

Answer the following question in a 1000-1250 word essay:

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 function in terms of “antagonisms and contradictions”? How does O'Reilly frame his discussion about immigration with Geraldo Rivera in "us vs. them" terms?

The following essay is an example of an *A* paper turned in by a student. It provides thoughtful, detailed analysis of the question at hand, while using specific examples to support the writer's ideas. Some further formatting guidelines you should be following include:

- ~ Use specific, detailed examples from the show/text to support your analysis. This is crucial for writing successfully in this class.
- ~ 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. *I Love Lucy* not **I Love Lucy** or I Love Lucy.
- ~ 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 is a great site for information about the shows/films (though not an outside source; see below).
- ~ 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.
- ~ Do not simply copy down the readings/interpretations of your fellow students during the discussion and pass them off as your own. If we talk about something in class, I expect you to elaborate with your own perspective to support.
- ~ Use present tense for criticism (ex: *I Love Lucy* is a good example of... not, *I Love Lucy* was a good example of...).

You are also required to use **at least two** written sources to support your ideas in your papers. For each paper you are to use **a)** one of the chapters/essays read in class as a source, along with **b)** a source outside of the class materials that you have researched either in the library, or online. Wikipedia is not a source. In addition to your two written sources, you may also use other shows/texts as references. Be sure to cite your references appropriately using any citation method of your choosing (MLA Style, Chicago Style, etc.).

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

I do not accept physical papers, so please email all of your assignments to adam@apwadenius.com. Please send your paper in an editable format such as Microsoft word, Open Office, Text Edit, Notepad, or Pages. **No .PDF or .WPS files!** Adhere to standard formatting conventions (one-inch margins, 12 pt. font, double spaced, etc.). If you format your paper incorrectly (16pt. font, 2.5 spacing, etc.) I will simply reformat it as I'm grading, and you'll be docked points for improper submission. Do not try to skimp on providing analysis.

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You are responsible for emailing me your papers by the start of class time on the assigned due dates. Upon receipt of your paper I will email back a response that I received it, and will email back your graded paper with comments, usually a week after I receive them. If I don't email you back, assume I have not received your paper, and re-send it to me. You are not bothering me if I receive your paper multiple times; it's better to be safe than sorry!

sample essay

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.