

Essay Assignment #1

Write a 4 page double-spaced paper. Cite at least one of the essays we have read for class as well as two other essays from the book we have not read. In some cases the prompts below ask you to find other sources on the web or to gather data on your own. These can substitute for citations from the book. Expect to have 3 to 4 sources in your Works Cited. Also plan to use examples from your own experience and your own contact with popular or sub-culture along with clear explanations to support your claim or main idea. Think back to our discussions of situation and how it can impact culture and texts when developing ideas for your paper. The prompts below give you a variety of genre options. Be sure to look at the particular genre in the glossary (IC 561-585). In each case, however, expect to write clear prose and to include detailed examples and reasons that logically connect to your main points.

1. Write a personal/reflective essay (IC 568-69, 570-72) that maps out all of the places and communities that have influenced your identity. These could include country, state, city, neighborhood, religion, parents, sub-cultures, academic disciplines, artistic or athletic communities, and much more. Each of these has particular cultural practices from marketing to communion to slam dancing that connect you to the places and communities and influence your identities. Each place or community has values and beliefs that influence the way you think and act. How do they all come together to make up your identity? How many identities do you have for different contexts? Which ones are real? Which ones are just roles that you play for particular audiences or situations even if you don't strongly identify with them? Which have been forced on you? Which have you sought out? Do you freely choose your identity? Is this possible? Be sure to look back to the semiotics site for ideas about values, myths, or ideologies, and to connect these issues to the readings, both one's we read in class and others in the book. Is identity a remix, for example? (58, 66)
2. Follow prompt number one but instead of writing a reflective essay write a dialogue (IC 569-70). Map out your multiple identities and turn them into fictional characters that carry on a discussion about the issues of identity and authenticity. (81)
3. Write an argumentative essay (IC 570-71, 573-74) that combines 1 article we've read and 2 we haven't. For example, Marc Spiegler, Nell Bernstein, James Ledbetter and David Klinghoffer all write about adopting a particular look and attitude in order to exhibit an authentic lifestyle choice. Look at the ways each author portrays young people and compare them with your own experiences of people around you. Go check out Myspace or Friendster or your friend's blogs. How is identity or authenticity represented in these spaces? Most of the article we read make a connection between authenticity and identity. Do media contexts subvert this connection (see Turkle for example)? From these sources, draw conclusions about the nature of authenticity and identity. This is similar to the personal essay but the personal essay will center on *your* identity while the argumentative essay will focus more on those around you. Also, you don't have to focus only on the essays mentioned here. Skim the others in the text and find some good connections to build an argument on.
4. Write up a report (IC 581) on something that you buy regularly or like to buy and analyze how it is marketed to you. This could be clothes, music, food, furniture, anything. You may want to refer back to advertisements you have lying around in magazines. You may want to watch the TV shows through which these are marketed to you. You may want to go to the mall and visit two or three stores. Look around at the products and how they are portrayed and informally interview someone who works there. You may want to go to web sites that market or discuss the product. Identify the images, the language, and the connotations that make up these real and/or media environments (refer back to the semiotics site for some ideas). The goal is to update Spiegler's essay and report on contemporary marketing strategies and values.
5. Write a manifesto (IC 577) on the relationship between art and commerce. Both Spiegler and Negativland discuss this relationship—Spiegler is more pro commerce, Negativland is obviously con. Develop your own position relative to theirs. What in the art-commerce relationship OK? Where is it a problem? Why? Cite the essays and bring in your own experience and examples. This piece will probably require you to define art. Art is almost as complex as identity. Think carefully about what art is to you as well as others. Define art in relation to artistic practices that you participate in or have some kind of investment in. Spell out that definition and then

base art's preferred relationship to commerce on that definition.

6. Write an opinion piece (IC 578-79) justifying or condemning P2P downloading. While most of you won't be remixing songs, you have and will download them. This argument will require you to look closely at the copyright law and carefully compare/contrast sampling to downloading. Try to look at downloading from multiple perspectives: the record company, the band, and the fans all have an investment in the music. In what ways are the companies hurt by downloading? In what ways are they helped? In what ways are the bands hurt by downloading? In what ways are they helped? In what ways are the fans hurt by downloading? In what ways are they helped? Find Mason's policy on P2P from their web site. Surf the web for articles on P2P to cite (but make sure the articles are from reputable authors and/or publishers). And then stake out your position in this complicated arena.

Peer Review: For peer review on Monday you'll need to write up a worksheet based around the model in the book (IC 25). Put in your name and brief comments 25-50 words, leave a blank line for the reader's name, and try to revise the generic questions in the book under reader's comments to fit your particular paper. Don't spend a lot of time on that, just make one pass through and revise the questions based on what comes to mind *after* writing your draft. Read over the Interview entry in the Genre glossary (IC 575-76) for some ideas about asking questions to get good information. Bring three paper copies of your draft and three worksheets. I'll try to put you in groups of 3 in class, which means you'd only need two copies, but you never know how the numbers will work out. In class on Monday, you'll exchange papers with your group and spend time reading the papers, commenting directly on the drafts, and then answering the question on the worksheet. After reviewing, you'll give the papers back, read over the comments, and then discuss them as a group.

Writing: For these papers I will be looking closely for: 1) a clear main claim or central idea with supporting reasons and examples that are logically connected to the main claim; 2) coherent paragraphs that don't jump around from sentence to sentence; 3) transitions (logical connections between paragraphs); 4) flow (no drastic shifts in content between sentences); 5) correct, clear sentences (no fragments or run-ons, no awkward wording, no subject/verb or pronoun disagreement). Number 5 is perhaps the most important at this juncture. It will be very difficult to get a good grade with sentences I can't decipher.

Format: Follow MLA format (See PSM 148-54). Be sure to include a header with Engl 101-section number, your name, date, and project/number (in this case Essay #1) in the top left corner of your first page. Your paper should be double spaced with 1" margins top, bottom, left, right. Font is typically 12 pt. Times New Roman. If you use another font, don't go larger than this—use your better judgment. Follow proper method for in-text citation (See PSM 128-35). The paper should include a Works Cited with precise MLA formatting (See PSM 135-48).

Delivery: This paper should be viewed as a project. Include all invention work, a **revised** summary/response paper, peer reviews, and drafts, in a folder (left pocket) with the final typewritten draft, stapled in the left corner of the page, placed in the right pocket. Presentation is all about credibility. If you have everything and it's all neatly in order, it signifies that you have your act together. If it is a mess and you have missing stuff, it signifies that you don't have your act together. This may or may not be true, but it is what the instructor will think when s/he picks up your paper to grade it.

Important notes:

- By 4 pages I do not mean 3 ¼ pages. I mean 4 full pages! You can spill over to 5 pages but no more.
- A draft generally means complete sentences and paragraphs. Bring something readable.
- Do not forget to title your essay: remember; make titles specific like a version of your thesis.

Important Dates:

- W Feb 22, assignment, invention day
- M Feb 27, peer review day
- R Feb 26, Essay 1 due

(See online syllabus for details that have changed for these days: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk/101>)