Paper 2: Rhetorical Analysis of Cultural Artifact

Description
For your second paper, you are assigned to do a rhetorical analysis of a cultural artifact to shed new light on the meanings of that artifact. In other words, you are being asked to select a cultural artifact and consider:

- What ideas are embedded in this artifact?
- And, how are these messages conveyed? Through what rhetorical means?

To put it more simply, you'll have to do a rhetorical analysis of some thing--anything. Your choice. It could be a website, a YouTube video, a song, a commercial, a mechanical pencil, a USB cable, a website, a magazine cover, a rock...really--anything. After you choose your thing, your artifact, begin thinking about the cultural meaning of that thing. For instance, what ideas, beliefs, or stereotypes are being represented through the rhetoric of the artifact? Then think about how that meaning is being made by using what you learned about rhetoric and the rhetorical appeals to analyze that thing. In other words, ask yourself: Who is the rhetor? Who is the target audience? What is the text? What is the context? What is the purpose? Does the artifact succeed in fulfilling this purpose? Keep in mind that there can be more than one target audience, rhetor, or purpose. Are there appeals to ethos, pathos, and/or logos? If so, describe the different ways that you see these appeals working, using details, specifics, and examples. It may also help to think about some of the more self-evident aspects of the artifact: what do you clearly see or hear? And, perhaps more importantly, what (or who) is being left out? Note that you do not need to answer all of these questions. You may want to pick and choose the ones that work best to support your central purpose. Remember that this paper should also be focused on one central purpose that is specific. It should also include lots of details, examples, and specifics.

Lastly, your paper should include some evaluation on your part: Is the rhetoric of the message effective? What is its impact? How, if at all, do you think the artifact affects its audience?

Tip: For this paper, it will be important that you think about the impact of the artifact on its audience.

Assignment Goals
Especially in the digital age, we are constantly confronted with images, ideas, and points of view. For instance, in the U.S. at least, we receive a great deal of information about issues like presidential elections, gender...
roles, and the legalization of drugs from popular culture and the media that purvey it. Ideas portrayed in the media--in commercials, television shows, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, movies, music, games, and on the internet--are largely responsible for reinforcing stereotypes about various groups of people based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, sexuality, nationality, age, (dis)ability, or other divisive categories. You may find that advertisements often exploit certain groups to convey messages in the media (most obvious one: women). Gaining the skills of critical/rhetorical analysis will help us read the messages that surround us more deeply, and thus enable us to make better-informed decisions in our everyday lives. One of the major goals of this assignment is therefore to refine your ability to critically analyze the objects that surround us and inform our understandings of the world. You will also continue to work on forming a clear and engaging central purpose, supporting your claims with evidence, and writing with a specific audience in mind.

This assignment also engages the following shared learning outcomes for First-Year Writing:

- Use writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry.
- Work within a repertoire of genres and modes to meet appropriate rhetorical purposes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of writing as an epistemic and recursive process and effectively apply a variety of knowledge-making strategies in writing.
- Engage in reading for the purposes of reflection, critical analysis, decision-making, and inquiry.
- Read in ways that improve writing, especially by demonstrating an ability to analyze invention, arrangement, and revision strategies at work in a variety of texts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of reading as an epistemic and recursive meaning making process.
- Apply methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding.

**Reflection Requirement**

Include a 1-2 page (single-spaced) cover memo with your final version. For this memo, you should reflect on your writing process and experiences in writing this assignment. For example, you might consider:

- What are some of your writing strengths that came through for this assignment?
- What would you like to improve in terms of your writing? How do you plan to work on making these improvements?
- What are some examples of feedback you received through peer response workshops or from your instructor that you found useful and that will help your writing improve?
- What skills would you like to take away from this assignment?
- What are some things you learned/realized in doing this project that you would like to remember for future writing?
- What did your writing process look like in creating this paper?
- How did you choose the cultural artifact that you did?
- Why did you take a particular stance in this paper?
- What are some things you learned/realized along the way that affected your revision decisions?
- How did your writing process help you improve in areas listed on the shared learning outcomes for First-Year Writing (see syllabus)?

Note that a good reflective essay will do more than simply describe what you did and when you did it; it will reflect on and analyze these decisions, providing reasons, explaining why you did what you did, and considering the implications of these decisions.

Summary of Requirements

- ✓ Draw on a cultural artifact to make some larger point about rhetoric, or how meaning is made through that artifact.
- ✓ Do not do research for this paper.
- ✓ Make sure that there is a clear central purpose.
- ✓ Include details and examples to support your claims.
- ✓ Length: 4-6 pages (this is a guideline and not a rule)
- ✓ As stated in the syllabus: standard font (like Times New Roman), 10-12 pt., double-spaced, APA or MLA format, one-inch margins, doc, docx, rtf, or pdf file format, follow file naming guidelines (WRA110_Yourlastname_2-Version#).
- ✓ Reflective cover memo.

Due Dates

First Version due: Sunday 10/9 (Upload to ELI.)
Second Version due: Sunday 10/16 (Upload to ELI.)
Final Version due: Sunday 10/23 (Post to appropriate drop box in ANGEL.)

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