Gender & Society, Spring 2020

University of Northern Colorado

Media Critique

**Purpose:**

Often, we think of media products as fun, harmless diversions, rather than as a set of cultural objects deserving our sustained attention, analysis and critique. However, the plethora of media each of us regularly encounters aid in the maintenance of oppression and privilege at macro, meso, and micro levels. This project asks you to consider how meso-level media institutions both creates and reflects or resists gender ideology at macro levels. Consider, too, how media affects individuals at the micro level. What can the critical interrogation of media teach us about the co-construction of gender, race, class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, religion, and citizenship?

You will compose a **1200-1500-word (4-5 pages)** analysis of a media product(s) of your choice. First, you will collect data in the form of qualitative observation and analysis of your chosen media. Next, you will examine your sources to look for patterns and themes that are being communicated or *not* communicated. What do the patterns within your data tell you about the gendered messages the media convey? What are the purposes or aims of these messages? The analyses you include in your paper should include the following elements:

1. Compose an introduction explaining your findings, culminating in a thesis statement. Be sure that you explain how your evidence connects to your thesis throughout your paper.
2. Describe your observational context. Give your reader all the information they need to understand the context in which you gathered your data.
3. Discuss how the media you observed maintains and/or challenges the ways we commonly understand and embody gender stereotypes at macro, meso, and micro levels?
4. Drawing from **at least three different class materials** (readings or films), use those assigned readings and/or films to analyze the portrayals of women and/or men and/or trans/non-binary folks that you found. How does this material help you better understand the meaning and consequences of gender stereotyping in mass media at macro, meso, and micro levels? Your selection of material will figure into your grade.
5. Compose a conclusion in which you re-emphasize the importance of your findings and the significance of your thesis statement.
6. Cite your sources in your bibliographic appendix.
7. Include a second appendix in which you explain your data set and provide an inventory of the media you examined. List what sources/data you included in your analysis and tell me how you arrived at that list. Provide screenshots or links to primary source materials that you wish to include to support your argument.

**Possible Topics:**

To effectively complete this project, you must observe enough data to identify and remark upon emerging patterns. This works better, and is more fun, if you examine media that you regularly consume. You have a variety of options to gather your data; select one of the following:

* Purchase and examine one fashion or health magazine aimed at women and another aimed at men. You should do either two fashion magazines or two health magazines, not a mix.
* Purchase and examine two magazines aimed at LGBTQA, Black, Asian, or Latinx, or other another marginalized community.
* Watch 2 hours of “niche” television aimed at LGBTQA populations, or at a racial/ethnic group paying attention to both advertising and programming.
* Watch 2 hours of regular network television (not cable channels), paying attention to both advertising and programming.
* Watch 2 mainstream Hollywood films from the same genre (e.g. drama, sci-fi, fantasy, action, etc.) that are related in some way.
* Examine the portrayals of women and men and the rules and interactions occurring within at least four video games.
* Listen to 15 songs by one group or artist, released over time.
* View 5 music videos from the same genre (e.g. hip hop, pop, country, rap, etc.).
* Watch 3 or more episodes of a 1-hour television program, or 5 or more episodes of a ½-hour television program.
* Browse a social media cite of your choosing (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter). Observe the design of the platform, the rules of interaction and the flow of content.
* Discuss another option for gathering your data with me. Think creatively!