

Essay IV

In Essay IV you will offer your own critique of consumer culture. In doing so, you must fold in the ideas of at least two of the authors we read this term, with references to them in the form of quotes or paraphrases. You will need, of course, to find a particular angle of approach—I don't want to read essays asserting that consumer culture is good for people or bad for people—I want you to make an argument about a specific aspect of consumer culture. It might help you to begin to imagine putting some of our authors in conversation with each other: what would Phyllis Rose and James Twitchell have to say to each other re: consumer culture and spirituality? What would Adam Gopnik and Wendell Berry have to say to each other about the local vs. the global? What might Juliet Schor want to say to Twitchell? What common ground might Diane Johnson and Peter Singer occupy—and what different solutions do their essays suggest? I want to see you engaged with some of the ideas we've been considering all term, pushing them a little farther, exploring the things that didn't get said in class or in your homework responses.

This essay will be written in the form of a conversation—an exchange of letters between two classmates. (Essays in this form are called “epistolary essays.”) You can take as your model the exchange of letters between Renzetti and Beck on the subject of dogs and public spaces. You need not, however, follow the argumentative tone of that exchange; you may choose to debate each other, but you may choose instead to engage in a more open-ended conversation, a mutual exploration of ideas. You'll write 3 letters each; each letter will be 1½ - 2 pages—i.e., each of you will write 4½-6 pages total.

Style will be informal; when you paraphrase or quote authors we've read, or others, however, you must identify them in your text. For example: As Doug Rushkoff suggested in “They Say,” You do not need to provide a Works Cited for this paper.

Audience: You are writing to an individual this time; but the resultant essay must be conceived as having a broad audience—educated young adults and adults. For example, it might appear in the Sunday Boston *Globe* “Ideas” section, much as the essay on dogs appeared in the Toronto *Globe & Mail*.

Deadlines: You'll write this essay in stages, beginning with freewriting, then a single letter, responses to that letter, and so on. Check the revised syllabus for more info on timing of parts of this essay.