

WRT 105
Rhetorical Cultural Analysis

Length:	5-6 pages
Points:	100
Draft Due Date:	At your scheduled conference (week 7)
Final Due Date:	October 29

Purpose

The Cultural Analysis, the second paper assigned in this course, is designed to help you build awareness of the products of the surrounding culture, and to analyze them critically. Cultural texts include any cultural artifacts (artwork, statues, buildings, ads, music, film, television, books, stories, etc.) that hold meaning because they gain and convey their significance in our culture. Because cultural texts comprise part of our everyday lives, they frequently appear value-free, neutral, or apolitical. Embedded within them, however, reside subtle messages and values that influence the attitudes of their audience. To investigate the positions, underlying assumptions, values, interests, and ideologies presented within it, I would like you to “read” a cultural text and write about it.

Audience

You should think of your audience for this assignment as fellow Syracuse University students. These students may not have knowledge of the same beliefs and ideas of which you have knowledge. But, as members of a common culture—Syracuse University—they may be aware of, and affected by, the cultural texts you discuss. You will need to make a clear and well-supported argument for your interpretation and understanding of the cultural text(s) and the ideologies involved in them. Be sure to consider how your audience might respond to your argument, and use that to identify and respond to possible **counterarguments**.

Assignment

For this assignment, you will write a 5-6 page essay in response to one of the following:

#1: Choose 2 print advertisements that center on a common theme of your choice (i.e. beauty products, beverages, vacation destinations, etc.). Conduct an analysis of each ad. What do you notice in common between them? What differs? How does each ad define its audience and how do you know? How do the ads make their arguments? What ideologies and beliefs underlie them? Do they share these same ideologies or are there important differences? Which ad most successfully convinces the audience of its claims? Why? Of course, this involves examining visual elements as part of your conclusions. ****You will need to include the ads with your paper when you submit it for grading.**

#2: A student’s Facebook page represents the person he or she has chosen others to see—sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Like an autobiography, Facebook pages never quite represent the author’s absolute “true” self, but rather a representation that he or she wishes others to see for a variety of reasons. Write an analysis of your own Facebook page that explores the person you construct and why you have chosen to construct yourself in that fashion. After all, your peers, professors, future employers, and just about anyone may be able to access this page in order to learn more about you. Identify your audience: who do you *expect* to see your page and who might *actually* see it (teachers, employers, parents, etc.)? How will your page present you to them (professional, fun-loving, immature)? What argument do you make about yourself? Look for

patterns in your posts or photographs. As you analyze, think about what is *not* contained in your Facebook page. What have you specifically chosen to exclude? Think about how this visual argument creates *you* as a cultural text. (Note: Many students struggle with their first attempt at writing on this option, as it requires you to move far beyond surface level statements about the fact that you don't post pictures of yourself partying because your grandma or a future employer may see them.)

#3: Choose some element of Syracuse culture to analyze. Some possibilities include: brochures for prospective students, the campus tour on the Syracuse website, fliers posted on campus, statues, buildings, and/or monuments on campus, etc. Explain how this item serves as a cultural text for the university. What argument does this item make, and how does it make this argument? Consider the ideology of Syracuse culture that your chosen "text" reinforces or subverts. What specific elements of the text clue you in to the ideology? Describe how the various visual elements of the text work to influence the audience. Finally, evaluate the success or failure of the text on conveying this ideology.
****You will need to submit a copy/picture of the item, flier, brochure, etc. that you choose.**

Evaluation Criteria

- *Appropriate and complete response to one of the above options
- *Inclusion of a clear thesis statement developed throughout the essay
- *Demonstrated understanding of rhetorical concepts discussed thus far
- *Evidence of critical thinking and reflection
- *Awareness of the specified audience
- *Presentation of error-free texts (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- *Use of a creative title that represents your essay