**ENGL 1302**

**Essay Assignment #2**

For the next formal paper, you are going to write an analysis of one or more advertisements. The purpose of this essay is to explain the meaning of the ads you choose to analyze and explain what they say about American culture. Use the readings and class discussions to help you analyze the ads and organize your essay. Remember to examine *how* the ads are put together, *why* they designed as they are, and *what* they ultimately mean.

**Procedure:**

First, decide on the type of advertisement you would like to analyze. You can also choose to do more than one ad. For example, you might want to analyze ads that have a specific theme or appeal; to examine a pair of ads for a similar product, or to analyze an entire ad campaign for a certain company. The possibilities are many.

Specific criteria for selection:

* The ad must be an actual advertisement—that is, something designed for the purposes of selling a product or service to consumers. You may not use an artwork, a parody of another ad, a PSA (Public Service Announcement, such as an anti-smoking campaign), or some random image that you found online. If you are not sure, check with me first!
* The ad must be something printed in a newspaper or magazine, aired on television, or posted online. You will need to offer context by citing where and when the ad appeared and to provide either the still images (scan, jpeg, etc) or hyperlinks for online items.
* The ad must be for a U.S. company or product and promoted within the U.S. No foreign materials.
* The ad must have been produced somewhat recently (within the past 5 years)

Once you have found your ads, begin to make notes about your observations as a means of organizing your thoughts. Follow the “Guidelines for Analyzing Advertisements” below to help you make notes. Employ your critical thinking skills: closely examine the images you see, discuss what is *explicit* (denotation) and *implicit* (connotation) in the text, and analyze the context in which it appears.

**Guidelines for Analyzing Advertisements**

To enact a “reading” of an advertisement, carefully analyze and discuss the details of your advertisement and then answer the questions below. The idea is to show how the ads reveal something about the character of American consumers or America itself.

Note that you are not expected to answer each every question listed below. Focus on those that are most relevant to the ad you have. In any case, be specific in your responses.

Begin by looking at all of the details of the ad:

* What catches your eye, and what do you notice first (foreground)? What do you notice when you look more closely (background)?
* Are there people in the ad? Who are they? How are they represented or characterized?
* Are there prominent objects, images, or colors? What ideas do they denote and/or connote?
* Are there prominent words or phrases? Is there accompanying text (copy) used? What do the words or phrases denote and/or connote?

Now use your detailed observations to answer the questions below to make detailed notes:

1. What is your prior knowledge of the product? or of the advertisement? How does this help you understand the ad’s meaning?
2. Who is the audience for the advertisement? How can you tell? What factors seem important in determining the audience? What assumptions do the advertisers make about the audience?
3. In what ways is the ad designed to manipulate the audience into buying the product? How does the ad make its appeal? What emotions does it play upon? What desires does it commodify?
4. What unstated messages does the ad convey? What themes does it utilize? What mythologies (common stories) or ideologies (belief systems) does it contain? What does the ad tell us about American culture?

**Developing Your Analysis and Essay**

You need to find a **focus** for your essay. What will you emphasize most in your analysis? Once you have decided on a focus, develop a clear **thesis statement**. Everything in the essay should provide support for the thesis. Having a clear thesis will also help you develop a strong introductory paragraph.

Format:

Your final essay should be 3-4 pages in length. Each draft should be typed and double-spaced, with one inch margins on all sides, and have the following information in the upper left corner: your name, the date, the course and section number, and the draft number (1st, Final, etc).

Your essay should contain the following elements:

* An introduction that offers a broad context, a focus, and a clear thesis statement
* A description of the key features and important details of the advertisement.
* A discussion of the ways in which the ad is designed to appeal to the audience. What emotions or desires does it play upon? How does it manipulate the viewer?
* An analysis of the meanings and messages of the ad. What are the unstated ideas? What are the implicit messages? What mythologies or ideologies does it rely upon?

We will be conducting a workshop with your first draft, so you will have opportunity for constructive criticism from your peers, and plenty of time to develop your essay. Please refer to the course calendar for the due dates for the first draft and the final draft.

Citations:

References to sources and quotations from them will be done with parenthetical citation using the MLA format. At the end of the essay, provide a separate Works Cited page, again using the MLA format. Here are a few examples of citations for advertisements of various kinds in and in different formats:

Ford F150. Advertisement. *Newsweek*, 11 May 2012, p. 22.

Old Spice. Advertisement. *adforum*. 28 Aug. 2013. <http://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/34443774>

“Puppy Love.” Budweiser Advertisement. *YouTube*. 29 Jan. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQB7QRyF4p4>