

English 106: Researched Analysis Essay

One of the central goals of English 106 is to engage students in college-level research writing. Many 106 students often confuse research writing with report writing, where the author's main purpose is to objectively report information on a specific topic. As we've been talking about all semester, though, college-level academic writers engage in research because they have a new idea that contributes in some way to the existing research on a particular issue. This assignment is designed to introduce you to this research and writing process, as you'll synthesize a variety of sources to develop an analysis of a specific set of materials.

For this assignment, you will choose a "text" (see options below) and analyze how it is designed to appeal to viewers and/or how it conveys various cultural values or messages to viewers (i.e. what ideas, beliefs or values is it selling beyond the product/overt message itself?). Then, you will develop and situate your analysis in relation to what other significant sources have argued about these (or similar types of) images. For the final project, you must use at least 3 sources in some way, one of which must be a scholarly, peer-reviewed source you located yourself. One of your sources may, but does not have to, come from our class readings; however, it may not count as your peer-reviewed source. Assume an academic audience (your peers and other professors) who are well-educated, and have expectations regarding academic discourse, but who may not be familiar with the subject. You will be writing 3 drafts of this essay, and you will get feedback on drafts from your peer-response group and from me, which will help you develop and revise your essay. The essay should be 7-8 typed pages, in MLA format.

You have several options for choosing, as suggested by the readings we have done this semester.

You could choose a particular advertising campaign and analyze it in conversation with other secondary sources (For example, you could analyze something like Dove's controversial "Real Beauty" ad campaign). You'll need to have a basis for choosing: Is this campaign particularly controversial? Popular? Important in terms of cultural or social messages? Following Virginia Blum's lead, you could choose a TV show (reality or otherwise) and examine how it is constructed to appeal to viewers and/or how it conveys particular kinds of beliefs or values. Like bell hooks, you could choose to analyze a popular film and examine how it conveys particular kinds of cultural messages along with the entertainment it offers. Daniel Hade is a good model for how you might analyze a set of popular reading materials, like a popular book, or magazine, or comic

In other words, we are using a broad definition of the word "text," and there are plenty of things for you to choose from, for example paintings, photojournalism, documentary film, comics/graphic novels, advertising, etc. Just make sure that whatever you choose that it provides enough material to develop 7-9 pages, and that you have a reason for choosing it (for example, it is particularly important, revealing, strange, or problematic in some way?). While you may select a set of materials that you find personally interesting, you will most importantly want to choose a primary object that is analytically valuable. Also, be sure that what you have chosen is available for you to view and analyze – don't wait until the last minute to put your hands on the materials. You should lay your hands on your chosen primary and do some preliminary analysis before beginning secondary research (this ensures that you have some of your own ideas before reading secondary material).

An excellent researched analysis essay will effectively use analytical methods, develop a specific analytical thesis whose significance is clearly explained, effectively support claims with analysis and examples, effectively use secondary sources to help frame and develop the analysis of the primary source, and effectively use and integrate quotes and paraphrases. Good essays will also use organizational techniques to orient the reader, such as using an effective introduction and conclusion, and making effective organizational choices such as paragraphs and transitional phrases. Finally, your paper must use appropriate and correct grammar, word choice, sentence-structure, spelling, punctuation, and style, as well as correctly formatted MLA in-text citations and a works cited page. Your collection of drafts should show significant revision from first to final draft.