

Homework Assignment #7

Essay II

Select an ad or ad campaign that interests you and that you want to think about. You may discuss either print ads or commercials, or both if they are part of the same campaign. Your job is to do a close reading of the ad(s), both visual and verbal elements. Using the essays by Brubach, Gladwell (“Khakis”) and Douglas as models, tell us what the ads are selling and how they do so. You’ll want to let us know if think the ad is intended to appeal to a particular audience, such as children and/or adolescents, girls and/or young women, or boys and/or young men, and so on. And let us know whether and how the ad appeals to the “romantic” or “classical” shopper. You may also find it useful to apply criteria re: ad techniques devised to appeal to men and women as discussed by Gladwell (“Khakis”) or techniques of persuasion noted by Rushkoff.

Make sure, too, that your readers know what you think of the ad(s): form a thesis that relates them to wider cultural ideas and/or values. Your audience for this essay is high school and college students (as well as, of course, me). However, I’m not looking for a schematic approach, but for a lively, engaging essay that will catch students’ attention and get them to see your ad(s) in a new way. 4-5 p.

Notes:

- 1) **Format:** Treat this as an informal essay. That is, if you quote sources, work references to them into the text rather than using citations or footnotes.
- 2) **Tone:** Although your purpose is serious, you are not restricted to using a formal tone such as you would typically use in a research paper. Consider the different ways Brubach and Gladwell approach their subjects. In other words, you may choose to make your presence in your essay explicit, as they do, or to keep the focus strictly on the material you’re discussing. Similarly, you may use humor if that seems like a good way to engage with your topic, or a more serious tone, as Jean Kilbourne does.
- 3) **Logic and claims:** This kind of assignment carries a temptation to make large claims about the intentions and effects of advertising. Be very careful how you word such claims; do not make claims you cannot support.