation.)

### 3 Montage

Another kind of critical analysis, the montage works primarily through juxtaposition of clips or images. Rhythm and repetition (or pattern) help to structure this type of film. Meaning emerges through the relationship that is created by this assembly of clips or images. In some ways, a montage could be a more lyrical argument, bringing together different images and ideas with either a scripted background (potentially your audio essay) or set to music that helps to make your point.

## Some examples

[Here was a series of links to examples.]

## Pre-Production

### Develop a plan

You must first decide what approach you're going to take and a general framework for your piece. Unlike a fiction film, you can't really storyboard (which is common pre-production work in film and video) because you don't know what you're going to get in your interviews. You can, however, make a list of the kind of shots, interviews, images, etc. that you need to gather in order to tell your story or make your point.

I encourage you to write a brief description of what you are setting out to do, as well as a list of the pieces that you'll be collecting in order to do it.

### Plan to shoot

Unlike writing, where you can generate more text if you forget to cover something, shooting generally affords no such luxury. When it comes time to edit, what you've shot is what you've got.

### To prepare for shooting interviews:

1. *Figure out your questions and think about follow up questions in advance.* If you ask open-ended questions about style, you're likely to get vague answers that don't offer the detailed story-telling that can make a video documentary interesting. Be prepared to ask people to describe or show you things, to remember events or give examples.

Tip: It's not a bad idea to conduct some quick pre-interviews as you're selecting subjects. Sometimes people freeze and don't say the interesting things on-camera. If you've already chatted them up, you can prompt them if they get stuck.

2. *Consider your locations carefully.* A video documentary is a lot like creative nonfiction in that you want to use the setting to help tell something about the person or the subject. This is important: First, it's boring to look at a talking head against a bland or distracting background. Second, environment is part of the story. Here's a checklist to help you select good locations:
  - Adequate lighting source. Natural light is best. Overestimate how much light you'll need.
  - Limited amount of clutter. Too much junk around competes with your subject.
  - Subject-enhancing background color. Be careful not to shoot your subject against backgrounds that wash them out.
  - Clear area behind your subject. Be on the lookout for objects that either stick out of or bisect your subject's head.
  - Other sounds in the area that might compete with your interview.

### Shoot to edit

Just as you wouldn't just write down every thought in your head while you are drafting a written composition, don't keep the camera rolling without purpose. Shoot what you think you will use and be thinking about collecting the pieces that you need or might need and do it in shorter takes.

Don't think that you'll sort it all out later. Digital video takes up a ton of space on the computer and the bigger your file is, the more likely it is that you'll have technical problems.

## Next: Production

# Observing and analyzing faculty webpages

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT

You are going to build a webpage for a faculty member within the next few weeks. The intention of this assignment is to help you determine what makes an effective webpage for a faculty member—in general, as well as for faculty in a particular discipline.

## WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING, generally

First, I'm asking you to do a bit of thinking about why a university's faculty members would have individual webpages. Then you're going to go out on the web and look at lots of different websites for faculty members in lots of different disciplines in many different schools. Then I'm going to ask you to write about what you have observed, how your initial thoughts about faculty webpages have changed, and to draw up a preliminary set of guidelines for building an effective webpage for someone who teaches at a university like ours.

## WHAT TO DO...

### First, write a little bit, informally...

In class, we talked a bit about the purposes of faculty webpages. I want you to write up a list of the different kinds of audiences a faculty webpage must address, and the sorts of expectations those different audiences will bring to looking at a faculty member's webpage. Describe to yourself, in words on a page, in as much detail as possible, what you think should be on a faculty member's webpage and how that page should look and function—and why.

### Second, look... a lot, and closely...

Now spend some time looking at faculty webpages. As you look, test your expectations against the pages you see. Which pages meet your expectations, and how? Which pages disrupt your expectations—but in good directions? Which disrupt your expectations in not so good ways? (Another way to think of this: Which faculty members look as though they really know what they teach? Which faculty members look like people from whom you'd want to take classes? Which faculty members look as though they're attached to schools you'd want to attend? In each of these cases—figure out WHY...)

In each case, note as many details as you can about what on the site worked to satisfy, exceed, or fail your expectations. Be attentive to the overall presentation of a page, how the page is arranged, what you learn from the page, and so on.

I want you to look at the webpages for at least 12 faculty members from different departments and different schools. As part of that 12, you can look at 8 sites linked below—but you need to find at least 4 other sites on your own. (Please list the sites you observe—and be sure you look at sites of people

who teach the same kinds of things as the faculty member with whom you'll be working. You can learn about your faculty members by reading about them on the Humanities Department's Faculty pages—see below.) Start by checking out how faculty in MTU's Humanities Department present themselves (go to <http://www.hu.mtu.edu/>, and then click the "Faculty & Staff" link at the top right). Then check out the links for these college faculty: [here followed a listing of links to 30+ websites for faculty from a range of Humanities disciplines]

**Third, write up what you have observed...**

Look back at what you wrote before you looked at faculty websites, and at all the notes you took while looking. By analyzing what you've observed and written, draw up guidelines to help you make the most effective website possible for the faculty member with whom you'll be working.

You can present your guidelines in any way you like, as long as someone else in class will be able to understand them easily (without you hanging over their shoulder to explain what you've written). Your guidelines should make specific reference to sites you observed, so that you use the sites as examples to support your reasoning. Be sure also, as you make recommendations for faculty webpages, that you explain your recommendations: just what purpose is your recommendation to serve, and for what audience? (And do not feel you have to make recommendations for "conservative" websites: if you can give solid reasons for recommending something "unusual", then please do so.)

Be as detailed as you can: address color choice as well as whether you think photographs should be included, and how much and what text, and how elements should be aligned, and what sorts of links, and what kinds of typefaces, and so on, and so on. The more details to which you attend, the easier your job will be in working with your faculty member.

And as you write, keep in mind our class conversations about interest, fascination, and delight.

It will probably take you a minimum of three typed pages to do enough analysis and make enough supported recommendations to be useful.

**TO TURN THIS IN**

Bring your typed, well-presented observations to class with you on Tuesday. This is an assignment that simply cannot be late.