

Analysis Paper or Podcast (300 points, 6-8 typed pages or 15-20 minute podcast)

Due Date: Due On or Before April 29

This paper or podcast expands some aspect of your group's local folk or popular culture report. Where the group reports focused primarily on describing the culture or some aspect of the selected local folk or popular culture, the analysis paper focuses on explaining the culture's historical or cultural significance.

This assignment asks you to use a local folk or popular artifact to interpret some aspect of American culture—an aspect related in some way to the cultural mores, roles, or myths that Americans live by. Your interpretation of this "cultural artifact" should help an audience interested in American culture to understand better—more fully, more critically—some aspect of your local American culture as it exists today. Your analysis may show the continuing power of cultural myths and mores in our lives today; it may show how American values are embodied or communicated in the various forms our culture takes.

Topic Choice:

Your topic could be a common cultural practice that your audience may take for granted the way it is—a thing in nature. You may show readers how and why it is not "natural," but specific to our popular or folk culture.

You may choose a key person to your local folk/popular culture and examine the persona that person creates and try to account for his/her success—or his/her controversial nature.

You may want to look at a popular image or value as depicted in the media—images of your local folk/popular culture. How do such images both reflect and shape cultural attitudes and myths?

Perhaps a work of art from this culture expresses a cultural attitude—a song, a book, a photograph, or painting? Perhaps a trend or a fad or some other particular artifact represents or reveals something about American culture in ways we have not realized.

Selection and Arrangement of Information

Clearly you'll have more to do in this assignment than simply describe your subject. The following suggestions are meant to help you focus and develop your ideas:

- Think about the audience you've chosen to address and about what impact you want to have. Imagine them as a friendly but skeptical audience, willing to be persuaded by a reasonable argument. Perhaps they are familiar with the topic or image you have selected but less conscious of its implications than they realize. Will you show them new connections and interpretations? Will you give them a new perspective?
- Next, gather information about your subject. What aspects of an American mythology or cultural more are the audience—are we—asked to identify with, and how are its characteristics embodied in your topic? What do most people seem to think about the topic? What else might it mean? Try to remain open as you gather more information about your subject: consider its parts; look at details; compare a variety of examples of it; look for evidence about the causes and effects of images; consider contrasts, too. Think also about similar practices or artifacts in the culture and common factors that might account for them as well. Then, think about how this information can help you shape a thesis—an interpretation you wish to argue.
- As you develop your argument, start with the questions you have about the topic. Consider also questions that the audience may ask; decide how your responses can be organized around a particular claim and support for that claim. Try to assess the strengths of your evidence and the changes or modifications your thesis may need.
- As you draft the paper, think about structure. Your introduction should make a clear contract with your reader. The body paragraphs will develop the main points in an order that is best for the audience and purpose; think strategically about the developing responses of the audience. The conclusion should present a statement of the thesis that the audience is prepared to accept given the evidence and reasoning you have shown.

Research:

If you have knowledge of other cultures because of family background or travel or living abroad, you may want to use examples from those cultures as points of comparison. Your own experiences of your own culture—personal or observed—may also be valuable evidence.

To assist your argument about the text's historical or cultural significance, you may need to conduct research in peer-reviewed journals or books. (Outside research is not required, but most topics will benefit from some type of outside research.) Helpful Resources that contain Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books are available in Stockton's college library and the library's Periodical Databases.

Suggested Format:

- **Introduction:** Peak your reader's interest and focus your argument. Introduce your topic and the aspect of the historical or cultural context that your analysis will illuminate.
 - **Thesis:** Place your thesis in the first or second paragraph. This thesis should be analytical rather than purely descriptive.
 - **Focus!** Be careful your thesis doesn't bite off more than a 6-8 typed page paper can reasonably argue.
 - **Interest!** Make sure your reader understands (implicitly or explicitly) what makes this argument worthwhile. What will the reader gain from reading your argument?
- **Body:** The paper's support (approximately pages 2-8). Start each paragraph with a clear topic sentence that connects the evidence with a portion of the thesis.
- **Conclusion:** Can be brief—one paragraph. Wrap up your argument. You might consider talking about other issues your argument raises—aspect your focus did not allow you cover, but would be important for a longer paper. Finally, double check to make sure your concluding remarks match your thesis statement. Have you shifted directions? Come to a more specific set of conclusions? If so, revise your thesis to reflect these changes.

If you elect to do an individual podcast, you will still likely follow the above format, but the podcast has the benefit, for example, of incorporating direct quotations from people you might interview as resources for your topic. A podcast might also be especially powerful if you are working with music. The podcast, like the paper, should have a clear argument, focus, and support.

Before passing in the final paper or podcast I encourage you to drop by my office hours to chat about your paper, look over your thesis statement, etc. **No revisions will be allowed.** Put your very best effort into the final draft.