

Short Assignment 1: Posters in Their Natural Habitat

Due: Tuesday, October 1st, 2013

The poster “I Has a Dream” that we looked at in class is said to have been posted in schools and also printed in newspapers like *The New York Times*. We discussed how these choices targeted very particular audiences that the poster was appealing to. Now it is your turn to find and observe posters in their natural environment on and around campus.

For this assignment, **first** you will need to go out and find **two (2)** locations where you can see many posters, and evaluate them. Try to find locations that are different (bus stop and a library, laundry room and a local bar, etc.). In order to get the best results, plan to spend at least 10-20 minutes at each location. Bring a pen and a notebook to write down your impressions and observations (you *will* forget them if you don’t!), and—if you have access to one—a camera to take some quick snapshots.

After you have assembled your evidence, create a one-page profile for each location. Try to answer the following questions in each profile:

1. Where is this location? Are there any buildings or other structures nearby?
2. What types of posters are displayed here? Are they all advertisements? List some specific examples.
3. Are they neatly arranged or pasted willy-nilly?
4. Can anyone put up a poster there, or do they need to be approved first?
5. Whom did you observe in the location when you were there? Did anyone specifically look at the posters?

Finally, write a one-page reflection about the similarities and differences you observed at the two locations. Were the people at each location similarly dressed or not? Was the content of the posters more or less the same? If some posters were present at one location but not at the other, why do you think that is?

If you’re stumped for where to go, some good places to visit are:

- ⇒ bus stations
- ⇒ libraries
- ⇒ community centers
- ⇒ communal laundry rooms

What to turn in

Please turn in the two (2) location profiles, your reflection, as well as any photographs you took at the location(s).

Short Assignment 2: Visual Analysis of a Poster

Due: Tuesday, October 8th, 2013

Now that we know a little more about how to read and analyze visual works, it is time for you to give it a try on your own. For this assignment you will need to **find one poster**, and **write a 2-3 page argumentative essay** about what the poster is trying to convey.

NOTE: You will have a **much** easier time doing this assignment if you find an interesting, complex poster that has relevance to you in some way.

A successful paper will include the following:

1. An arguable claim (thesis) and evidence to support that claim.
2. A discussion about which of Aristotle's three appeals the poster relies on, successfully or unsuccessfully.
3. An analysis of the rhetorical situation of the poster (pp. 22–25).
4. A legible picture of the poster you have chosen, on a page by itself **OR** a *detailed* description of the poster included in your essay (see EWP Tip on p. 227).

As you are evaluating the poster, consider especially questions on pp. 212–213 (Analyzing a Visual Text) and pp. 227–228 (Summarizing a Visual Text). In addition, think about these questions regarding the text of the poster:

- ⇒ What is the tone of the text? Is it uniform or does it change throughout?
- ⇒ What role does language or languages play?
- ⇒ Are there any unusual word choices?
- ⇒ What text is emphasized/de-emphasized? How?
- ⇒ How do fonts and/or font sizes affect the perceived message?

Short Assignment 3: Rhetorical Analysis of “Ways of Seeing”

Due: Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

From the beginning of this course we have been focusing on posters and advertisements. These genres, as we know them today, in large part exist because we have the technology to mechanically reproduce such visual works. The tangible effect an advertisement has is directly proportional to the number of people who see it. We have now read John Berger’s “Ways of Seeing,” where he writes about the effects of such mechanical reproduction on works of art, but does not address posters directly. Nevertheless, many of his ideas can be very useful for thinking about posters and other works of art “in the age of mechanical reproduction.” Before we start fully exploring his ideas, however, it would be helpful to take a step back and look at the essay as a whole.

Your task for this assignment is to do a **2-3 page rhetorical analysis of Berger’s essay**. While you analyzed the rhetorical situation of posters in your previous assignment, what you will be doing now is somewhat different. Follow the following steps:

1. Read *Contexts for Inquiry*, pp. 173–187 (to the end of the page)
2. Re-read Berger’s essay, marking passages that identify the text’s
 - a) **situation**;
 - b) **purpose**;
 - c) **claims**, especially **main claim**; and
 - d) **audience**
3. Write at least a paragraph about each of the above aspects

The goal of this assignment is for you to look at *how* the text works instead of focusing only on *what* it says. Being aware of how the texts you are reading work rhetorically will help you when you sit down to do your own writing.

Keep in mind

- ◇ Support your conclusions with **reasons** and **evidence drawn from the text**
- ◇ Cite any direct quotations from the text using MLA format (see Resources below)

Format

- ◇ one-inch margins all around
- ◇ include the standard MLA header **but put “Collin” as your name**

Resources

- ◇ Purdue OWL: MLA Formatting and Style Guide
- ◇ Writer’s Help: Log In → Table of Contents → MLA Papers

Major Assignment 1: A Poster of One's Own

Due: Tuesday, 29 October 2013

By this point, you have seen dozens of posters, and have closely analyzed at least one of them. It is now time for you to use the skills you have developed to create a poster of your own.

For this assignment, your task is to **create a poster** on the topic of your choosing¹. Additionally, you will write a **5–7 page analysis** summarizing the poster, and describing in detail how its elements convey your message and fulfill your purpose. You will have an easier time with the reflection if your poster deals with a nontrivial topic that is important to you.

After you have had a chance to revise it, you will hang this poster up.

Your analysis should address the following:

- ★ What is the *situation* that your poster is responding to?
- ★ What is the *purpose* of your poster? What are you trying to achieve?
- ★ What are the *stakes* involved?
- ★ Who is your *audience*?
- ★ What are the main *claims* of your poster?
- ★ How does your poster appeal to *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos*?
- ★ How did you make the decisions about the *presentation* (composition, organization, color, space, etc.) of your poster?
- ★ What rhetorical function does *text* (captions, titles, explanations) play in your poster?
- ★ How did the *form* (medium) affect your *content* (text and visuals)?
- ★ Why did you choose the size you did, and how did it affect the poster?

What to turn in

1. *physical* copy of your poster with **only your student ID number** on the back
2. *electronic* copy of your reflection; put **“Collin” and your student ID number** (for example, “Collin 12345678”) in the name field

¹As long as it adheres to our class code of conduct: no hate speech or content used to bully or belittle people.

Short Assignment 4: Photography in Advertising**Due: Tuesday, 5 November 2013**

Anandi Ramamurthy's "Constructions of Illusion: Photography and Commodity Culture" (*CFI* pp. 834–865), published in the year 2000, is now more than a decade old. Has anything changed in the field of advertising? For this assignment, your tasks are to **find 3-5 contemporary magazine ads**, and **write a 2-3 page essay** arguing whether—or how—advertising photography has changed during this time. To do this, you will need a good understanding of Ramamurthy's essay, especially her case studies.

Your essay should include the following:

- ★ An arguable claim related to whether, or how, advertising photography has changed since 2000;
- ★ A one-paragraph summary of "Constructions of Illusion";
- ★ Reasons, based on evidence, supporting your claim;
- ★ Evidence drawn from the advertisements **and** from Ramamurthy's essay;
- ★ If possible, images of the ads (look how Ramamurthy incorporates them into the text);
- ★ Proper citations for evidence from Ramamurthy;
- ★ A "Works Cited" page, *including the ads you used*¹.

Why are we doing this?

A large part of this assignment is for you to get used to summarizing texts. No matter whether you are studying in humanities, social sciences, or hard sciences, you will need to write many research papers in your academic career. And since you cannot assume that your readers will be familiar with the sources you find, you will need to effectively summarize them for your audience before you can use them to support your claims.

Course outcomes targeted: 1, 2, 3

Format

- ★ 2–3 pages in length
- ★ one-inch (1") margins on all sides
- ★ 12pt Times or Times New Roman font, double-spaced
- ★ MLA header with **your student ID instead of the name**

¹Use the following format (changing underlined parts):

Company/Product Advertised. Advertisement. Publication Name. Publication Date: Page Number. Print.

Short Assignment 5: Connecting Berger and Ramamurthy**Due: Thursday, 14 November 2013**

We have read Anandi Ramamurthy's "Creations of Illusions" and watched part four of John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" BBC documentary. They both address advertisements in our culture, but do so from somewhat different angles. Your task for this assignment is to see how they address the main common themes that we came up with as a class. The themes (somewhat reworded), along with the groups responsible for them, are as follows:

1. Domestic "Us" versus the foreign "Other" (Patience, Matthew, Justin, Vivian)
2. Sexuality in advertising (Maggie, Logan, Aaron W., Evan)
3. Hidden labor relations (Chara, Jordan, Collin, Ziming)
4. Role of desire (for happiness, etc.) in advertising (Andy, Aaron C., Andrew, Varun)
5. Creation of and change in meaning based on context (Byron, Max, Katie)
6. Role of money and social status in construction of illusions (Nancy, Grace, Elliot)

Part I: Group Synthesis (due in class on Thursday)

Collaborate with your group members (listed above) to come up with a **synthesis (350-700 words)** of the two texts as they relate to your group's theme. You will turn in this synthesis in class on Thursday. Be sure to note both the *visual* as well as *textual* information. How you create this collaborative document is up to you; one possibility is to use the collaborative editing features of TitanPad or Google Docs.

Part II: Individual Analysis (by end of day on Thursday)

Write an **analysis paper (350-700 words)** where you:

- 1) evaluate how effective the synthesis is (use evidence from the textbook and your synthesis to back up your claim); and
- 2) discuss how the differences in genres (documentary vs. academic article) affected the process of synthesis (be specific, provide evidence).

If you wish, you can also discuss your unique contribution to the group and the contributions of your group-mates.

Format

- ★ 12pt Times or Times New Roman font, 1" margins all around, double-spaced
- ★ MLA headers with *your name* (for analysis) or *the names of all group members* (for synthesis)

Major Assignment 2: Analyzing Advertisements**Due: Tuesday, 26 November 2013**

Throughout this quarter, we have been looking at posters and ads. You have had a chance to develop sophisticated techniques for reading visual texts, and more recently saw how scholars do the same. In SA₄ you used your understanding of Anandi Ramamurthy's "Creations of Illusions" to analyze modern ads. In SA₅, you have deepened your understanding of the subject by synthesizing Ramamurthy's article with part four of John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" BBC documentary. The time has come to pull all of these resources together and write a detailed analysis of an ad.

Your task is to respond to a (mock) call for submissions shown on the next page. Even though you are not writing for an academic audience, to have a chance in being published, your essay must display many of the features we have been addressing since the beginning of the class. In particular, your analysis ought to do the following:

- ★ Cater to the specific *audience* described;
- ★ Address the particular *situation* (why are you writing about this ad?);
- ★ Have a clear *purpose* (what do you hope your audience to get out of this?);
- ★ Argue a *complex claim*;
- ★ Visually analyze the ad (especially its meaning); and
- ★ Make use of our two texts on advertising (Ramamurthy's essay and part four of Berger's documentary).

As always, provide specific reasons and evidence from the various primary (i.e., the ad) and secondary (i.e., the two texts) sources.

Resources

- ★ Anandi Ramamurthy, "Constructions of Illusion" (*CFI* pp. 834–865)
- ★ John Berger, "Ways of Seeing," Part 4 (<http://vimeo.com/55279377>)
- ★ Marcia Muth, Karla Kitalong, "Strategies for Understanding Visual Representations" (Canvas → Files → Readings)
- ★ "Reading Visual Texts" (*CFI* pp. 365–371)
- ★ Canvas Discussion on "Questions about class or assignments"

Ads Monthly
5621 Commercial Ave SW
Seattle, WA 98102

November 19, 2013

Dear First Year Student at UW:

I am the editor of a monthly magazine, *Ads*, which engages with the topic of advertisements in the modern society. Our readership includes professionals in the field, scholars, as well as members of the general public interested in the subject. Every issue of the magazine has featured an example of a contemporary advertisement along with its detailed expert analysis. In our effort to engage with the students of UW, for our January issue we decided to feature a *student* analysis instead. I would like to offer you an opportunity to submit such an analysis, and perhaps have it appear in our magazine.

Of course, we realize you are not an expert. Our readers, however, have come to expect a certain level of academic rigor from this section, so your analysis should adhere to the same standards. At the same time, since we do have a wide readership, it should not use inaccessible language or expect our lay readers to be familiar with the scholarship on the topic of advertising.

If you would like your essay to be considered, please submit: 1) an image of a commercial advertisement of your choosing, preferably from a magazine or a newspaper; 2) a 1,500–2,000-word analysis, double-spaced; 3) your bibliography; and 4) a cover letter explaining your choice of the advertisement and an abstract (150 words) of your essay. Since we will be starting work on our January issue soon, please submit this no later than November 26th, 2013.

I look forward to reading your analysis.

Sincerely,

Shoshawna Wilking
Editor