

## general assignment guidelines

You are expected to use the course materials as references to support each of your assignments. Be sure to cite your references appropriately using any citation method of your choosing (MLA Style, Chicago Style, etc.). If you are unsure about how to properly cite your sources, see the below website:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

### Here are some more tips to consider for successful writing in this course:

- ~ Use specific, detailed examples from the show/text to support your analysis.
- ~ Avoid using too much summary/exposition. Assume the reader (me) has seen the shows/commercials/texts/etc., and understands them intimately (because I have, and do).
- ~ Dispatch of any review-type language (ex: The show is a blockbuster extravaganza!).
- ~ Do not ask rhetorical questions, and do not raise questions you do not attempt to answer. Also, do not talk about what the text doesn't do, but what the text *does* do. Be critical and express your ideas.
- ~ Use *italics* for all show/film titles, i.e. *Jersey Shore* not **Jersey Shore** or Jersey Shore.
- ~ Do not qualify your analysis (ex: I think, perhaps, probably, sort of, etc.). Do not be afraid to make statements and support them with examples/analysis.
- ~ If you refer to a character from a show, research their name (as well as directors, writers, etc.). [www.IMDB.com](http://www.IMDB.com) is a great site for information about the shows/films.
- ~ Don't use quotes as stand-alone analysis, but rather, as support for your own thoughts about the texts. I'm interested in *your* perspective, not someone else's.
- ~ Use present tense for criticism (ex: *I Love Lucy* is a good example of... not, *I Love Lucy* was a good example of...).

All papers are to be turned in using the Turnitin.com application. You must first set up an account here:

[https://www.turnitin.com/newuser\\_type.asp?lang=en\\_us](https://www.turnitin.com/newuser_type.asp?lang=en_us)

Enter your information (name, email, etc.) along with the course ID and password →

Account ID: **19616505**

Join Password: **sutjhally**

You are responsible for uploading your quiz by the start of class time on the assigned due date. Upon receipt of your paper, Turnitin will email back a response that it has been received. Do not email me any assignments. If the system doesn't email you back, check your SPAM folders, and if it's not there, then you can email me to double-check. You are not bothering me to double-check if your paper has been submitted; it's better to be safe than sorry!

## contemporary culture analysis

Answer each of the following questions in short-answer form (*each response should be between 300-350 words*). Each question corresponds to a short clip that can be accessed by clicking the links. Read and answer each question carefully, using specific examples from the clip to support your analysis. You are required to use the readings/lecture materials as sources to support your ideas, and you may also use any outside sources that you research.

### ~ Question #1 ~

Go to <http://genderads.com/> and spend a few minutes navigating the site. Choose an ad that interests you, and perform a semiotic analysis of its content. What is the dominant meaning the ad is trying to convey? From an oppositional perspective, consider how the ad might challenge, or subvert a hegemonic reading of the text? Please include a copy of your image with your answer for reference.

~ *Question #2* ~

Analyze Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" as a postmodern music video.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj9SeMZE\\_Yw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj9SeMZE_Yw)

Discuss the lyrical and visual content, and consider how it gives "currency to the idea of 'post-modernism,'" as Peter Wollen suggests is a major function of music videos.

~ *Question #3* ~

Discuss Samsung's "Sibling Rivalry" commercial as an example of the commodity image system.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VH89uBFSyk>

How does it reflect Sut Jhally's notion of the "vignette approach" to advertising, and a foster a sense that visions of happiness are often tied to the purchase of products?

### infotainment essay

Watch the below clip and address the following question in a *1250-1500 word essay*. Answer the question carefully, using specific examples from the clip to support your analysis. You are required to use the readings/lecture materials as sources to support your ideas, and you may also use any outside sources that you research.

Discuss the following clip from *The O'Reilly Factor* (1996-2017) as an example of the contemporary trend in infotainment television:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhwwbNA3hjg>

How do programs like this employ fear appeals as a strategy to build urgency around partisan issues? How does O'Reilly frame a dialogical discussion about immigration with Geraldo Rivera in "us vs. them" terms?

The below essay is an example of an *A* paper turned in by a student. It provides thoughtful, detailed analysis of the video's visual and narrative elements, while using specific examples to support the writer's ideas.

**Choose a music video from a popular recording artist (singer/band/group) and provide an analysis of the images and the lyrical content of the song. What kind of image is the artist/group trying to portray, and how is this expressed in their appearance, attitude, lyrics, etc.? How does this image reflect an aspect of contemporary culture (race, sex/gender, class, etc.)?**

#### The Fame Workout

Britney Spears, otherwise known as the "Queen of Pop", became a household name with her hits "Baby one more time" and "Oops I did it again." Her image represents wealth, fame and beauty; all of which American culture places great importance on. As her career progressed, it became harder and harder for the average American to remember a time in which Britney was an ordinary girl without a gross amount of money or fame. As the lyrics of one of Britney's newest songs "Work Bitch" says, "You wanna hot body, you wanna Bugatti, you wanna Maserati, you better work bitch."

Happily demonstrating just what you, the average American, needs to do to become rich and famous like Britney, her music video and song "Work Bitch" exposes some truths to this process, you need to work. However, what is her definition of "work"? Surely she means long hours of singing practice, dance workouts

and finagling as much TV time as possible. Not exactly, in this cookie cutter four minute music video Britney, consciously or not, gives her audience a little insight as to what it truly takes to become just as glamorous as her. As the first scene comes in to focus, the audience sees the blonde singer in tiny shorts and a bra top wearing sky high glittery stilettos posing against a white wall beside a large pool with her backup dancers, all of which have dark hair and tan skin. In doing so, it reinforces the attention onto Britney with her blonde hair and light skin, making her stand out in the group. Although the scene is plain, wealth is apparent by the size of the pool and by the glitzy costumes the dancers and Britney herself are wearing. This is a subtle reminder of her wealth. Viewers are then brought to a scene where a white vanity sits in the middle of a desert, illuminated by bright lights. Britney sits in a matching white chair gazing at her reflection; the sole focus is on her, showing that nothing else matters but her beautiful appearance and image. A huge diamond necklace hangs from her neck, sparkling in the lights hinting at more excess. The camera then pans to a close up of her signature perfume sitting on the vanity, which not only markets the bottle but sells Britney Spears herself as a commodity. As a famous singer, Britney becomes a brand, an image, when she sells products she sells herself. This shows the idea that you have to “work” for fame by offering yourself up as a product for the public to consume.

Posing against the white wall Britney shows off her picture perfect body, the kind magazines, TV, and virtually every media outlet throws at Americans as the ‘ideal body type’. As described in an editorial by Kasey Serdar of Westminster College, “The mass media's depiction of women portrays a standard of beauty that is unrealistic and unattainable for a majority of women in society. Models shown in all forms of popular media are often under what is considered healthy body weight, which sends a powerful message that women must sacrifice their health to be considered attractive by societal standards.” Displaying this sought after body type, the camera focuses on Britney’s curves and seductive gestures as she sings, “You wanna Lamborghini, sip martinis , look hot in a bikini, you better work bitch”, blatantly stating that a ticket to fame comes with the price of perfection. Britney herself is the staple of beauty in mass media; she has long blonde hair with piercing blue eyes, smooth skin and a thin fit body. The message is clear; to attain fame you must “work” at becoming a Barbie doll. The dancers beside her reinforce this belief with all of them having fit bodies as well, wearing outfits exposing their perfect chests, legs and stomachs. Throughout the video Britney is dressed in many outfits exposing her body, the viewer’s focus is drawn to her ‘assets’, which undoubtedly played a part in her sky rocket to fame. Dancing in a seductive manner in every dance sequence she demonstrates how women in the media must become sex

symbols as a way to achieve fame, giving them the message that they must “work” on their sexy allure to attract media attention.

Playing the role of a domineering woman in her music video Britney exposes race relations in modern media. As an attractive white woman she surrounds herself with subordinate women with dark hair and tan skin. She is put in a position of power throughout the video. From the start this is made apparent when a tan woman wearing black lingerie crawls along the pool's edge as Britney stands above her, cracking a whip which rips the woman's clothing, exposing her skin while singing, “Now get to work bitch.” Another scene shows a faceoff between Britney and another woman, she cracks her whip and the woman is sent flying backwards as she repeats the saying, “Now get to work bitch.” A third time the singer is shown dominating an underdressed woman this time stepping on her chest and pulling at a leash attached to the woman's neck, overemphasizing the fact that she has a high position of authority because of her fame and excessive wealth. These subtle hints at white dominance in the media show how women who are not white must “work” even harder to achieve the level of fame Britney has. As she dances in a strip club setting under a neon sign spelling out the word “Bitch”, Britney exploits another dark haired woman as she holds onto her leash and keeps her knelt on the ground. Driving the point home viewers are brought back to the desert where the pop icon stands on top of a white structure wearing a mostly white dress with a long white skirt trailing in the wind as she holds glittery white reins attached to six ethnic women writhing on the desert floor in black costumes with black masks and head pieces shaped like devil horns. This image demonstrates how the white ‘all-American’ woman is still what the media prefers. In every dance sequence Britney at one point knocks over all the background dancers, as she remains standing, only to command them to rise again. This creates the idea that the dancers, and anyone seeking fame, must “work” for their recognition by pleasing whoever is in power. Britney is undoubtedly in charge of the women in this video; however, there are no men for her to faceoff, suggesting that she could still be subordinate to men, which would play along with traditional American ‘family values’.

Living in excess is a dream cultivated from our modern culture. As Britney sings, “You wanna live fancy, live in a big mansion, party in France, you better work bitch,” she gets straight to the point, most Americans would love to have a fancy life and party in France. As Sut Jhally states, in *Image based culture: Advertising and popular culture*, that when asked what people seek in life, what makes them happy, the most reported things related to “social life” and that “Commodities are only weakly related to these sources of satisfaction.” Jhally Goes on to say that in a market society, such as ours, people are taught to search for

happiness in consumerism. Staying true to American ideals Britney indulges in her money as she dances in the desert as a Bugatti swerves around her, she then dances in an exclusive club and all the while the camera flashes scenes of her in an alleyway as she dances in front of a black car with its headlights shining on her, putting the spotlight literally on her. The unidentified passengers of the black car watching her dance symbolizes her fans and everyone buying into her brand, captivated by her performance their attention is centered on her with the headlights spotlight. Catering to the idea that one day her audience could have everything that she has, a dancer wears a headpiece with speakers in her mouth as an unidentified hand turns them on showing that someday that could be their hand, and that they could have the spotlight, if they “work bitch”.

Throughout this video, Britney Spears presents her audience with overt sexiness and wealth, while subtle hints of how to achieve these things sneak in. playing up her importance by controlling other women, advertising her perfume and flashing to a billboard with her image plastered on it reading “live Britney” there is little guess work when viewers think about where she stands on the scale of relevance. Playing up her credentials as a famous pop singer Britney speaks to the desire Americans have of money, fortune and fame. Demonstrating for viewers that to achieve all of this one must sell themselves, meet the mass medias expectation of beauty, remain firmly planted in ones gender role, and not to forget to expose your midriff at every opportunity. All anyone has to do is “work” on these aspects and fame just might come their way.

### Works Cited

Jhally, Sut. "Image Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture." *Apwadenius.com*. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.

Serdar, Kasey L. "The Myriad: Undergraduate Academic Journal." *Westminster College: A Private Comprehensive Liberal Arts College in Salt Lake City, UT, Offering Undergraduate and Graduate Degrees in Liberal Arts and Professional Programs, including Business, Nursing, Education and Communication*. Westminster College, n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.

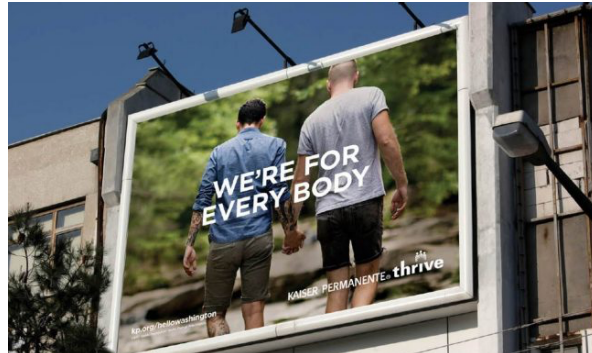
### **media analysis project**

A good way to approach the media analysis project is to first consider Geroge Gerbner's quote at the conclusion of the 2010 documentary *The Mean World Syndrome*:

Indeed, the telling of stories, the cultivation of a sense of who we are, what the world is like, has always been the principal shaper of human behavior. The new task, then, is to try to design a media system – a cultural environmental system – which will address the issue of how can we create an environment for our children, of stories, of all the socializing influences in which they grow up that is more fair, that is more equitable, that is more just, and less damaging than the one we have today.

Gerbner calls for a change in the current system of media representation. The task of the project is to research the current media landscape for a specific artifact (an ad campaign, commercial, film, song, magazine article, book, video game, etc.) and analyze how it functions to depict a more diverse picture of American culture. Your

analysis should be between *450-500 words*, and must consider how your example addresses a particular aspect of culture (race relations, gender norms, environmental issues, etc.) with the intent on designing a new “cultural environmental system” that Gerbner call for. For example, a student once analyzed the below Kaiser Permanente billboard as a more diverse representation of sexuality:



Another student looked at the below Oscar Mayer commercial and discussed the diverse array of race, age, and ability of the people depicted:

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/wid1/oscar-mayer-deli-fresh-honey-ham-school-for-us-all>

While another considered the taboo of mental health, and discussed the positive depiction of expressing your emotions in the below “Seize the Awkward” ad campaign:

<https://mashable.com/2018/01/17/seize-the-awkward-mental-health-suicide-prevention/#Mae4uePe8sqZ>