

HUMANITIES DEI-SJ OER



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Humanities

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology

While certainly a complex theoretical concept, ideology nevertheless provides vital language for making sense of the power, influence, and constitutive nature of cultural productions (from literature to Hollywood and everything in between); in this chapter, students will be introduced to the concept and have scaffolded opportunities to utilize the framework within their own critical cultural analyses.

[1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay](#)

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1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay

As Eric Liu begins in [‘How To Understand Power,’](#) we all move, each and every day, through systems and structures and guidelines—systems of power—that we’re not always fully in control of:



At first, this may seem a bit depressing, or, perhaps, even like a down-right lie: who is Liu to question? Who is he to say we do not wield full agency over our lives? But, as he notes, power isn’t really so much a question of ‘good’ or ‘bad’—it’s a force, an element of life, akin to fire or physics. The evaluation of power lies in how it’s deployed—what ends it achieves—rather than just some presumed, inherently negative ‘thing.’ It is a system of power, after all, which protects me from getting decked in the face every time I leave my apartment; it is, likewise, that very same system of power which suppressed my right to publicly love who I wanted to love in decades and centuries prior. Power isn’t good or bad: it just is.

In Liu’s sketch, **power** is defined specifically as “the ability to make others do what you would have them do.” Sometimes, this force can be expressed quite overtly. The bigger, taller, scarier bully asks for your lunch money—physical force compels you to do what you otherwise wouldn’t do, and hand over the cash. To continue the theme: the government passes a law mandating a legal drinking age—high schoolers are compelled to party in secret, when the parents are out of town. The students gather en masse outside the school grounds, demanding access to better resources—the school administrative body is compelled to act in a direction they may not have otherwise.

But not all expressions of power are as overt, or as easy to spot. Take this scenario, for example. You’re hunkering down for a night of old-school, classic television; you flip on Fox, it’s Sunday night, it’s the ‘Animation Domination’ night. Up first is *Family Guy*, where you indulge in the comedic antics of a white, middle-class, heteronormative family: a stay-at-home mom, a breadwinner dad, a son, a daughter, a baby, and a dog, living and loving in suburban America. Up next is *American Dad*, where we find a shockingly similar arrangement: a stay-at-home mom, a breadwinner dad, a son, a daughter, a fish, and—for a bit of intrigue—an alien; white, upper-middle class background, living and loving in suburban America. You’re really feeling yourself, so you cozy up for the next program: *The Simpsons*: a stay-at-home mom, a breadwinner dad, a son, a daughter, a baby, a cat and a dog, middle-class background, living and loving in suburban America. And, just as soon as we might say: well, at least they’re all yellow—yellow, in *The Simpsons*, is a stand-in for whiteness: we know this, because characters of color aren’t drawn yellow. The trend continues: *Bob’s Burgers*, *South Park*, *King of the Hill*—animated show after animated show putting forward the same generalizations, the same stories, the same narratives... despite the fact that, as a drawn medium, these families could quite literally be *anything*. Some might even have a name for this continually-depicted arrangement: the Nuclear Family. They might even think of this as the ‘normal’—and, maybe even ‘ideal’—familial arrangement in America.

Of course, there are plenty of families out there in America that don’t look like those culled from the minds of Seth MacFarlane and Matt Groening and the like. But in continually putting forward the same idea of the ‘successful family,’ these programs subtly suggest what we’re *all* meant to aspire to. It limits who can be seen within the ‘American Dream,’ who is meant to achieve it, and what role we’re meant to play in it. It compels us, perhaps, to act in certain ways we might not have otherwise, or at the very least to hold particular beliefs we might not have otherwise had. And that’s what Liu is getting at when he talks about some of those less tangible, softer powers that nevertheless assert themselves upon us each and every day—the power of norms, the power of social and cultural conditionings, the power of technological and mediated influence. Within the humanities and social sciences, we often call these kinds of powers—the power to shape ideas, our ways of seeing and making sense of the world—powers of ‘ideology.’

For some of us, this may be a term we've heard before; for others, this may be our first time encountering it—no matter your experience, [this light-hearted, introductory video from media scholar Matthew Hale may prove helpful](#):



The beginning of an understanding of ideology can, in many ways, be found in the name itself: **ideology** is a term we use to describe the prevailing 'ideas' of society, the beliefs and assumptions any given cultural/social/political group holds to be true and self-evident and unassailable. One is not born into the world believing, for instance, that one political party is better than another, that one career path is more favorable than another, that one system of finance is better than another—these beliefs are *ideologies*, and those who ascribe to these beliefs have come to hold them through processes of *ideological indoctrination*. And while some ideologies can be benign, others can be quite dangerous: one is not born believing, for example, that there are differences in ability between men and women, but ideologies of patriarchy insist that there are, and convince many that there are; one is not born thinking differently about people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds, but ideologies of white supremacy say otherwise; one is not born thinking that one form of love is more respectable than another, but ideologies of heteronormativity claim the opposite.

That said, ideology, like power, isn't 'good' or 'bad,' but rather a fact of social life: each and every day, we encounter thousands of ideological messages, which serve to reinforce (or challenge!) certain 'logics' of the world, certain ways of thinking, seeing, believing, and making sense which holds a cultural group together, dictating right from wrong, acceptable from unacceptable, agreeable to disagreeable. We refer to the most overwhelming, widely-held, and most influential ideologies—such as white supremacy, patriarchy, Judeo-Christianity, capitalism—as **dominant ideologies**, but their counterparts (i.e., feminism, multiculturalism, etc) are *also* to be understood as ideologies.

Though ideology moves through many channels, mass media—such as movies, social media, music, TV, radio—plays a particularly important role. In fact, as influential scholar Stuart Hall argues, “media channels and artifacts carry decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere,” having become the primary conduit “through which we perceive the ‘worlds,’ the ‘lived realities’ of others, and imaginarily reconstruct their lives and ours into some intelligible ‘whole-of-the-world,’ some ‘lived totality’” (372). As contemporary media scholar Nicholas Couldry adjoins, “one of the most distinctive features of media power [is] the ability to influence the basic reference points of social life” (146). In other words, what both Hall and Couldry are getting at is that there is no ‘just’ when it comes to media culture—‘just’ a movie, ‘just’ an app, ‘just’ a clothing brand; instead, each device, each production, each phenomenon adds to an ever-growing basis upon which we come to know ourselves, our peers, and the worlds around us—they reinforce particular ideas, understandings, and ways of making sense in our world, and simultaneously de-emphasize other perspectives. Think about the Animation Domination argument from above, and all the ideological ‘lessons’ put forth: men are meant to be breadwinners and women stay-at-home mothers, success is a two-story home in the suburbs, white skin is the de facto skin color (and culture) of America, to list a few of the many.

This, ultimately, is what the bombastic, pessimistic philosopher Slavoj Žižek is getting at [in this clip from *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*](#):



Power and ideologies are all around us, have always been all around us, will always be all around us; each and every day, we have, and will always, encounter countless structures which serve to compel us in a variety of directions we might not have taken otherwise. Many of these forces are for good; they help keep us, as Thomas Hobbes wrote way back in 1651, from a life “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” But, with many of the cases discussed above, these forces can be used for less noble ends, too. And so we must, like Ben Nada in *They Live*, put on the glasses, to see, Žižek argues, “the *real* message beneath all the propaganda, publicity, glitz, posters and so on.”

While we certainly don’t have to follow Žižek all the way down the dystopian rabbit hole, I’ve always found the imagery of his film (and of *They Live*) a helpful way of ‘seeing’ ideology: an advertisement for a computer entertainment system is replaced with ‘obey’ in simple typeface; a billboard for a Caribbean getaway replaced with ‘marry and reproduce’—the whole world reimagined as a series of socio-political commandments, subliminally preaching a gospel of ‘no thoughts,’ ‘stay asleep,’ and ‘obey,’ indoctrinating the unaware masses into blissful compliance.

Similarly, I find the allegory of the glasses provides a helpful conduit for understanding a core skill of media studies: **close reading**, which asks us to continually take the time to ask those age-old rhetorical questions to ensure we’re getting the full picture. To closely read is to inquire about the ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘why,’ and ‘where’s’ of one’s consumption, to think critically about what one is consuming, how they’re consuming it, where it comes from, and so on; to ask important questions like: how is this information or media trying to persuade me? What’s in it for those who created it? Where did it come from and what does its origins say about its reliability?

Putting on the glasses in this way—thinking critically about not just about the information itself, but the larger contexts in which it is couched—can help us develop [what Tressie McMillan Cottom calls ‘disciplined curiosity,’](#) where one strives to be strategic about how and what they consume:



We are surrounded, each and every day, by countless ideological positions which serve to influence the truths we hold about the world; this unit, and others in this collection, looks to provide us with the critical tools necessary to navigate these ideological waters with more care, consternation, and effectiveness.

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1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity

Reading Culture | Classroom Activity | 'How'd You Get That Idea'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- This is a two-parter—a guided lecture and an interactive ‘theory in action’ class activity/discussion—intended to introduce the concepts of power and ideology, and is designed for students of all experience levels. A link to a prepared Google Slides presentation can be found [here](#) (with a preview offered below).
 - Slides 3-8 offer first a brief over-arching sketch of the two concepts, and slides 9-13 a more detailed discussion of some of major theoretical ‘players in the game’
 - Slides 14-30 offer various ways for students to see the concepts in action, and begin to develop a critical ideological eye when engaging with media artifacts
- This class activity is meant to follow J. F. Lindsay’s multimedia essay, and as such will make reference to a few of the materials contained within his piece
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material and edit it as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Lecture

- Power, within the social sciences, isn’t what you might typically think of: it isn’t ‘power’ as in brute force, it isn’t ‘the power’—the capacity—to do something, it’s power as in: the structures and systems that instill and maintain particular relations between individuals, institutions, nations. For media studies, of particular interest is how mediated tools work to instill, reproduce, challenge, and disrupt power relations between different stakeholders
 - We have, then, a public execution and a time-table. They do not punish the same crimes or the same kind of delinquent. But they each define a certain penal style. Less than a century separates them” (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*)
 - “It all... is about power in the end” (Roger Silverstone, *Media and Morality*)
 - “Power is the central thing that social scientists study... at the core of who and what we are” (Jonathan Hearn, *Theorizing Power*)
 - “...one of the most distinctive features of media power [is] the ability to influence the basic reference points of social life” (Nick Couldry, “Power” - *Keywords for Media Studies*)
- “How to Understand Power” | Eric Liu
 - “Everyday of your life you move through systems of power that other people made”
 - “Power is the ability to make other do what you would have them do”
 - “It determines who gets to determine the rules of the game”
 - “Power is no more inherently good or evil than fire or physics. It just is”
 - Six main sources of power: 1. Physical force | 2. Wealth | 3. State action | 4. Social norms | 5. Ideas | 6. Numbers
 - Three laws worth examining: 1. Power is never static (hegemonic negotiation) | 2. Power is like water; it flows like a current though everyday life | 3. Power compounds, power begets more power (same goes for powerlessness)
 - Instructor Notes: I usually talk through each of the sources of power Liu identifies, having the class generate responses for each category. I skip over social norms, returning to it last as the bridge to introduce ideology. Some examples:
 - Physical force - policing, imprisonment, institutionalization
 - Wealth - lobbying, literally buying other kinds power (i.e., celebrities/security details, Jeff Bezos owning The Washington Post)
 - State action - passing laws, geopolitics
 - Ideas - MLK ‘I Had A Dream,’ #metoo, #BlackLivesMatter
 - Numbers - Palestinian solidarity encampment protests, George Floyd protests, Women’s March on Washington
 - I typically talk students through the laws, too:
 - Power is never static: women’s rights, for instance, are in a much different place today than they were in the 1920s—but that doesn’t mean we’re not still living under systems of patriarchy
 - Power is like water: sometimes, the waters can be choppy (social injustice, for instance), but other in other cases, it can be tranquil (being able to leave one’s apartment with a good chance of not getting punched in the face, for instance)—power is not good or bad, it just is

- “Concepts of Ideology” | Harry Benshoff
 - Ideology “refers to the basic ideas and assumptions that help shape a given culture, the preconceived notions and beliefs that structure a given society (as well as individual members)” (19)
 - Ideology is all around us. It’s the logics of our world, the ways of thinking/seeing/being that hold us together, the unwritten, unspoken doctrines that dictate right from wrong, acceptable from unacceptable, agreeable to disagreeable; it is the “invisible glue that binds... [our] various objects and behaviors into a coherent and meaningful system of shared relatable experiences” (19)
 - “...we can [never] ‘step outside’ ideology. We can become aware of the ideological messages that surround us... but doing so does not exactly make us free from them. Ideologies are pre-existing social and political structures that surround us from the moment we are born to the moment we die. They shape our lives and how we think about the world whether we are aware of them or not” (24)
 - Ideology isn’t always a unified, calculated logic; “any given society is awash in multiple ideologies... texts and people... and the ideologies they contain constantly ebb and flow, interacting and interweaving with one another” (20)
 - That said, “in different cultures and in different historical eras, some ideologies are invariably more prominent or prevalent than others”—these are the “dominant ideologies: the set of ideas and assumptions that are most prevalent within any given culture at any point in time” (20)
 - In other words, when certain ideologies—when certain ideas, ways of being/thinking/understanding the world—become unquestioned, become naturalized, become unquestioned truth
 - Ideology is never fixed, never stable; the ideological doctrine of the moment is always “on the table,” influenced and altered by the cultural productions and attitudes of the time
 - Hegemonic negotiation—“...any given society is made up of a huge diversity of ideological positions—in people, in texts, in governing bodies—that necessarily interact with one another in multiple ways... this interaction can and does lead to social change” (20)
- A more detailed version of this lecture, which includes talking through some of the major players/theories in the game (from Marx to present day), can be found [here](#).

Interactive Discussion

Now that we’ve got all that important history, development, and definition out of the way, let’s start to actually use this stuff, to make these concepts a bit more real by witnessing them with our very own eyes...

Dominant Ideology Spotlight: Patriarchy

- Take a look at this [this brief clip](#) from Pixar’s *Inside Out*, featuring a look inside the heads of main character Riley’s parents
- What differences did you spot between the two depictions? Similarities? Why do you think the filmmaking team made these decisions when illustrating the parents’ perspectives?
- Taking it a step further: how might these depictions influence our own understandings of the similarities and differences between genders? How might these depictions reinforce particular conceptualizations of gender roles?

Dominant Ideology Spotlight: Patriarchy

- As feminist work makes clear, patriarchy is a system that hurts all of us—even those it would seemingly most support
- Think about what kinds of understandings of masculinity, for instance, are promoted by [this famous Old Spice ad](#)
- How might these messages influence how one enacts, performs, and make sense of their own gender identity?

Dominant Ideology Spotlight: Nationalism

- [This Budweiser ad](#) is about the ‘typical American,’ suggesting something about a national character we should ascribe to
- What, according to this ad, are the qualities of a typical American?
- How might these messages influence our overall understanding of the moral character—and potentially, even the superiority—of America?

Dominant Ideology Spotlight: Race & Stereotype

- [This clip](#) from Spike Lee’s *Do The Right Thing* sees the filmmaker playing with cinema’s power to both reinforce and deconstruct racial stereotypes

- What racial understandings does Lee promote within the scene? What understandings does he complicate, and offer a more nuanced depiction of?
- What do you think the result of these decisions might be on the viewer?

Dominant Ideology Spotlight: What's in a Living Room?

- Ideological influence is not always as direct and explicit, as evidenced by these images below showcasing a broad array of TV living rooms
- What kinds of lifestyles, perspectives, and worldviews are promoted by these depictions?
- Think, too, of elements beyond the living room: cultural markers, class markers, gender markers, etc. Likewise, think about the results of these depictions; how might they influence us and the lifestyles, perspectives, and worldviews we come to value?



Dominant Ideology Spotlight: Capitalism/Consumerism

- The following images feature the homepages of a variety of different popular shopping websites
- What kinds of approaches to wealth, accumulation, and purchasing are promoted?
- Think, too, of the ways in which the sites introduce 'problems' that need to be solved (often by purchasing something); what other ideologies might be reinforced through these websites' designs?
- Likewise, as per usual: think about the results of these depictions, how might they influence us and the lifestyles, perspectives we come to value, and the purchases we choose to make



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1.3: Power and Ideology - Assessment

Reading Culture | Assessment | Spotting Ideology in the Wild

As discussed in our homework materials and class discussions this week, ideology is “a term we use to describe the prevailing ‘ideas’ of society, the beliefs and assumptions any given cultural/social/political group holds to be true and self-evident and unassailable” (Lindsay). Ideology, in other words, is a way of speaking on the interlocking ways of thinking/seeing/being that hold us together—the unwritten, unspoken doctrines we hold to be obvious and unquestioned, the mores and customs and guiding structures of any given society. That said, as Lindsay notes, depending on the cultural group/historical period, some ideologies are more prevalent than others—these are the ‘dominant ideologies,’ the beliefs most widely-held and commonly enacted within any given social group.

For this post, I’d like you to **first identify a dominant ideology within our current time and place**. If you’re feeling stuck, our reading materials and class activities named quite a few. Next, I’d like you to **find of a piece of media** (movie, song, TikTok trend, book, podcast, TV show, etc., etc.) you’ve encountered that reinforces that ideological perspective. **In what ways does your chosen media reinforce the dominant ideology you selected? In what ways, if any, does it not? What social/cultural/political effects do you think could result from your chosen media?**

Your post should be at least **250 words**, and, if possible, **contain a link to your example** (like, say, the clip of the movie trailer or scene, the image of the ad, the Youtube of the song).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology

Oftentimes, we take technology for granted, and see technological development as an innate good; in this chapter, we will disrupt, challenge, and investigate some of these knee-jerk assumptions, and develop a more critical lens when thinking through the many technological changes of our current moment.

[2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold](#)

[2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity](#)

[2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment](#)

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2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold

[Click here](#) to access our material for this week, a reading from Howard Rheingold prompting us to question our abilities to see and understand the extent to which technology shapes and influences our lives, both now and in the future.

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2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity

Reading the Internet | Classroom Activity | Voices of Tech Gallery Walk

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a ‘gallery walk’ activity, where students—either individually, or as a group—walk around the room and interact with a host of interrelated quotes, all centered around critical thinking and technological change.
 - Gallery walks are a proven engagement tool, great at shaking up traditional group work activities as well as providing unique opportunities to kinesthetic learners in particular
 - Additionally, it’s a great way to have students interact with a diversity of content, as in the case in this lesson: the quotes range from ancient Greece to the modern day, with voices from fields such as pop culture, academia, law, and computing
- To set up the activity, print the following slides full-page and disperse throughout the classroom (there are 22 quotes in total, still images presented below in historical order). There is a Google Slide version of this activity; [a link to the Slides presentation can be found here](#), and at the bottom of this chapter section.
 - It also works as a whole-class activity, in which you use a projector to work through the material
- This activity is meant to follow an engagement with Howard Rheingold’s ‘Technology 101’ article, but would certainly work as a stand-alone as well
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so
 - Additional credit goes to Dan Krutka and Jacob Pleasants of CivicsOfTechnology.org, from whom this activity is adapted

Preamble

Oftentimes, we take technology for granted, and see technological development as an innate good—a march towards becoming an ever-more equipped, able, and capable species. Today’s activity looks to disrupt, challenge, and investigate some of these knee-jerk assumptions, and help us develop a more critical lens when thinking through the many technological changes of our current moment.

Welcome to the Gallery Walk

- As you walk around the room, you’ll be confronted a variety of different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of thinking about technology, from a whole host of different voices throughout history; read through each quote a few times, and leave your reflections in the space provided
- Here are some helpful questions to consider:
 - What is the speaker’s position on technology?
 - Do you agree or disagree with their assessment? Why or why not?
 - Has this quote held up over time, or does it seem outdated?
 - What is your reaction to the quote?
- Write your thoughts, doodles, comments, questions, etc. in the space provided; try to leave a thought at each station
- After the walk-through, we will reflect together as a class, thinking through our core questions for the day...
 - What kind of relationship do we want with technology?
 - How can critical thinking practices help us foster this relationship?

Class Reflections:

"[The invention of writing] will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them"

— Socrates, "Phaedrus" (370 BC)

Class Reflections:

"Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at... We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate"

— Henry David Thoreau | *Walden* (1854)

“Recent inventions and business methods call attention to the next step which must be taken for the protection of the person, and for securing to the individual... the right ‘to be let alone.’ Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life... [threatening] to make good the prediction that ‘what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops.’ For years there has been a feeling that the law must afford some remedy for the unauthorized circulation of portraits of private persons...”

— Louis Brandeis (future Supreme Court Justice),
Harvard Law Review (1890)

Class Reflections:

Class Reflections:

“We must keep our moral and spiritual progress abreast with our scientific and technological advances... Civilization is that complex of devices, instrumentalities, mechanisms, and techniques by means of which we live. Culture is that realm of ends expressed in art, literature, religion, and morals for which at best we live. The great problem confronting us today is that we have allowed the means by which we live to outdistance the ends for which we live. We have allowed our civilization to outrun our culture, and so we are in danger now of ending up with guided missiles in the hands of misguided men. This is what the poet Thoreau meant when he said, ‘improved means to an unimproved end’”

— Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘I Have A Dream’ speech (1961)

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”

— Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future* (1962)

Class Reflections:

“Machines for human beings, or human beings for the machine?”

— Alice Mary Hinton, *Logic, Computing Machines, and Automation* (1963)

Class Reflections:

Class Reflections:

**“We shape our tools and
thereafter our tools shape us”**

— John Culkin, *Saturday Review* (1967)

Class Reflections:

“All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical”

— Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (1967)

Class Reflections:



"Throughout all our existence the frightened and faint-hearted have been warning [us] not to push any further, not to learn any more, not to hope, grow, and exceed [our]selves. I don't believe we can stop, I don't believe we're meant to. Do you wish the first Apollo mission hadn't reached the moon? Or we hadn't gone on the Mars and then the nearest star? That's like saying you wish that you still operated with scalpels and sewed your patients up with catgut like your great-great-great-great-great-grandfather used to... risk... risk is our business" — Captain Kirk, *Star Trek* (1968)

Class Reflections:

**"The master's tools will never
dismantle the master's house"**

— Audre Lorde, Institute for the
Humanities conference talk (1979)

Class Reflections:

“Our tools are not always at our beck and call. The less we know about them, the more likely it is that they will command us, rather than the other way around”

— Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother* (1983)

“The battle for the mind of North America will be fought in the video arena... the television screen is the retina of the mind's eye... whatever appears on the television screen emerges as raw experience for those who watch it, therefore television is reality, and reality is less than television”

—Prof. Brian O'Blivion, *Videodrome* (1983)



Class Reflections:

Class Reflections:

"Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather"

— John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" (1996)

Class Reflections:

"...the Internet can become anything we can imagine and program it to be. It is a most malleable and evolving infrastructure. Like the celebrated holodeck of the Star Trek Next Generation starships, it opens a truly endless frontier... with such plasticity, it is how we think about the Internet that matters"

— Vinton G. Cerf, Foreword to *Internet Dreams* (1997)

Class Reflections:

“Online and offline, the degree to which one is determined by prevailing forces of supra-cyber-telekinetic technocapitalism is quite clearly a function of one’s level of technological prowess”

— Interrogate the Internet, “Contradictions in Cyberspace: Collective Response” (1998)



— Dr. Ian Malcolm,
Jurassic Park (1993)

Class Reflections:

Class Reflections:

"I've come up with a set of rules that describe our reactions to technologies:

1. Anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
2. Anything that's invented between when you're fifteen and thirty-five is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
3. Anything invented after you're thirty-five is against the natural order of things"

— Douglas Adams, *The Salmon of Doubt* (2002)

Class Reflections:

"Native Science is a term that defines an adaptive, living knowledge. It is a study of the whole and includes spiritual, ethical and social dimensions... These bodies of knowledge held by the Indigenous peoples of the Earth share many of the same principles and also employ the precision and rigor associated with western science. The difference between these two methods of knowing the world rests in the ways in which the world is perceived"

— Native American Academy, *Watershed Sentinel* (2007)

"We live in a moment when the military is using technology to wage remote war. Corporations are using technology to move extraordinarily quickly around the globe to take advantage of weak environmental standards and weak labor standards. And yet, we're living in the moment of the social forums, which are organized over the network. We're living in the age of the Zapatistas, who in 1994 sent messages by horseback, messages written on paper, to Internet cafes where they could be sent out as press releases and could be used to build a global network of solidarity"

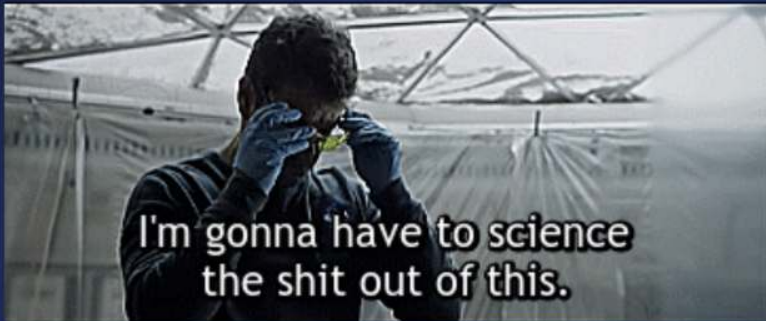
— Alex Rivera, *FPIF* (2009)

Class Reflections:



—Sean Parker,
The Social Network (2010)

Class Reflections:



I'm gonna have to science
the shit out of this.

—Mark Watney,
The Martian (2015)

Class Reflections:

Class Reflections:

“Our inability to understand
technology and perceive its effects
on our society and on ourselves is
one of the greatest, if most subtle,
problems of an age that has been so
heavily influenced by technological
change”

— Rudi Volti, *Society and Technological
Change* (2017)

Class Reflections:

“On the Internet and in our everyday uses of technology, discrimination is embedded in computer code and, increasingly, in artificial intelligence technologies that we are reliant on, by choice or not... We are only beginning to understand the long-term consequences of these decision-making tools in both masking and deepening social inequality”
— Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018)

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2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment

Reading the Internet | Assessment | Sci-Fi Futures

Introduction

“Science fiction isn’t just thinking about the world out there. It’s also thinking about how that world might be—a particularly important exercise for those who are oppressed, because if they’re going to change the world we live in, they—and all of us—have to be able to think about a world that works differently”

— Samuel R. Delany, *Paris Review* (2011)

“It’s not speculation, it’s true! Mobile phones, laptops, tablets, the Internet, all were predicted and dreamed up in science fiction first. Science fiction writers speculate when they write. I don’t just make random things up. I consider the world around me. I live in it. I experience it. I love it. I hate it. I worry about it. Then I imagine what’s to come”

— Nnedi Okorafor, *Ventures* (2015)

“Any time we try to envision a different world--without poverty, prisons, capitalism, war--we are engaging in science fiction. When we can dream those realities together, that's when we can begin to build them right here and now”

— Walidah Imarisha, *The Nation* (2015)

As the voices above attest, science fiction—while often cast aside as stuff for the nerds, geeks, and other fantastical fanatics—provides an exceptional platform through which to consider, make sense, and investigate technological change. This short activity looks to have you think science fictionally, in an effort to showcase the importance of critically-examined technologies, as well as the power of speculative fiction in exploring them.

In Octavia Butler’s short story “The Book of Martha,” a Black novelist, Martha Bes, is given the power to realize one fundamental change to the human species that would re-shape humanity for the better. Martha eventually settles on vivid dreams, with the thought being that if humans could experience their greatest joys each night, they might be less compelled to make them manifest during the day (which often leads to much pain and suffering).

Assessment

This is a speculative exercise that invites you to dream as Butler suggests we should in “The Book of Martha,” asking you to share your vision of future change and imagine the technologies necessary to make it a reality. Please write a short response to each of the following questions:

1. If you could change one thing about humanity that would ensure that we all survive and thrive in the future, what would it be and why? '
2. How might current and/or future technology help us realize this change?
3. What quote from today’s class best speaks to your change?
4. How might you address potential challenges to this vision?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Reading Culture - Semiotics and the Fundamentals of Meaning-Making

At first glance, semiotics may seem like hoity-toity academia nonsense run amuck, but the semiotic frame is in fact a vital resource for making sense of the world around us and how we come to derive meaning from it; in this chapter, we will gain familiarity with the concept and practice utilizing it to analyze a wide variety of different mediated artifacts.

[3.1: “Semiotics and Advertising - Hypertext Essay” | Tom Streeter](#)

[3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity](#)

[3.3: Semiotics - Assessment](#)

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3.1: “Semiotics and Advertising - Hypertext Essay” | Tom Streeter

Semiotics is all about signs: how the words, images, sounds all around us come to ‘make sense.’ At first, it may seem like the tell-tale signs of academia gone too far, but—if you’re willing to stick with it—you’ll come to find that the framework provides crucial language to better analyze the visual, cultural, and sonic landscape all around us with far more nuance, detail, and critical insight.

Think about it this way: You’ve just sat down for a movie you know nothing about. First few minutes in, character is walking home at night, they’re dancing to some hit song, everything is great, you’re vibing. Every once and awhile, though, the the camera like... wobbles a bit. The music starts to get a bit more... off too—it’s atonal, off-beat, moving from the major into the minor key. If you had to wager—based on this description of the opening few minutes alone—what *genre* do you think this made-up movie is? A. Comedy B. Romance or C. Horror?

If you guessed horror, it’s because you correctly read the *signs* provided by the scene description: the shaky camera, the ‘creepy’ music—these are some standard media ‘signs’ of horror films. But, of course, semiotics and the study of signs goes far beyond the world of film alone.

A **sign** itself can be just about anything: a word (like ‘cat’), an image (like a picture of a cat), a sound (like a meow), a symbol (like the heart in an ‘i <3 my cat’ bumper sticker)... anything and everything in the entire world might be thought of as a sign: a visual or sonic ‘thing’ which triggers some kind of larger, more significant meaning for whomever encounters it.

Every sign is made up of two parts: the *signifier* and the *signified*.

- **Signifier:** the part of the sign that exists in the material world
 - AKA: the raw data, what you literally see/hear
- **Signified:** the ‘mental meaning’ that is derived from the sign
 - AKA: the interpretation, what the mind makes of the data

So, the return to that movie clip: the *signifier* would be, say, the camera starting to shake, or the music changing; the *signified* would be you thinking something along the lines of “hmm... maybe something’s not right.” As you may already begin to see, we engage in this semiotic process *all the time*—the whole point of the field is to slow down this rapid-fire mental meaning-making and better understand how the mediated experiences *work*.

But, as much as I’m sure you’d love to hear me babble on about it, semiotics is best approached with visual aid. [So, without further ado, I encourage you to head on over to Tom Streeter’s “Semiotics and Advertising” hypertext essay \(linked here\)](#), which is the real star of the show this week. Be sure to navigate through all the sections of the essay.

(Introduction written by J. F. Lindsay)

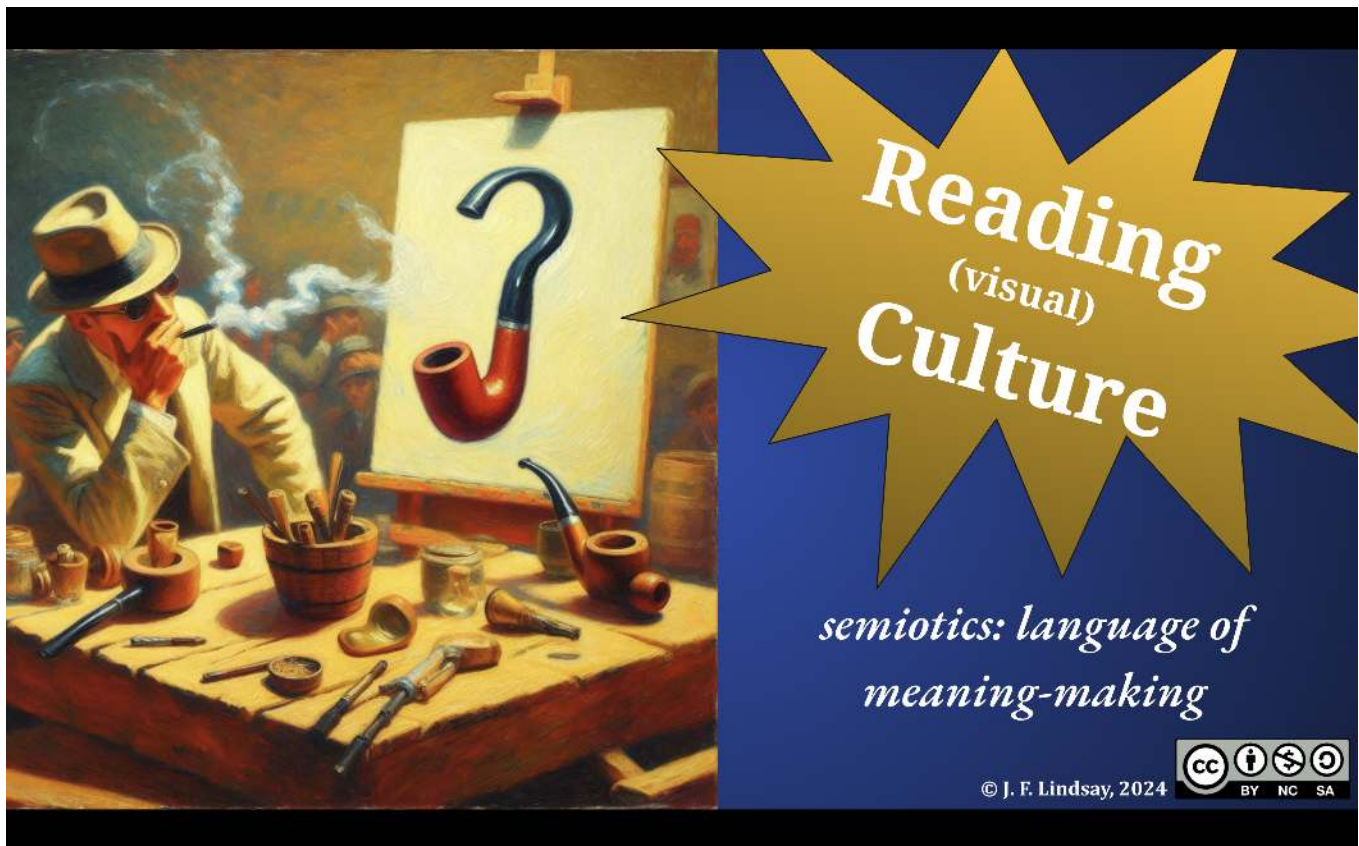
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3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity

Semiotics | Classroom Activity | 'Semiotics in the Round'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a whole-class activity designed to help students gain comfortability thinking in the language and framework of semiotics, as well as showcase how such thinking—while a bit clunky at first—can offer a vital frame to better understand and intervene upon the tactics, strategies, and successes of mediated messaging. A link to the full Google Slides activity can be found [here](#), as well as at the bottom of this page.
 - I have provided additional instructor guidance in the ‘speaker notes’ section of each example, to ensure that those with less comfortability with the concept can still lead the activity
- The primary focus is on advertising, but there are additional examples towards the end that delve into strategies for/of semiotics within other mediated disciplines, too: film, news, web design, and sonic logo curation
- This activity is meant to follow a homework assignment of Tom Streeter’s exceptional ‘Semiotics and Advertising’ hypertext essay, but was designed with enough scaffolding to act as a stand-alone activity if need be
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to credit and follow CC license mandates when doing so



- Right away, I like to start with a semiotic reading of this opening slide. The AI image is a fun way to lead into the classic Magritte example (what is the central image? Is it a pipe? What about the objects on the desk?), as well as offer other entry points for the more important cultural aspects (for instance: gender cues, age, profession, mood)



"La Trahison des Images" ("The Treachery of Images") | René Magritte, 1929

- Magritte's famed example acts as a perfect introduction to semiotics: it is not a pipe, but a painting of a pipe (and, in this case, a digital replication of a painting of a pipe... and so on and so forth).

Semiotics - An Introduction to Study

- "Magritte's point is a simple one, so simple that we usually don't think about it. But precisely because we don't think about it, because we forget that the signs and symbols all around us are just that, signs and symbols, and not things themselves, we can come to take for granted, take as "natural," aspects of life that are anything but. And this may have important social implications" (Streeter)
- Semiotics is all about **signs**: how the words, images, sounds all around us come to 'make sense'
- Semiotics, in other words, is a field of study that "seeks to explain and explore what happens when we look at a word or image or hear a certain sound, and how that word or image or sound creates meaning" (Benshoff 43)
- Semiotics, or semiology, can be traced back to both Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, and, as Streeter notes, "has its proponents, detractors, and scholarly disputes. But, whatever else you can say about it, these days semiotics serves as a very useful set of tools for identifying many of the formal patterns that work to make meaning in many aspects of our culture, particularly the media."
- A sign itself can be just about anything: a word, an image, a sound, or a symbol... anything in the world that may create meaning in the mind of whomever happens to encounter it
- Each sign has a dual nature, every sign made up of two parts: the signifier and the signified
 - Signifier: the part of the sign that exists in the material world
 - AKA: 'what you see'
 - Signified: the 'mental meaning' that is derived from the sign
 - AKA: 'interpretation'
- This can be broken down even further, by sign type, but you'll notice the same core framework remains
 - Symbolic sign: a sign based in language, wherein there is a system of agreed relation to give meaning to otherwise arbitrary signifiers
 - 'dog' = dog, 'perro' = dog, 'tjkw' ≠ dog

- Iconic sign, or icon: a sign where the signifier resembles the thing it signifies, a sign that can be understood outside the realm of language
 - Sketch of a dog, a shadow puppet dog
 - Color, pitch, volume in cinema a kind of icon sign—making meaning without language
- Indexical sign, or index: a sign that is produced by evidence of the signifiers presence
 - A paw print, evidence of dog hair
 - But, more important for our purposes, also photo/video of a dog: the camera captured a past event, is a mechanical reproduction of a past event
- Roland Barthes furthered the study of semiotics with his work around denotation and connotation; denotation is what ‘first’ arises in the mind when encountering a sign, whereas connotation refers to all the other significations that can inevitably arise from the encounter with the sign
 - Take a picture of Scooby-Doo, for example: on the denotative level, it’s a dog, and perhaps, even, a named dog (Scooby-Doo); but, of course, the image will set off a wide variety of other meanings—connotations—which will necessarily vary from person to person, but will inevitably be derived from larger cultural contexts
 - One might think of solving mysteries, then true crime, then Law and Order: SVU; another may think of Cartoon Network, and then a childhood memory of watching the channel; another may think of ghosts, then Halloween, then Michael Meyers—it could go on and on and on
 - You could think of what you're wearing, too: on the denotative level, nothing but various clothing items, but—as you likely don't need me to remind—on the connotative level, what you wear comes with larger associations about who you are, how you see yourself, what communities you belong to, etc.
 - The important point is that connotation is almost immediately cultural
 - Skin color a way to make this phenomena more critical: on denotative level, simply a pigmentation difference; but when one moves beyond the denotative color, we stumble into a whole bunch of cultural-inscribed connotations

But enough talk! Let's get into some examples, which you can find [here](#)

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3.3: Semiotics - Assessment

Semiotics | Assessment | Semiotics Here, There, Everywhere

At first glance, semiotics may seem like the epitome of ‘reading too much into things.’ But, as our materials for this week make clear, semiotic communication is a fundamental language of popular culture, and its power and influence on the human mind is a well-documented, empirical fact. Different words, images, sounds, colors, effects, etcetera, offer forth different meanings, associations and understandings, which in turn affects how we do—or do not—engage with ‘the thing’ in question.

If, as Streeter argues, semiotics offers a “very useful set of tools for identifying many of the formal patterns that work to make meaning in many aspects of our culture,” then perhaps we better put his words to the test. So, to that end: **your task for this week’s discussion board post is to conduct a semiotic analysis on a media artifact of your choosing.**

Perhaps you want to look at the promotional materials for an upcoming movie, album, or TV show. Maybe you want to look into the logo of your favorite snack brand, or a commercial you like/dislike. Maybe you want to think about the title sequence of a television show, or a scene from a movie. Maybe you want to think about political campaigns, or a fashion house you admire, or a music video. If it's a piece of visual culture you can analyze semiotically, it's fair game.

Whatever ‘artifact’ you choose, the goal is the same: to think it semiotically, to think about how decisions in sound, color, shape, lighting, framing, casting, dressing—the list could go on and on—serve to communicate the meanings intended by the creator(s). **Your post should be at least 250 words, engage directly with the language and processes of semiotics, and include some way to access the artifact you selected (a link, an attachment, an image, etc.).**

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the 'Always/Already' of Ideology

Children's media—by nature of the intended audience—is often thought of in somewhat neutral, apolitical terms, but the reality is far different; in this chapter, we will use the Walt Disney Company as a case study, showcasing the myriad ways the children's media act as purveyor, promulgator, and instructor of ideological lessons.

[4.1: "Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" | Cassandra Stover](#)

[4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity](#)

[4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment](#)

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4.1: "Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" | Cassandra Stover

Cassandra Stover's article, "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess," is [attached here](#). Her piece traces the evolving ideological positionings of the Disney princess archetype (from *Snow White* to *Brave*), as well as investigates the larger, real-world influence of the genre.

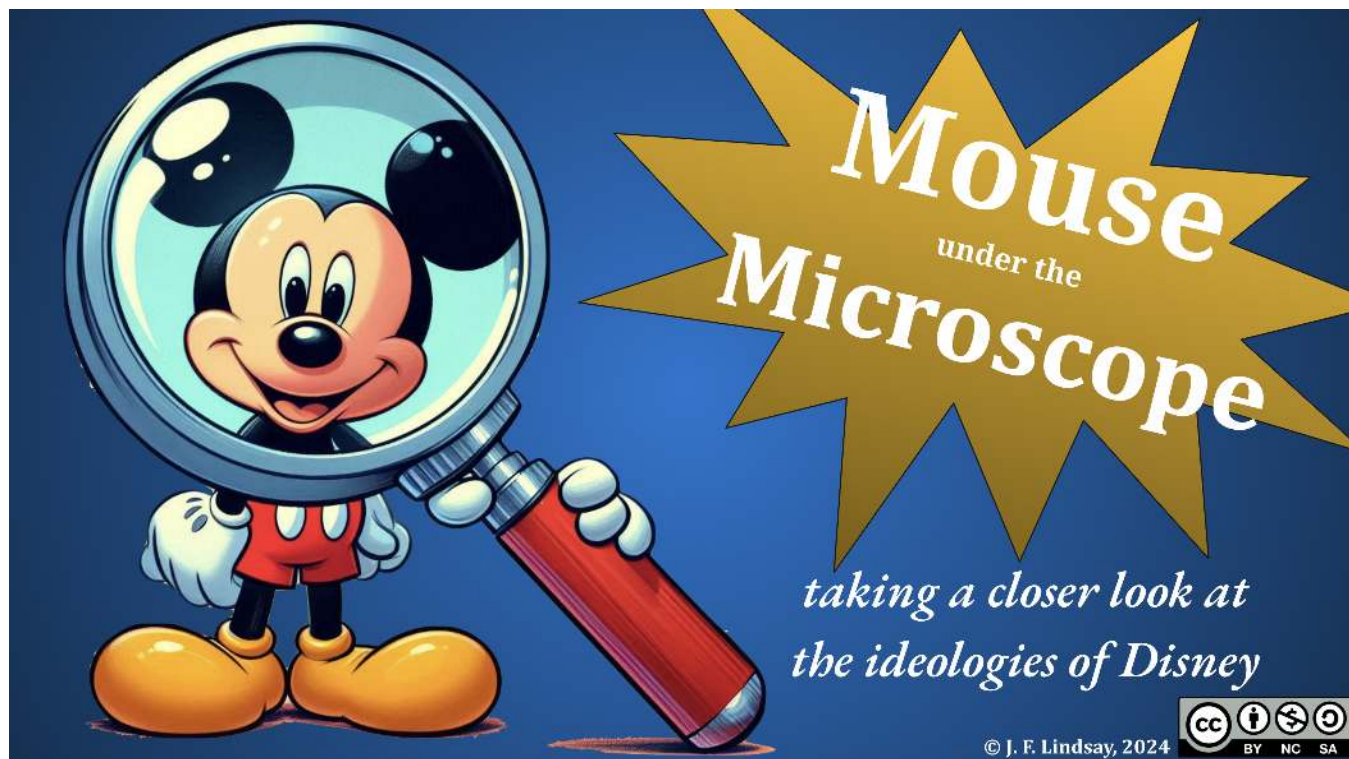
This article is part of the American Popular Culture Commons, amongst other collections:

- Stover, Cassandra (2013) "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess," *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University*: Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 29.
 - Available at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/lux/vol2/iss1/29>

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4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity

Reading Disney | Classroom Activity | 'Mouse Under The Microscope'



How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The opening slides provide context to the activity, speaking to Disney's ideological influence writ large (Giroux & Pollock), as well as to the influence of the Disney princess in particular (Stover)
- The subsequent slides provide a host of different case studies, offering a wide range of Disney content for students to interact with, critique, and 'make real' the arguments put forward by the suggested reading material (Stover's 'Damsels & Heroines')
 - As Stover's focus is on the Disney princess, the majority of the curated pieces speak to this genre, but there are some exceptions
- The clips collected here can be interacted with in a variety of ways: as stations student(s) 'gallery walk' through, as a whole-class activity, as a group-based chat-and-share, etcetera
 - I've offered some guiding questions on Slide 5; these can certainly be more specified clip-to-clip
- Slide 17 offers some more explicit representations of racism, sexism, and/or antisemitism within Disney works; while it is important that we bear witness to some of Disney's most nefarious representations, I suggest caution to ensure student comfort and security
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material and edit it as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Professor Walt? | Introducing the Lessons of Disney

- In *The Mouse That Roared*, scholars Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock define Disney as a "teaching machine" (xiv), arguing that the corporation's many media offerings often serve as "the primary sites at which education takes place for the vast majority of young people and adults" (1)
- In their view, the company has unprecedented capability to "not merely provide entertainment," but likewise "shape the identities, desires, and subjectivities of millions of people across the globe" (xv)
- Today's activity looks to have us critically examine this perspective, thinking about the role Disney plays in shaping public opinion, in 'teaching' particular cultural lessons through their many media offerings

"Damsels and Heroines" | Cassandra Stover | Review

- Cassandra Stover takes up a similar position in the material assigned for today's class, with a particular focus on Disney princesses: "The Walt Disney Corporation has enjoyed a lengthy reign in the realm of princess film production, helping to shape the ideals of femininity for millions of little girls both in America and around the world" (2).
- Notably, too, the company has modified the traits and personhood of the princess to adapt to larger social/cultural/political trends: "most fascinating is Disney's endless revamping of the princess to correspond with contemporary gender standards, to maintain relevance both in actions and characteristics" (2).
 - Early Disney princesses "drew on associations of traditional femininity, indicating the widespread encouragement of these traits within 1930's American culture" (2), epitomized by characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora
 - Responding to larger socio-cultural trends, Stover argues Disney "underwent a shift towards a 'New Wave' of princess films, which transformed the damsel into a heroine of sorts, with both a voice and desire for adventure" (3), epitomized by characters such as Jasmine, Mulan, and Tiana
- Despite these evolutions, Stover argues the Disney princess nevertheless remained mired in patriarchal politics: still about finding a man ("just because a princess is no longer 'wishing for the one she loves to find her,' as Snow White does, she is not necessarily now wishing for anything grander than finding him herself" (4)) and pleasing her father (5), to say nothing of the toy market (6)

Introducing Today's Activity

- For today's activity, we're going to put some of these critical perspectives to work, examining a host of different Disney artifacts in hopes of coming to a better understanding of the ideologies, worldviews, and perspectives offer to viewers by The Walt Disney Company
 - What social/cultural/political 'lessons' are taught by Disney media? How do these lessons differ film to film, franchise to franchise, and across different historical periods?
 - What are the potential results of these influences?
 - In what ways, if any, can we spot these influences in our own lives?

"True Love's First Kiss" | *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* | dir. Hand et al (1937)



"He's A Tramp" | *Lady and the Tramp* | dir. Luske, Geronimi, & Jackson (1955)



“An Unusual Prince/Once Upon a Dream” | *Sleeping Beauty* | dir. Geronimi, Reitherman, Larson, & Clark (1959)



“Kiss The Girl” | *The Little Mermaid* | dir. Rob Marshall (2023) **Note the lyric changes from the original!*



“Make Me A Prince” | *Aladdin* | dir. Musker & Clements (1992)



"I'll Make A Man Out Of You " | *Mulan* | dir. Cook & Bancroft (1998)



“Scream” | *High School Musical 3* | dir. Kenny Ortega (2008)



“Mother Knows Best” | *Tangled* | dir. Greno & Howard (2010)



“Let It Go” | *Frozen* | dir. Buck & Lee (2013)



“We’re Doing A Sequel” | *Muppets Most Wanted* | dir. James Bobin (2014)



“Gondola” | *Zootopia* | dir. Howard & Moore (2016)



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- Frozen*. Directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2013.
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- Lady and the Tramp*. Directed by Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske, Walt Disney Productions, 1955.
- Mulan*. Directed by Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, Walt Disney Pictures, 1998.
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- Tangled*. Directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard, Walt Disney Pictures, 2010.
- The Little Mermaid*. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, Walt Disney Pictures, 1989.
- Zootopia*. Directed by Byron Howard and Rich Moore, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2016.

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4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment

Reading Disney | Assessment | Exploring Childhood Ideologies

Children’s media—by nature of the intended audience—is often thought of in somewhat neutral, apolitical terms. However, as we’ve been exploring this week, the reality couldn’t be further from the truth. As Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock remind, Disney—and media companies like it—act as a kind of “teaching machine” (xiv), and serve as “primary sites at which education takes place for the vast majority of young people and adults” (1). In other words, while the age-appropriate media we interact and engage with as children might not be, say, actively ascribing us to a certain political party, that is not to say that they aren’t offering more general ideological lessons, lessons around self-making, around gender, around sexuality, around capitalism, and a whole host of other ideological positions.

For your discussion board this week, I’d like you to reflect on a children’s show/movie from your youth, be it from Disney or another major purveyor. What ideologies, politics, world-views, and value-systems does the show uphold? How does the program explore and present these ideas? How, in other words, did a program from your childhood perhaps shape the values, attributes, and perspectives you hold today?

Your post should be at least **250 words**, and, if possible, **contain a link to your example** (like, say, the clip of the movie trailer or scene, the image of the ad, the Youtube of the song).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You

While it is true that mass media tends to represent the dominant ideologies of the times, the audiences who engage with them are far more diverse; in this chapter, we will discover the power and practice of ‘oppositional readings,’ learning about how marginalized communities have found home within popular discourse, as well as what the oppositional frame can unlock for our own mediated engagements.

[5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay](#)

[5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity](#)

[5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment](#)

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5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay

Popular culture and media often speaks to a 'mass' rather than to the particulars of [our unique, intersectional identities](#). Accordingly, the popular is filled with artifacts (television shows, movies, songs, advertisements, etc.) that we love, but may not always be 'about' us, and may even perpetuate false, damaging depictions of us. Our key concept for the week—oppositional viewership—is all about centering alternative ways of approaching mass media, offering strategies for thinking, viewing, and interacting with popular culture 'against the grain.'

While one can certainly trace far earlier origination points, we'll enter the conversation with Laura Mulvey and her seminal 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which introduces the concept of the "male gaze."

When we're talking about the gaze, we're talking about the common definition, like, say, intensely looking at something or someone: the fox *gazes* at the chicken coop, awaiting the best moment to strike. But we're also talking about the power dynamics of/behind/within those looks, the larger 'looking relations,' the way any given look is informed by a larger social/cultural/political context. For Mulvey, women are overwhelmingly sexualized, trivialized, and objectified in mediated representation. She coined this phenomenon the "male gaze," a way to put language to women's frequent sidelining for "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 68) in film, while men are granted endless agency.

For a great example of the male gaze, check out [this clip from Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*](#). Pay attention to how the camera introduces the various inhabitants of the apartment complex, noticing not only the differences between the treatment of male and female characters, but between the various women specifically (i.e., treatment of stereotypical beauty vs. an 'old maid' trope). For a more modern, obvious (and far more crude) example, you're welcome to check out [this Hardee's ad](#), which reveals the objectifying gaze quite clearly.

Beyond cinematic enjoyment, the more pressing component to Mulvey's theorization is that these representations, in turn, affect the larger cultural, social, and political experience of gender across the spectrum, reinforcing patriarchal ideologies through the seductive power of cinema. In order to build a truly liberatory, revelatory cinema, she argues these patriarchal "cinematic codes and their relationship to formal external structures... must be broken down" (68), which begins with critiquing the status quo, calling out sexist depictions, and advocating for ulterior representations.

To learn more about the male gaze (with particular focus on the fashion/advertising industries), check out [this brilliant hypertext essay](#) by Thomas Streeter, Nicole Hintlian, Samantha Chipetz, and Susanna Callender.

Our next stop is bell hooks, who both builds on—and directly counters—Mulvey's work in her 1992 essay "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992). For hooks, Mulvey improperly assumes a universality amongst women, failing to realize that differences in categories outside of sex (such as race, class, sexuality) can *also* impact one's experience of cinema. Reflecting on her experience growing up in the 1970s, hooks writes, "when most black people in the United States first had the opportunity to look at film and television, they did so fully aware that mass media was a system of knowledge and power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy. To stare at the television, or mainstream movies, to engage its images, was to engage its negation of black representation" (463).

In her essay, hooks first discusses the specific relationship to the cinema for both white women and Black men respectively, before then turning to Black women, demonstrating the ways in which these viewers—barred from privilege(s) afforded by both patriarchy and/or white supremacy—are found in a dynamic which makes near-impossible a direct relation to cinema. As she writes, "with the possible exception of early race movies, black female spectators have had to develop looking relations within a cinematic context that constructs our presence as absence, that denies the 'body' of the black female so as to perpetuate white supremacy and with it a phallogocentric spectatorship where the woman to be looked at and desired is 'white'" (464).

But hooks is not willing to accept this cinematic exclusion as a given, and strives to find a new route to cinematic pleasure: "When I returned to films as a young woman, after a long period of silence, I had developed an oppositional gaze. Not only would I not be hurt by the absence of black female presence, or the insertion of violating representation, I interrogated the work, cultivated a way to look past race and gender for aspects of content, form, language" (466). As neither looker or lookee, located outside the power dynamics depicted in mainstream cinema, hooks found a different kind of relationship: "looking at films with an oppositional gaze,

black women were able to critically assess the cinema's construction of white womanhood as object of phallogentric gaze and choose not to identify with either the victim or the perpetrator" (467).

For hooks, "critical black female spectators construct a theory of looking relations where cinematic visual delight is the pleasure of interrogation" (468): the gaze has become *oppositional*, a "look to change reality" (463), a tool of resistance against the erasure and stereotyping perpetuated by mainstream visual media where one gains power to not only notice and call out damaging depictions, but locate spaces to reinterpret, redefine, and reimagine those representation, as well.

The critical contributions of hooks' work are wide-ranging, as other marginalized identities found resonance in her perspective and modified the frame to make sense of the ways in which *their own* mediated depictions served to silence, stereotype, and diminish their actual lived cultural, social, political experiences. To hear a bit more about hooks' work with the oppositional gaze, I encourage you to check out [this short piece](#) featuring narration by Laverne Cox.

If the male gaze was coined to call out sexist, patriarchal depictions in media, and the oppositional gaze to add an intersectional lens to the pleasure of analysis, then one can understand "queer reading" as a practice of *imagination*, using these critiques to fuel ulterior reimaginings of any given media.

The practice originates in groundbreaking works like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* and Alexander Doty's *Making Things Perfectly Queer*, and encourages viewers to 'wrongly' interpret media in ways that subvert heteronormative frameworks. [When Elsa belts out "Let It Go"](#) in *Frozen*, who's to say it's not an anthem for her self-acceptance, proudly coming out and 'letting go' of what others might think? Why can't one read [Ariel's journey to live in her 'authentic body'](#) in *The Little Mermaid* as an allegory for gender dysphoria, as experienced by many trans people? [When Chad insists to Ryan that he 'doesn't dance'](#) in *High School Musical 2*, what exactly are we to understand that 'dancing' to mean?

For queer readers, our culture—"caught within the spell of heterocentrism (and, for some gay and straight men, sexism)"—"persist[s] in seeing heterosexuality where it ain't" (Doty 139). In response, the practice looks to showcase that queerness is an inherent, unequivocal part of popular culture, whether intended or not. Queer readings not only challenge traditional narratives of heterosexual desire, identity, and success, but validate the queer experience by shining light on the queerness always lurking right around the bend, in the margins, in the subtext. By identifying these moments of ambiguity, tension, and/or coded queerness, viewers can reclaim media as sites of possibility and resistance. Queer reading, like the oppositional gaze, is an act of defiance and imagination, a way to navigate and transform media spaces that often marginalize non-normative identities.

To see exceptional queer reading at work, [I recommend you check out "2 Bi 2 Furious."](#) video essayist Ben From Canada's wonderfully hilarious and insightful piece on the bisexual love story within Hollywood action staple *2 Fast 2 Furious*.



These frameworks—Mulvey's male gaze, hooks' oppositional gaze, and the practice of queer reading—highlight the transformative potential of oppositional viewership: just because media is made to be understood 'one way' doesn't mean that's the interpretation *you* have to settle for. By actively resisting dominant perspectives through these strategies of oppositional viewership, one is able to

not only critique the media they consume, but also *reimagine* it in ways that speak to the particular, lived realities of their diverse, intersectional identities and experiences.

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5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity

Oppositional Viewership | Classroom Activity | 'Media Deconstruct-o-pedia'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a group-based, rotating activity which has students engage a variety of different media (commercials, television shows, movies, music videos) and ‘think’ them from a handful of oppositional perspectives (class, race, gender, sexuality, and colonialism)
 - The goal is to walk away with not only a better understanding of the socially-, culturally-, and politically-constitutive nature of popular culture, but how perspectives on the margin have—and will continue—to bring about meaningful, critical change
- Each station is dedicated to a different media/perspective, with each offering specific guiding questions that fit the particulars of that phenomena
- This activity was designed to follow an engagement with concepts of ‘oppositional gaze,’ ‘queer reading,’ and ‘orientalism,’ but contains enough scaffolding to be accomplished without
- I would recommend starting with a 5-10 minute introduction; review questions can be found below
- Depending on your classroom layout and tech access, you can have the stations be literal locations in the room (each would need its own media device), or upload the stations to your learning platform for students to access using their own tech (at least one member per group will need laptop/tablet access to stream the various content)
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to give credit and follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Media Deconstruct-o-pedia - Exploring Oppositional Viewerships

While it’s important to know the history, context, and critical developments of a concept, nothing beats hands-on engagement. To better realize the socially-, culturally-, and politically-constitutive nature of popular culture—and how perspectives on the margin have (and will continue!) to bring about meaningful, critical change—we’re going to work through a series of case studies. Each station is centered on a different type of media, as well as a different identity. As you and your group members move station to station, you’re to ‘think’ the gathered media from a handful of oppositional perspectives, in hopes to better appreciate what such critical positionings can unlock.

Instructions

- Step One: Review (5-10 min)
 - What is the oppositional gaze? What does it mean to read media ‘oppositionally’?
 - In addition to critiquing representation(s), how does the oppositional perspective allow one to ‘find’ themselves in (often unlikely) mediated experiences?
- Step Two: Station/Rotation (10 min per station, 50 min total)
 - Each station is designed to have about 6-ish minutes of materials to interact with; as you’re watching, be sure to take notes and pause as needed to chat with your peers about what you’ve noticed, keeping the guided questions for that station in mind
 - Once you’ve finished engaging with the materials, return to the guided questions and answer them altogether as a group. Make sure at least one member is writing down your responses!
 - In total, you will spend roughly 10 minutes at each station, so be sure to work efficiently
- Step Three: Group Reflection (10 min):
 - What have we learned about dominant ideologies and the oppositional gaze?
 - In what ways do these various categories and the media you’ve engaged with today intersect with one another?
 - How can we utilize the practice of oppositional reading to disrupt, change, alter, and/or critique these dominant ideologies?

Station #1: Gender & Advertising

- **Guiding Question(s):** How are masculinity and/or femininity being constructed in these ads? How does taking an ‘oppositional’ perspective allow you to better see/understand those constructions? What other, alternative advertisements might you create, and, if they were to play on the airwaves, what possibilities might they unlock?

- **Laundry Detergent Ads:**
 - [“Whitest-White and Cleanest-Clean”](#) | Fab Laundry Detergent (1955)
 - [“Ring Around The Collar”](#) | Wisk Laundry Detergent (1971)
 - [“The Stain Lifter”](#) | All Laundry Detergent (1991)
 - [“Simpler”](#) | Arm & Hammer Laundry (2020)
- **Car Ads:**
 - [“Buick Riviera”](#) | Buick (1964)
 - [“Bulger Cadillac”](#) | Cadillac (1970s)
 - [“It’s Good To Be Bad”](#) | Jaguar (2015)
 - [“Family Car”](#) | Ford Flex (2010s)

Station #2: Race & Sitcoms

- **Guiding Question(s):** How do these sitcoms perpetuate (or challenge!) racial stereotypes? If you’ve already seen these programs: are these stereotypes you’d noticed before today? How might we use an oppositional gaze to be more vigilant to what stereotypes our media perpetuates? What are some more positive, interesting examples of representation in sitcom-related media you’ve encountered?
- **Examples:**
 - [“Theme Song”](#) | *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* (1990-1996)
 - [“Everyone’s Annoying Habits”](#) | *Friends* (1994-2004) *Remember: NYC is one of the most diverse cities in the world
 - [“Asian F”](#) | *Glee* (2009-2015)
 - [“Sheldon Puts a Snake in Raj’s Desk”](#) | *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019)
 - [“Jay Finds Gloria’s Sister A New Man”](#) | *Modern Family* (2009-2020)
 - [“White Guilt College Essay”](#) | *Black-ish* (2014-2022)

Station #3: Class & Reality Television

- **Guiding Question(s):** What do these programs suggest is necessary to live a good, happy, healthy life? How are messages about wealth (and poverty) being communicated, both by what the characters say/do and by how it is presented by the camera/editing/production? In what ways are these programs similar, and in what ways do they differ? Are these shows promoting capitalism, or is it a ‘farce’—a more satirical, critical perspective, too outrageous to be taken seriously?
- **Examples:**
 - [“Kylie and Kris Go Grocery Shopping”](#) | *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* (2007-2021)
 - [“Circadian Optics”](#) | *Shark Tank* (2009-)
 - [“Retail Therapy Session”](#) | *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* (2010-)
 - [“Chic, C’est La Vie”](#) | Luann de Lesseps, *Real Housewives of New York City* (2008-)
 - [“Redneck Fun”](#) | *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (2012-2014)

Station #4: Queer Readings & Pop Music

- **Guiding Question(s):** Each example will have it’s own guiding focus; see prompts below
- **Examples:**
 - **Quintessentially Heteronormative:** [“You Belong With Me”](#) | Taylor Swift (2009)
 - How does this song uphold and embolden classic, stereotypical ideas of love, romance, and happiness? What other popular cultures is the song in conversation with, from Shakespeare plays to *Mean Girls*?
 - **Questionably Queer:** [“I Want It That Way”](#) | Backstreet Boys (1999)
 - While not intended to be a ‘queer’ song, this Backstreet Boys hit has been perpetually labeled as ‘gay.’ What about this song might lead one to have that perspective? Does approaching the song in that way suggest homophobia, or does it provide a unique route for queer representation in popular culture? Is it ‘okay’ to have a perspective different from what the creator(s) intended?
 - **Quixotically Gay:** [“MONTERO \(Call Me By Your Name\)”](#) | Lil Nas X (2021)
 - Unlike our other two examples, this was fully intended to be a queer anthem. How does Lil Nas X make sure his message is communicated? What is that message? In what ways does his music video/song unlock new forms of representation for gay men, and queer people writ large? In what ways does it not?

Station #5: (Post)Colonialism & Disney

- **Guiding Question(s):** How do these early Disney films distort one's understanding of the practices, processes, and justifications of colonization? How might these films perpetuate false, dangerous, and deleterious understandings of cultures, places, and peoples from around the world? How do these films position 'Western' characters, and what 'justifications' of/for colonization might they suggest? How, if at all, are more recent films responding to these depictions?
- **Examples:**
 - ["Arabian Nights"](#) | *Aladdin* (1992)
 - ["Pocahontas Meets John Smith"](#) | *Pocahontas* (1995)
 - ["Perfect World"](#) | *Emperor's New Groove* (2000)
 - ["T'Challa Arrives In Wakanda"](#) | *Black Panther* (2018)
 - ["Dos Oruguitas"](#) | *Encanto* (2021)

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5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

Oppositional Viewership | Assessment | Thinking Oppositionally

As we've been exploring throughout the semester, popular culture often speaks to a 'mass' rather than to the particulars of our unique, intersectional identities. Accordingly, the popular is filled with artifacts (television shows, movies, songs, advertisements, etc.) that we love, but may not always be 'about' us. Our key concepts of the week offer alternative ways of approaching these popular cultures—ways of thinking, viewing, and interacting with popular culture 'against the grain.' We might, in other words, enjoy these popular experiences, but not in the 'right' way; they're pop cultures we engage in 'oppositionally,' with our engagement a bit different from what those who created it might have intended.

For your discussion board this week, I'd like you to select an example from popular/media culture (anything you'd like!) and discuss the ways in which your engagement with it operates 'oppositionally,' how you read the piece differently than others who may have engaged with the same piece, be it finding the "pleasure in interrogation" hooks discusses or constructing an ulterior world within the subtext, as many queers throughout history have done. **Your post should be at least 250 words** and should **provide some way to access your chosen media** (link, clip, etc.).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies

When it comes to news, it's not just a matter of fact vs. fiction; the materials collected within this chapter provide critical perspectives and frameworks for approaching contemporary news industries, inviting us to think about not just about questions of accuracy, but also *what* events are chosen and *how* they're presented.

[6.1: "Introduction to SIFT" | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield](#)

[6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity](#)

[6.3: Reading the News - Assessment](#)

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6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield

As the title suggests, [your assigned chapter from Michael Caulfield’s *Check, Please!*](#) provides a new framework to approach online content, introducing the SIFT method to improve our ability to source good, quality, accurate information on the web. Looking forward to hearing what you make of his work!

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6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity

Reading the News | Classroom Activity | Counternarratives

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a group-based activity, wherein students are encouraged to think critically about not only the factual content of their news, but the ways in which that information is being presented.
- This exercise is inspired by work of Alexandra Bell's '[Counternarratives](#)' project; I encourage you to view her work prior to the activity, and to share her work before/during your class to introduce the assignment.
- This activity is meant to follow an engagement with the preceding 'SIFT' lesson from Michael Caulfield, but could be easily implemented without it.
- To set up the activity, you will need to source news stories for each small group. I print out enough of each story for each group member to have a copy, and then a large-format copy of each story to distribute at the midway point of the activity. You will also need pens, dark markers, and other annotation tools.
- In my experience, contemporary news stories always work best. I typically select a handful of well-known stories, looking for obvious applicability to the assignment; that said, I've also done the activity by picking up a copy of the local paper and clipping pieces. You could also assign the same pieces Bell looks at.
- The opening two pages can be read together as a class, reviewing Caulfield's work before introducing Bell's contribution (and the larger activity). I typically bring the class whole class together for 15ish minutes of mini-presentations/discussions on their final annotated pieces at the end of class.
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Recap

As you likely don't need me to point out, the news industry—an industry which had remained relatively stable for hundreds of years—is undergoing some truly seismic shifts, with traditional modes of radio, television, and newspaper usurped by an endless array of digital platforms, providers, and purveyors. Where there were once calls for more voices, more outlets, more perspectives, we now are faced with the opposite problem: an overwhelming number of ways to get the news of the day—podcasts, YouTube, 24/7 television segments, TikTok, Facebook—with some content, well... far more reliable than others.

This daily deluge of information requires new strategies for seeking out reliable, quality information—strategies we're looking to shine a light on with our materials and activities for this week.

As the title suggests, your assigned chapter from Michael Caulfield's *Check, Please!*—"Introduction to SIFT"—provided a new framework to approach online content:



STOP



INVESTIGATE THE
SOURCE



FIND BETTER COVERAGE



TRACE CLAIMS, QUOTES
AND MEDIA TO THE
ORIGINAL CONTEXT

- Stop: both when you first land on a webpage, and after, too
 - First, "ask yourself whether you know and trust the website or source of the information... don't read it or share it until you know what it is."
 - Second, "if you feel yourself getting overwhelmed in your fact-checking efforts... take a second to remind yourself what your goal is... make sure you approach the problem at the right amount of depth for your purpose."
- Investigate: get to know a bit about who you're engaging with
 - "Knowing the expertise and agenda of the source is crucial to your interpretation of what they say. Taking sixty seconds to figure out where it is from before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time, and if it is, help you to better understand its significance and trustworthiness."
- Find Better Coverage: sometimes, you just gotta know—is this true? In that case, seek out content from other purveyors, doing your best to diversify your sources, to see if they echo the same

- “Ignore the source that reached you and look for other trusted reporting or analysis on the claim. In other words, if you receive an article that says koalas have just been declared extinct from the Save the Koalas Foundation, the winning strategy may be to open up a new tab and find the best source you can that covers this, or, just as importantly, scan multiple sources to see what the consensus seems to be.”
- **Trace Claims to OG Context:** online content is often shrunk down to it’s most engaging parts; find the original source to provide full context and understanding
 - “Trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in its original context and get a sense if the version you saw was accurately presented.”

These are great strategies, and strategies we can—and should!—use each and every day as we traverse through digital environments. But sometimes, even the most ‘trusted’ of sources can get it wrong. Humans aren’t infallible; we all make mistakes, we all have blind spots, we all have biases. And news is, well... made by humans. So that means our news, too, can sometimes be wrong. And not just in misquoting an individual or flubbing a fact; news reporters and journalists, just like the rest of us, can fall victim to stereotypes and ways of understanding the world that may bleed into their reporting and presentation of events. While quality journalistic practices always strive for objectivity, the key word there is *strive*—it doesn’t always mean they’re successful.

Beyond Fact-Check

For one thing, as the late journalist and professor Curtis D. MacDougall notes, there’s the matter of curation: “At any given moment billions of simultaneous events occur throughout the world... all of these occurrences are potentially news. They do not become so until some purveyor of news gives an account of them. The news, in other words, is the account of the event, not something intrinsic in the event itself” (12). Every moment of every day, many things occur around the world that many of us—if we heard it—would consider ‘newsworthy.’ Not all of those things make it on *Good Morning America* or *Fox & Friends*, however: news outlets big and small have to sort through the many happenings of the day and pick out the stories they think are most central, a practice which inevitably means that some events get better coverage than others, often reflecting larger societal biases.

Additionally, there is the matter of how those selected stories are presented to readers: as Stuart Hall explains, not only do news purveyors “define for the majority of the population what significant events are taking place,” they likewise “offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events” (651). The world is complex, confounding, overwhelming, gigantic—something us humans aren’t all that comfortable sitting with. When presented with chaos, we like to make it neat, to make it tidy; we like to make sense, to make legible, to make understandable. And narratives, stories, and the like are some of the most effective framing devices to make sense of the unknown. But, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, “narratives are necessarily emplotted in a way that life is not... they necessarily distort life whether or not the evidence upon which they are based could be proved correct” (6). Narratives, in other words, will always be formed—at least in part—upon stereotype, presumption, and bias: for as much as they allow us to ‘see’ our world, they likewise prevent us from seeing it from ulterior perspectives.

So, in addition to sorting fact from fiction, we must also analyze our news for bias and subjectivity, to think about not just what news is presented, but how it’s being presented. As such, our activity today looks to complement SIFT with another analytic tool: reading between the lines and thinking through ‘counternarratives.’

Introducing Today’s Activity

Artist, journalist, and activist Alexandra Bell’s public art series, “[Counternarratives](#),” uses the visible power of the edit to call attention to the myriad ways in which the news is presented to us, with a specific focus on how stories are told about people of color. [As she shared with The Guardian](#), her work continually asks—and looks to draw attention to—how “presentation [is] changing the way [we] view event[s].” Why, for instance, are certain words used to describe certain individuals, and not others? Why was a particular image used in the paper, and not another? Why was that headline phrased like that, and another phrased slightly differently? And, perhaps most importantly: what is the result of all these editorial decisions?

Engaging with one of the most respected news institutions in the world—*The New York Times*—Bell looks to shine light on exactly such features, annotating, marking up, crossing out, and leaving notes in the marginalia to make clear the wide variety of biases, influences, and other editorial factors which serve to color our understanding of the event(s) in question. In so doing, she is able to draw direct attention to the countless ways in which our perspective of any given event is mediated through the ways in which it is being presented—as she notes in another interview, “it’s imperative to show how a turn of phrase or a misplaced photo has real consequences for people at the margins who are still suffering under the weight of unfair and biased representation.”

Our activity today is inspired by her work, calling on each and every one of us to think about how all the little details that make up a news story—such as title, placement, word choice—work to provide a particular perspective through which to view the news

event, and engage in a editorial process not unlike her own. Your goal today is to read the news through Bell's eyes, and use her annotative method to shed light on the stories' rhetorical and presentational missteps.

Instructions

- Step One: Each small group has been assigned a news story by the instructor. Start by reading the story out loud together, switching off readers every few paragraphs. Try to just absorb the story first, without marking up the page.
- Step Two: After you've read through the story aloud, discuss the piece together, working through the following questions:
 - First: what is the story about? What is the Sparknote version of the story, the most essential and important information?
 - Second: how is the story being told? Does anything about its presentation stick out to you, upon first reading?
- Step Three: Read the story again, marking up any areas you think deserve more attention.
 - Feel free to do this individually, or as a group. Remember that any and all details are on the table, such as word choice, visual presentation, title/sub-title, context given/not given by the author, experts consulted/not consulted, evidence provided/not provided, pictures used/not used.
- Step Four: Research the story, finding another outlet or two that has covered the same event.
 - What's different about their coverage? What's the same? How do these similarities/differences help you better understand the biases of your assigned piece?
- Step Five: Send a group member to get the master copy of the story from your instructor, along with the various annotation tools they've provided.
- Step Six: Discuss together what edits you'd like to make, and settle on a plan. It could be helpful to use one of your copies as a 'test' piece before turning to the master copy.
- Step Seven: When you're ready, mark up the story (as Bell does) to reflect the various biases and errors you've discovered.
 - Like Bell, your goal is to be left with a 'new' telling of the same event, using your annotations, deletions, insertions, and other edits to not only shed light to the news purveyors' subjectivity, but also to present another way of telling the same event.

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6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

Reading the News | Assessment | Same Story, Different Source

Introduction

As Damon Brown remarks in “[How To Choose Your News](#),” “today, we are more free than ever from the old media gatekeepers who used to control the flow of information. But with freedom comes responsibility: the responsibility to curate our own experience and ensure that this flow does not become a flood, leaving us less informed than before we took the plunge.” His invocation of Spider-Man is not without justification: how we, the public, inform ourselves of the happenings in the world has fundamental consequences on what kind of ideas, politics, practices, and relationships we hold to be self-evident. Whether you’re a daily reader or a second-hand nomad, the news of the day is one of the most important elements of a healthy, happy, and thriving social public, which means making sense of the news—both what is reported and how it’s reported—is of vital importance for all of us.

Our readings and activity for this week centered on ‘critical news practices,’ shining a light on the ‘SIFT’ method for determining factors like accuracy and relevancy, and Alexandra Bell’s ‘[Counternarratives](#)’ project for noting the ways in which bias and subjectivity can alter one’s takeaways of any given event. This closing activity looks to cement these practices by having you look at the same story across multiple outlets and answer some short-response questions.

Assignment

- Step One: Find the same story as reported by at least two different news purveyors. Share a link to both stories.
 - For example: you could look at, say, coverage of a recent town hall, or reporting on a new law passed by Congress, or an investigation into a company malpractice case, or even coverage of a recent celebrity mishap. All is fair game, as long as it’s the same story, as reported by multiple outlets
- Step Two: What similarities are shared between the two stories? Differences? Be sure to consult the SIFT materials, as well as your ‘Counternarratives’ classwork.
 - For example: is all the information the same? Do the reporters use the same sources? Do they use the same pictures? Do they use the same language? Do they provide similar context?
- Step Three: What, in your view, was gained by using the SIFT method in your analysis? Did it aid in your ability to confidently determine the legitimacy and accuracy of the story?
- Step Four: What, in your view, was gained by taking on the critical perspective provided by Alexandra Bell? Did it aid in your ability to ‘see’ the potential subjectivities of the author(s)?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language

While many of us engage with moving images on a day-to-day basis, we don't always stop and consider how such communication works; in this chapter, we will explore the concept and practice of 'cinematic language,' a way for us to better understand and make sense of how films communicate meaning and emotion to us.

[7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman](#)

[7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity](#)

[7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment](#)

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7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman

Step One: Evolve an optic nerve that “refreshes” at a rate of about 13 to 30 hertz in a normal active state.^[1] That’s 13 to 30 cycles per second. Fortunately, that bit has already been taken care of over the past several million years. You have one of them in your head right now.

Step Two: Project a series of still images captured in sequence at a rate at least twice that of your optic nerve’s ability to respond. Let’s say 24 images, or frames, per second.

Step Three: Don’t talk during the movie. That’s super annoying.

Okay, that last part is optional (though it is super annoying), but here’s the point: Cinema is built on a lie. It is not, in fact, a “motion” picture. It is, at a minimum, 24 still images flying past your retinas every second. Your brain interprets those dozens of photographs per second as movement, but it’s actually just the **illusion of movement**, a trick of the mind known as **beta movement**: the neurological phenomenon that interprets two stimuli shown in quick succession as the movement of a single object.

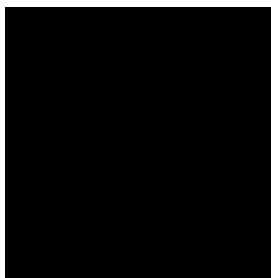


Figure 7.1.1: A series of dot still images that put together give the illusion of movement.. (Copyright; E vidal via [Wikipedia](#))

Because all of this happens so fast, faster than our optic nerves and synaptic responses can perceive, the mechanics are invisible. There may be 24 individual photographs flashing before our eyes every second, but all we see is one continuous moving picture. It’s a trick. An illusion.

The same applies to cinematic language. The way cinema communicates is the product of many different tools and techniques, from production design to narrative structure to lighting, camera movement, sound design, performance and editing. But all of these are employed to manipulate the viewer without us ever noticing. In fact, that’s kind of the point. The tools and techniques – the mechanics of the form – are invisible. There may be a thousand different elements flashing before our eyes – a subtle dolly-in here, a rack focus there, a bit of color in the set design that echoes in the wardrobe of the protagonist, a music cue that signals the emotional state of a character, a cut on an action that matches an identical action in the next scene, and on and on and on – but all we see is one continuous moving picture. A trick. An illusion.

In this chapter, we’ll explore how cinematic language works, a bit like breaking down the grammar and rules of spoken language, then we’ll take a look at how to watch cinema with these “rules” in mind. We may not be able to speed up the refresh rate of our optic nerve to catch each of those still images, but we can train our interpretive skills to see how filmmakers use the various tools and techniques at their disposal.

CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

Like any language, we can break cinematic language down to its most fundamental elements. Before grammar and syntax can shape meaning by arranging words or phrases in a particular order, the words themselves must be built up from letters, characters or symbols. The basic building blocks. In cinema, those basic building blocks are **shots**. A shot is one continuous capture of a span of action by a motion picture camera. It could last minutes (or even hours), or could last less than a second. Basically, a shot is everything that happens within the **frame** of the camera – that is, the visible border of the captured image – from the moment the director calls “Action!” to the moment she calls “Cut!”

These discrete shots rarely mean much in isolation. They are full of potential and may be quite interesting to look at on their own, but cinema is built up from the *juxtaposition* of these shots, dozens or hundreds of them, arranged in a particular order – a cinematic syntax – that renders a story with a collectively discernable meaning. We have a word for that too: **Editing**. Editing arranges shots into patterns that make up scenes, sequences and acts to tell a story, just like other forms of language communicate through words, sentences and paragraphs.

From these basic building blocks, we have developed a **cinematic language**, a set of rules and conventions by which cinema communicates meaning to the viewer. And by “we” I mean all of us, filmmakers and audiences alike, from the earliest motion picture to the latest VR experience. Cinematic language – just like any other language – is an organic, constantly evolving shared form of communication. It is an iterative process, one that is refined each time a filmmaker builds a story through a discrete number of shots, and each time an audience responds to that iteration, accepting or rejecting, but always engaging in the process. Together, we have developed a **visual lexicon**. A lexicon describes the shared set of meaningful units in any language. Think of it as the list of all available words and parts of words in a language we carry around in our heads. A visual lexicon is likewise the shared set of meaningful units in our collective cinematic language: images, angles, transitions and camera moves that we all understand *mean* something when employed in a motion picture.

But here’s the trick: We’re not supposed to notice any of it. The visual lexicon that underpins our cinematic language is invisible, or at least, it is meant to recede into the background of our comprehension. Cinema can’t communicate without it, but if we pay too much attention to it, we’ll miss what it all means. A nifty little paradox. But not so strange or unfamiliar when you think about it. It’s precisely the same with any other language. As you read these characters, words, sentences and paragraphs, you are not stopping to parse each unit of meaning, analyze the syntax or double check the sentence structure. All those rules fade to the background of your own fluency and the meaning communicated becomes clear (or at least, I sure hope it does). And that goes double for spoken language. We speak and comprehend in a fluent flow of grammar and syntax, never pausing over the rules that have become second nature, invisible and unnoticed.

So, what are some of those meaningful units of our cinematic language? Perhaps not surprisingly, a lot of them are based on how we experience the world in our everyday lives. Camera placement, for example, can subtly orient our perspective on a character or situation. Place the camera mere inches from a character’s face – known as a **close-up** – and we’ll feel more intimately connected to their experience than if the camera were further away, as in a **medium shot** or **long shot**. Place the camera below the eyeline of a character, pointing up – known as a **low-angle shot** – and that character will feel dominant, powerful, worthy of respect. We are literally looking up to them. Place the camera at eye level, we feel like equals. Let the camera hover above a character or situation – known as a **high-angle shot** – and we feel like gods, looking down on everyone and everything. Each choice effects how we see and interpret the shot, scene and story.

We can say the same about **transitions** from shot to shot. Think of them as conjunctions in grammar, words meant to connect ideas seamlessly. The more obvious examples, like **fade-ins** and **fade-outs** or long **dissolves**, are still drawn from our experience. Think of a slow fade-out, where the screen drifts into blackness, as an echo of our experience of falling asleep, drifting out of consciousness. In fact, fade-outs are most often used in cinema to indicate the close of an act or segment of story, much like the end of a long day. And dissolves are not unlike the way we remember events from our own experience, one moment bleeding into and overlapping with another in our memory.

But perhaps the most common and least noticed transition, by design, is a hard cut that bridges some physical action on screen. It’s called **cutting on action** and it’s a critical part of our visual lexicon, enabling filmmakers to join shots, often from radically different angles and positions, while remaining largely invisible to the viewer. The concept is simple: whenever a filmmaker wants to cut from one shot to the next for a new angle on a scene, she ends the first shot in the middle of some on-screen action, opening a door or setting down a glass, then begins the next shot in the middle of that same action. The viewer’s eye is drawn to the action on screen and not the cut itself, rendering the transition relatively seamless, if not invisible to the viewer.

Camera placement and transitions, along with camera movement, lighting style, color palette and a host of other elements make up the visual lexicon of cinematic language, all of which we will explore in the chapters to follow. In the hands of a gifted filmmaker, these subtle adjustments work together to create a coherent whole that communicates effectively (and invisibly). In the hands of not so gifted filmmakers, these choices can feel haphazard, unmotivated, or perhaps worse, “showy” – all style and no substance – creating a dissonant, ineffective cinematic experience. But even then, the techniques themselves remain largely invisible. We are simply left with the feeling that it was a “bad” movie, even if we can’t quite explain why. (Though by the end of this book, you should be able to explain why in great detail, probably to the great annoyance of your date. You’re welcome.)

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT MEANING

Once we have a grasp on these small, meaningful units of our collective cinematic language we can begin to analyze how they work together to communicate bigger, more complex ideas.

Take the work of Lynne Ramsay, for example. As a director, Ramsay builds a cinematic experience by paying attention to the details, the little things we might otherwise never notice:



Cinema, like literature, builds up meaning through the creative combination of these smaller units, but, also like literature, the whole is – or should be – much more than the sum of its parts. For example, *Moby Dick* is a novel that explores the nature of obsession, the futility of revenge and humanity’s essential conflict with nature. But in the more than 200,000 words that make up that book, few if any of them communicate those ideas directly. In fact, we can distinguish between **explicit meaning**, that is the obvious, directly expressed meaning of a work of art, be it a novel, painting or film, and **implicit meaning**, the deeper, essential meaning, suggested but not necessarily directly expressed by any one element. *Moby Dick* is explicitly about a man trying to catch a whale, but as any literature professor will tell you, it was never *really* about the whale.

That comparison between cinema and literature is not accidental. Both start with the same fundamental element, that is, a story. As we will explore in a later chapter, before a single frame is photographed, cinema begins with the written word in the form of a screenplay. And like any literary form, screenplays are built around a narrative structure. Yes, that’s a fancy way of saying story, but it’s more than simply a plot or an explicit sequence of events. A well-conceived narrative structure provides a foundation for that deeper, implicit meaning a filmmaker, or really any storyteller, will explore through their work.

Another way to think about that deeper, implicit meaning is as a **theme**, an idea that unifies every element of the work, gives it coherence and communicates what the work is *really* about. And really great cinema manages to suggest and express that theme through every shot, scene and sequence. Every camera angle and camera move, every line of dialogue and sound effect, every music cue and editing transition will underscore, emphasize and point to that theme without ever needing to spell it out or make it explicit. An essential part of analyzing cinema is the ability to identify that thematic intent and then trace its presence throughout.

Unless there is no thematic intent, or the filmmaker did not take the time to make it a unifying idea. Then you may have a “bad” movie on your hands. But at least you’re well on your way to understanding why!

So far, this discussion of explicit and implicit meaning, theme, and narrative structure points to a deep kinship between cinema and literature. But cinema has far more tools and techniques at its disposal to communicate meaning, implicit or otherwise. Sound, performance and visual composition all point to deep ties with music, theater, and painting or photography as well. And while each of those art forms employ their own strategies for communicating explicit and implicit meaning, cinema draws on all of them at once in a complex, multi-layered system.

Let’s take sound, for example. As you know from the brief history of cinema in the last chapter, cinema existed long before the introduction of synchronized sound in 1927, but since then, sound has become an equal partner with the moving image in the communication of meaning. Sound can shape the way we perceive an image, just as an image can change the way we perceive a sound. It’s a relationship we call **co-expressive**.

This is perhaps most obvious in the use of music. A **non-diegetic** musical score, that is music that only the audience can hear as it exists outside the world of the characters, can drive us toward an action-packed climax, or sweep us up in a romantic moment. Or it can contradict what we see on the screen, creating a sense of unease at an otherwise happy family gathering or making us laugh during a moment of excruciating violence. In fact, this powerful combination of moving image and music pre-dates synchronized sound. Even some of the earliest silent films were shipped to theaters with a musical score meant to be played during projection.

But as powerful as music can be, sound in cinema is much more than just music. **Sound design** includes music, but also dialog, sound effects and ambient sound to create a rich sonic context for what we see on the screen. From the crunch of leaves underfoot, to the steady hum of city traffic, to the subtle crackle of a cigarette burning, what we hear – and what we *don’t* hear – can put us in

the scene with the characters in a way that images alone could never do, and as a result, add immeasurably to the effective communication of both explicit and implicit meaning.

We can say the same about the relationship between cinema and theater. Both use a carefully planned **mise-en-scene** – the overall look of the production including set design, costume, make-up – to evoke a sense of place and visual continuity. And both employ the talents of well-trained actors to embody characters and enact the narrative structure laid out in the script.

Let's focus on acting for a moment. Theater, like cinema, relies on actors' performances to communicate not only the subtleties of human behavior, but also the interplay of explicit and implicit meaning. How an actor interprets a line of dialog can make all the difference in how a performance shifts our perspective, draws us in or pushes us away. And nothing ruins a cinematic or theatrical experience like "bad" acting. But what do we really mean by that? Often it means the performance wasn't connected to the thematic intent of the story, the unifying idea that holds it all together. We'll even use words like, "The actor seemed like they were in a different movie from everyone else." That could be because the director didn't clarify a theme in the first place, or perhaps they didn't shape, or direct, an actor's performance toward one. It could also simply be poor casting.

All of the above applies to both cinema and theater, but cinema has one distinct advantage: the intimacy and flexibility of the camera. Unlike theater, where your experience of a performance is dictated by how far you are from the stage, the filmmaker has complete control over your point of view. She can pull you in close, allowing you to observe every tiny detail of a character's expression, or she can push you out further than the cheapest seats in a theater, showing you a vast and potentially limitless context. And perhaps most importantly, cinema can move between these points of view in the blink of an eye, manipulating space and time in a way live theater never can. And all of those choices effect how we engage the thematic intent of the story, how we connect to what that particular cinematic experience *really* means. And because of that, in cinema, whether we realize it or not, we identify most closely with the *camera*. No matter how much we feel for our hero up on the screen, we view it all through the lens of the camera.

And that central importance of the camera is why the most obvious tool cinema has at its disposal in communicating meaning is visual composition. Despite the above emphasis on the importance of sound, cinema is still described as a visual medium. Even the title of this chapter is How to *Watch* a Movie. Not so surprising when you think about the lineage of cinema and its origin in the fixed images of the camera obscura, daguerreotypes and series photography. All of which owe a debt to painting, both as an art form and a form of communication. In fact, the cinematic concept of **framing** has a clear connection to the literal frame, or physical border, of paintings. And one of the most powerful tools filmmakers – and photographers and painters – have at their disposal for communicating both explicit and implicit meaning is simply what they place inside the frame and what they leave out.

Another word for this is **composition**, the arrangement of people, objects and setting within the frame of an image. And if you've ever pulled out your phone to snap a selfie, or maybe a photo of your meal to post on social media (I know, I'm old, but really? Why is that a thing?), you are intimately aware of the power of composition. Adjusting your phone this way and that to get just the right angle, to include just the right bits of your outfit, maybe edge Greg out of the frame just in case things don't work out (sorry, Greg). Point is, composing a shot is a powerful way we tell stories about ourselves every day. Filmmakers, the really good ones, are masters of this technique. And once you understand this principle, you can start to analyze *how* a filmmaker uses composition to serve their underlying thematic intent, to help tell their story.

One of the most important ways a filmmaker uses composition to tell their story is through repetition, a pattern of recurring images that echoes a similar framing and connects to a central idea. And like the relationship between shots and editing – where individual shots only really makes sense once they are juxtaposed with others – a well-composed image may be interesting or even beautiful on its own, but it only starts to make sense in relation to the implicit meaning or theme of the overall work when we see it as part of a pattern.

Take, for example, Stanley Kubrick and his use of one-point perspective:



Or how Barry Jenkins uses color in *Moonlight* (2016):



Or how Sofia Coppola tends to trap her protagonists in gilded cages:



These recurring images are part of that largely invisible cinematic language. We aren't necessarily supposed to notice them, but we are meant to feel their effects. And it's not just visual patterns that can serve the filmmaker's purposes. Recurring patterns, or **motifs**, can emerge in the sound design, narrative structure, mise-en-scene, dialog and music.

But there is one distinction that should be made between how we think about composition and patterns in cinema and how we think about those concepts in photography or painting. While all of the above employ framing to achieve their effects, photography and painting are limited to what is fixed in that frame by the artist at the moment of creation. Only cinema adds an entirely new and distinct dimension to the composition: **movement**. That includes movement *within* the frame – as actors and objects move freely, recomposing themselves within the fixed frame of a shot – as well as movement *of* the frame itself, as the filmmaker moves the

camera in the setting and around those same actors and objects. This increases the compositional possibilities exponentially for cinema, allowing filmmakers to layer in even more patterns that serve the story and help us connect to their thematic intent.

FORM, CONTENT AND THE POWER OF CINEMA

As we become more attuned to the various tools and techniques that filmmakers use to communicate their ideas, we will be able to better analyze their effectiveness. We'll be able to *see* what was once invisible. A kind of magic trick in itself. But as I tried to make clear from the beginning, my goal is not to focus solely on form, to dissect cinema into its constituent parts and lose sight of its overall power. Cinema, like any art form, is more than the sum of its parts. And it should be clear already that form and content go hand in hand. Pure form, all technique and no substance, is meaningless. And pure content, all story and no style, is didactic and, frankly, boring. How the story is told is as important as what the story is about.

However, just as we *can* analyze technique, the formal properties of cinema, to better understand *how* a story is communicated, we can also analyze content, that is, *what* stories are communicating to better understand how they fit into the wider cultural context. Cinema, again like literature, can represent valuable cultural documents, reflecting our own ideas, values and morals back to us as filmmakers and audiences.

We'll spend more time on content analysis – the idea of cinema as a cultural document – in the last couple of chapters of this book, but I want to take a moment to highlight one aspect of that analysis in advance. I've discussed at length the idea of a cinematic language, and the fact that as a form of communication it is largely invisible or subconscious. Interestingly, the same can be said for cinematic content. Or, more specifically, the cultural norms that *shape* cinematic content. Cinema is an art form like any other, shaped by humans bound up in a given historical and cultural context. And no matter how enlightened and advanced those humans may be, that historical and cultural context is so vast and complex they cannot possibly grasp every aspect of how it shapes their view of the world. Inevitably, those cultural blind spots, the unexamined norms and values that makes us who we are, filter into the cinematic stories we tell and how we tell them.

The result is a kind of cultural feedback loop where cinema both influences and is influenced by the context in which it is created.

Because of this, on the whole, cinema is inherently conservative. That is to say, as a form of communication it is more effective at conserving or re-affirming a particular view of the world than challenging or changing it. This is due in part to the economic reality that cinema, historically a very expensive medium, must appeal to the masses to survive. As such, it tends to avoid offending our collective sensibilities, to make us feel better about who we already think we are. And it is also due in part to the social reality that the people who have historically had access to the capital required to produce that very expensive medium tend to all look alike. That is, mostly white, and mostly men. And when the same kind of people with the same kind of experiences tend to have the most consistent access to the medium, we tend to get the same kinds of stories, reproducing the same, often unexamined, norms, values and ideas.

But that doesn't mean cinema *can't* challenge the status quo, or at least reflect real, systemic change in the wider culture already underway. That's what makes the study of cinema, particularly in regard to content, so endlessly fascinating. Whether it's tracking the way cinema reflects the dominant cultural norms of a given period, or the way it sometimes rides the leading edge of change in those same norms, cinema is a window – or frame (see what I did there) – through which we can observe the mechanics of cultural production, the inner-workings of how meaning is produced, shared, and sometimes broken down over time.

EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

One final word on how to watch a movie before we move on to the specific tools and techniques employed by filmmakers. In as much as cinema is a cultural phenomenon, a mass medium with a crucial role in the production of meaning, it's also an art form meant to entertain. And while I think one can assess the difference between a "good" movie and a "bad" movie in terms of its effectiveness, that has little to do with whether one likes it or not.

In other words, you don't have to necessarily *like* a movie to analyze its use of a unifying theme or the way the filmmaker employs mise-en-scene, narrative structure, cinematography, sound and editing to effectively communicate that theme. *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), arguably one of the greatest films ever made, is an incredibly *effective* motion picture. But it's not my favorite. Between you and me, I don't even really like it all that much. But I still show it to my students every semester. Which means I've seen it dozens and dozens of times and it never ceases to astonish in its formal technique and innovative use of cinematic language.

Fortunately, the opposite is also true: You can really, really like a movie that isn't necessarily all that good. Maybe there's no unifying theme, maybe the cinematography is all style and no substance (or no style *and* no substance), maybe the narrative

structure is made out of toothpicks and the acting is equally thin and wooden. (That's right, *Twilight*, I'm looking at you.) Who cares? You like it. You've watched it more often than I've seen *Citizen Kane* and you *still* like it.

That's great. Embrace it. Because *taste* in cinema is subjective. But *analysis* of cinema doesn't have to be. You can analyze anything. Even things you don't like.

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[MOONLIGHT // BLUE](#) by Russell Leigh Sharman. Standard Vimeo License.

Sofia Coppola: Gilded Cages by Fandor. Standard Vimeo License.

1. Okay, it's actually a lot more complicated than that. Optic nerves don't "refresh" in the way we normally think of that term. In fact, the optic nerve is part of a complex system that includes your eyeballs, retinas and brain, each of which performs at varying degrees of efficiency and changes as we age. But the numbers here are a good rule of thumb for thinking about how quickly we can process images. For more on how the optic nerve works, check this out: <https://wolfcrow.com/notes-by-dr-optoglass-motion-and-the-frame-rate-of-the-human-eye/>↵
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7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity

Reading the Movies | Classroom Activity | Cinematic Language Scene-a-palooza

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- This activity is meant to help students take what they've learned from the Sharman text, and put it into action. The first eleven clips compiled here are exemplary scenes from across film history, which will allow students the opportunity to 'spot' cinematic language at work. The particular selections, and the order in which they are presented, are meant to help scaffold student learning.
- Each of these clips are accompanied by guiding questions and frameworks for class discussion, which can be found below each embedded video.
- There is a Google Slide version of this activity, which contains an addition 16 clips that you may want to swap in with others depending on class interest, themes, etc. [A link to the Slides presentation can be found here](#), and at the bottom of this chapter section.
- The opening is a recap of Russell Sharman's 'How To Watch A Movie,' from the OER text Moving Pictures, which I recommend students read for homework prior to this activity.
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material and edit it as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates if/when doing so.

Recap: Sharman's "How to Watch a Movie"

- As Sharman notes, "the way the cinema communicates is the product of many different tools and techniques, from production design to narrative structure to lighting, camera movement, sound design, performance, and editing... employed to manipulate the viewer without us ever noticing" (47)
 - Our task today is to notice these tools and techniques, to better understand how cinema communicates with audience
- For Sharman, we can think of cinema like a language; his chapter (and this activity) is all about "how cinematic language works"
 - Like "breaking down the grammar and rules of spoken language," the hope is to "train our interpretive skills to see how filmmakers use various tools and techniques" to achieve their desired effect (47)
 - Over time, filmmakers and audiences have together developed a visual lexicon, a "shared set of meaningful units in any language... [a] shared set of meaningful units in our collective cinematic language: images, angles, transitions and camera moves that we all understand mean something when employed in a motion picture" (49)

Scene One - "Veal Cutlets" | *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* | dir. Chantal Akerman (1975)

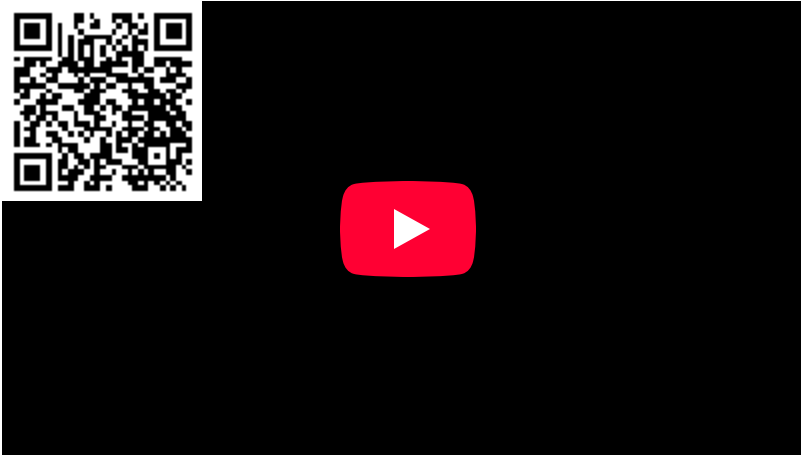


- Discussion Questions:
 - Acting as a commentary on patriarchy and the oppression of women, *Jeanne Dielman* dives headfirst into the monotony of the titular character's day-to-day (as evidenced by this scene), before things start to unravel and she murders a client. How does the mise-en-scene speak to Jeanne's interior world? What is the effect of the use of grid-like structures, textures, and patterns, the singular camera placement, the lack of dialogue, the blocking (or lack thereof), the lighting? While we're only

watching a segment, imagine the effect of building up this careful, rigid structure, before completely bulldozing it as Jeanne's anger and disillusionment grows?

- Remember that, in film, nothing is there 'just because'—this is a great scene to start with, as every detail in this scene can be analyzed, and is used in service of a larger theme, idea, and/or effect.

Scene Two - "Opening Sequence" | *Rear Window* | dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1954)



- Discussion Questions:
 - Opening scenes are often tasked with introducing the key themes, ideas, and characters of the film, and *Rear Window* offers a great example. Through the camera alone, what are we able to 'tell' about the movie; what expectations, plot-points, and character developments are communicated through cinematic language? (we learn that Jefferies, for instance, is a photographer, and in a cast due to an accident on the job)
 - This clip provides a great example of the male gaze, too: how is Miss Torso (the name in the script of the woman dancing) captured differently than her other, less traditionally 'desirable' neighbors (Miss Lonelyhearts, the musician, the newlyweds, etc.)? What kinds of social, cultural, and political messages might be communicated through such depictions?

Scene Three - "Three-Way Standoff" | *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* | dir. Sergio Leone (1966)



- Discussion Questions:
 - How do all the close-up shots serve to build tension and intrigue within the scene? What is the dramatic effect when we're finally given a wide-shot?
 - How does the music serve to elevate the tension and intrigue of the scene?

Scene Four - Video Store Meet | *The Watermelon Woman* | dir. Cheryl Dunye (1996)



- Discussion Questions:

- How does Dunye use blocking—where/how characters are placed and moved through the frame—to communicate with the audience? How do these decisions affect our understanding of the character's internal thoughts and feelings? Their external actions? How do they affect our ability to connect with them?
- What is the significance of the 'normality' of the scene: it's shot pretty straight-forwardly, all things considered, and the kind of conversation the coworkers are having is a common one, one not all too dissimilar from conversations you might've had with your own friends and coworkers—why might Dunye have wanted to present the content of this scene (Black queer romance) in such a manner?

Scene Five - "Eva!" | *World on a Wire* | dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1973)



- Discussion Question:

- What does the dynamic camera work contribute to one's understanding of both the interior and exterior conflicts of our character? How does the 360 effect introduce tension, fear, and confusion into the audience?

Scene Six - "Swimming Scene" | *Moonlight* | dir. Barry Jenkins (2016)



- Discussion Questions:

- How does the handheld nature of the camerawork lend to the intimacy of the scene?
- What is the effect of having the water push against the frame?
- What is achieved through the way in which the scene is edited together? What is accomplished by placing the swimming scene before Chiron's and Juan's conversation? How do the camerawork changes after the swim elevate the themes and messages of the scene overall?

Scene Seven - "Ark of Arts" | *Children of Men* | dir. Alfonso Cuarón (2005)



- Discussion Questions:

- In a science fiction text, the author must flex and stretch our shared language to communicate sights, sounds, and ideas that may lie beyond our Earthly imaginations. In what ways is cinema uniquely able to depict the non-human, the futuristic, the off-planet?
- Cuarón is playing quite a bit with color, sound, and set decoration here; what sticks out to you? Why? Why do you think the filmmaking team chose to include this detail?
- How is camera placement contributing meaning to the scene? What does placing the camera in/at different positions bring to our understanding of the scene's implicit and explicit messages?

Scene Eight - "The Hills are Alive" | *The Sound of Music* | dir. Robert Wise (1965)



- Discussion Question:
 - This is a movie adapted from a stage musical; what is lost and gained by the adaptation to film—the grandeur of the location, the use of color, the ability to zoom in and out while capturing the performance vs. the rawness of a live show, the stylization of a theater adaptation, etc.

Scene Nine - "Leap of Faith" | *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* | dir. Persichetti, Ramsey, & Rothman (2018)



- Discussion Questions:
 - Outside the set-up dialogue, this scene is communicated entirely through moving image, and yet the emotions one feels at the end are likely much different than those at the start: how does the animation team use cinematic language to achieve this effect?
 - In what ways are the themes, messages, and a/effects of the scene elevated by the use of the animated form? What would be the difference if this was shot in live action?

Scene Ten - "Animal Fight Scene" | *RRR* | dir. S. S. Rajamouli (2022)



- Discussion Questions:

- This is a scene that quite simply couldn't exist without CGI technologies. What is gained through the deployment of such tools? Is anything lost? Do we want more CGI films in the future, or less?
- How is tension, excitement, and intrigue built into the scene through not just what is being shown, but how it's being shown. Sure, this scene is cool because a bunch of animals leap out from nowhere, but it is because of cinematic language that we read this as 'bad-ass' and not 'cheugy'

Scene Eleven - 'Duck Amuck' | *Looney Tunes* | dir. Chuck Jones (1953)



- Discussion Questions:

- How does Jones play with cinematic language within the piece? What 'rules' of cinematic language does he break, and what is achieved in doing so?
- In what ways does our understanding and enjoyment of this short piece rely on our understanding of cinematic language (a language, prior to today, you may not have realized you spoke!)

A link to a Google Slides presentation of this material, which includes an additional 16 scenes, [can be found here](#).

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7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

Reading the Movies | Assessment | Seeing Cinema, Writing Cinema

Our materials for class this week were centered around the idea of ‘cinematic language,’ a way for us to ‘think’ how films communicate meaning and emotion to us. While we may most notice things like performance and narrative, moving images communicate meaning through far more than dialogue alone: as Sharman notes in "How To Watch A Movie," “the way the cinema communicates is the product of many different tools and techniques, from production design to narrative structure to lighting, camera movement, sound design, performance, and editing” (47). Importantly, too, all this is “employed to manipulate the viewer without us ever noticing” (47).

So, following Sharman: **your task for this week’s discussion board is to ‘read’ the cinematic language of a clip of your choosing—to select a scene from a movie, TV show, video game, or other form of moving image, and analyze how the filmmaking team is utilizing cinematic language to communicate and connect with audiences.** Your response should be 250 words, and should include a way to access your chosen scene (YouTube link preferred).

The prompt is open-ended on purpose, to give you space to explore the particulars of your chosen clip. The following questions may be helpful as you work. I’d encourage you to return the Sharman text, as well.

- What are the compositional decisions made by the filmmaking team within the scene? How do they play into the larger conversations and commitments of the film?
- How is the scene shot? How does the camera ‘work’ within the scene?
- What is put into view, and what is excluded? What do these decisions ‘do’ for our overall takeaway from the scene, or the movie writ large?
- What details do you notice in background, set design, props, character costuming? What do these details add to the piece? What would be the result if we removed them?
- What is the implicit message of the clip? How is the filmmaking team communicating this message through their creative use of the camera and other tools of cinema?
- How does the scene/film relate to the social/cultural/political concerns of the times? Is it critiquing them? Agreeing with them?
- What messages, commitments, and perspectives about the world does the scene uphold and/or dismantle? How is the filmmaking team utilizing cinematic language to do so?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Reading Television - The Cultural Shifts of Streaming Media

Many of us likely say we're 'watching TV' whether we're turning on cable or booting up Hulu, but there are important differences between the two; in this chapter, we'll take a closer look at some of these televisual shifts, as well as think a bit about what larger, ideological alterations may come from them.

[8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno](#)

[8.2: Reading Television - Classroom Activity](#)

[8.3: Reading Television - Assessment](#)

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8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno

Our reading for this week can be found [here](#). I look forward to seeing what you make of Buonanno's overview of the contemporary television landscape, where the 'broadcasting' of yesteryear has become usurped by the 'narrowcasting' of modern streaming.

This page titled [8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Erica McCormack and Jack Lindsay](#).

8.2: Reading Television - Classroom Activity

Reading Television | Classroom Activity | Duel Screening - TV Through The Decades

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The opening slides provide a review of Ramon Lobato's "What Is Netflix?," one of the suggested reading materials to accompany this activity
- Slides 7 & 8 outline two suggested in-class screenings, which showcase a host of the dramatic formal evolutions brought about by streaming (as Lobato identifies)
- Additionally, both episodes exceptionally speak to the power, potentials, and limitations of television as a means for the dispersion of ideological positions
- Cumulatively, the two should take a little under an hour to screen, leaving plenty of room for class discussion
- Each episode is accompanied by brief lecture notes, as well as other suggested reading material you may want to incorporate
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Recap: "What Is Netflix?" | *Netflix Nations* | Ramon Lobato

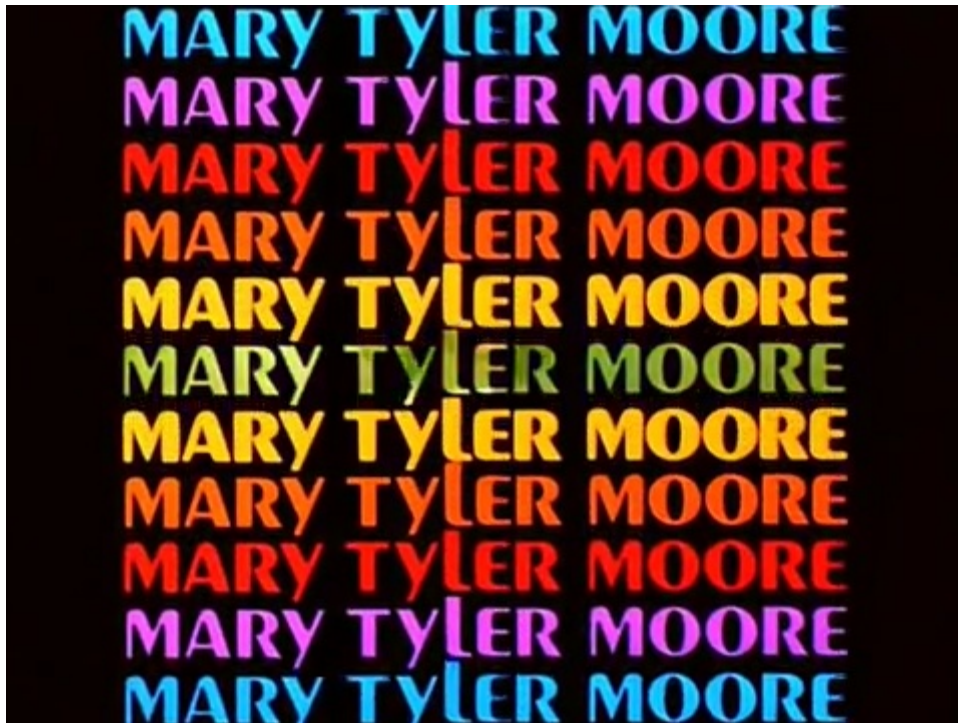
- Our assigned reading material offered a broad look at how various media studies scholars make sense of the similarities and differences between traditional television and their more modern streaming counterparts, with a particular focus on Netflix
 - "While Netflix is an established global brand with 20 years of history, there is still very little agreement about what Netflix is or how it should be understood by the public, scholars, or media regulators. Netflix—like many disruptive media phenomena before it, including radio and broadcast television—is a boundary object that exists between, and inevitably problematizes, the conceptual categories used to think about media" (20)
- Can't look at Netflix as something fundamentally new, as "focusing exclusively on the software dimension obscures Netflix's structural relationships with established screen industries" (22); can't look at Netflix as too akin to traditional TV, for "if we study Netflix in terms of its similarities to and differences from television, we can miss its connections to other digital media" (22)
- One of the big shifts between traditional television and newer streaming models can be found in their fundamentally different approaches to content selection, the shift from a broadcast-based service to a narrowcast-based service
- As Lobato notes, television has moved from "a mass medium to a niche one," which serves to "fragment" what was once mass audience into a series of hyper-niche ones (23)
 - Milly Buonanno: "Netflix's modus operandi has substantially helped widen the landscape of storytelling and has expanded access to what appears to be an almost boundless cornucopia of television narratives to an unprecedented degree. This certainly generates the valuable gain of a greater range of choice that discloses and (seemingly) maintains the historical promise—left unfulfilled by television as we have known it—to 'give viewers what they want'" (6)
 - At the same time, as Nick Couldry and Joseph Turow argue: this means that we've got increasingly less "shared public reference points" (1711) which could lead in turn to "the gradual erosion of a common arena of discourse" (1712)
- Another important shift Lobato traces is the rise of the algorithm, which serves to suggest, guide, and influence viewers on a personalized level. As such, Netflix cannot be seen as a 'neutral' force or mere technological innovation: instead, we must acknowledge that the platform "shape[s] the communications, interactions, and consumption that they facilitate— through interface design, moderation policies, terms of service, algorithmic recommendation, and so on" (38)
 - Reed Hastings, Netflix CEO: "One day we hope to get so good at suggestions that we're able to show you exactly the right film or TV show for your mood when you turn on Netflix" (The Economist)
- Some worry this ability to hyper-target audiences will led to the strengthening of cultural echo chambers: "the rise of predictive personalization might be good news for the study of artificial intelligence and machine learning, but it is bad news for anyone who wishes to encounter what Sontag calls 'great films.'" (Alexander, as cited by Lobato 41)

Introducing Today's Activity

- Many of us likely say we're 'watching TV' whether we're turning on MTV or booting up Hulu, but, as Lobato makes clear, there are important differences between the two: "the everyday terminology may remain unchanged... but might refer to quite a different set of practices that are ontologically distinct from what that terminology referred to in the past" (31)

- Today's activity looks to have us put some of the analytic perspectives and approaches Lobato identifies into action by showcasing two different television programs, with their original air date separated by over half a century
- Not only will these examples allow us to see shifts in the ways television 'works' (changes in storytelling, in formal style, in content, etcetera), but also allow us a look at the ways in which television serves as a conduit for ideologies—be them reaffirming the dominant frame or offering an ulterior view

Screening One: "The Birds... and... um... Bess" | *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*



- Screening Notes:
 - Episode available on Hulu and YouTube TV, both of which offer free trial periods (if instructor/institution does not have an account to either already)
 - This episode offers an exceptional look at the simultaneously radical and reductionist nature of television, but others from the series could certainly work as well
 - Additionally, watching 'older' television provides students a chance to experience television in its formal heyday, to better make sense of the changes more common to their own, contemporary televisual experiences
 - The media productions of decades past, too, provide a exceptional chance to see the power of mediated ideologies, as the perspectives and positions that don't 'fit' with our own are much more noticeable
 - This screening pairs particularly well with Kathryn Fuselier's "'A Necessary Medium' - Mary Tyler Moore Show & Media Portrayal of the Second Wave Feminist Era," should you like to incorporate an additional text for homework/group-work/discussion/etcetera
 - Not only does it offer a great outline of first-, second-, and third-wave feminism, but speaks to the ways in which The Mary Tyler Moore Show can be both celebrated and critiqued for its contributions/hindrances to the feminist movement
 - And, even better, it's a student essay!

Screening Two: "New York, I Love You" | *Master of None* (2017)

Master of None

- Screening Notes:

- Episode available exclusively on Netflix, which occasionally offers free trial experiences (if instructor/institution doesn't have an account already)
- While other modern television episodes would certainly work, this piece in particular provides an exceptional opportunity to 'see' the many changes brought about by streaming television options; [this interview](#) with star and writer Aziz Ansari offers a brief overview, if you're not familiar with the episode already
- Amongst other highlights, the episode features multiple compelling narratives, and represents the power of truly inclusive, intersectional media; additionally, it takes a variety of formal risks that would be unavailable to traditional television, making clear the stylistic differences between the two forms
- This screening pairs particularly well with Milly Buonanno's "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century," should you like to incorporate an additional text for homework/group-work/discussion/etcetera

Works Cited

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"New York, I Love You." *Master of None*, created by Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang, season 2, episode 8, Netflix, 12 May 2017.

"The Birds... and... um... Bess." *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, created by James L. Brooks and Allan Burns, season 2, episode 1, CBS, 18 Sep. 1971

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8.3: Reading Television - Assessment

Reading Television | Assessment | Investigating the Stream

As Ramon Lobato's literature review makes clear, "Netflix is a shape-shifter" (43), combining elements of traditional television with innovative digital tools that engender entirely new opportunities for the form. But, as our materials for this week attest, these changes aren't an inherently 'good' thing: while Netflix and other services may be broadening the playing field, one could just as easily accuse them of fracturing audiences and undercutting the broad, communal goals of traditional television. For your discussion board this week, I'd like you to identify one of the arguments Buonanno discusses in her text, and then share your own thoughts as to where you fall in the equation.

1. Cite & Explain: what is the argument Buonanno identifies that you look to respond to? In addition to talking through the position in your own words, be sure to share a direct quote from the text which speaks to the core aspects of the argument
2. Respond: What is your response? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
3. Support: What is a piece of evidence that supports your position? Why does this example support your argument?

Your post should be at least **250 words**, and contain responses to all three steps identified above.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes

While many might dismiss memes as little more than silly internet content, being able to analyze, make sense of, and call out a politically-motivated meme is becoming an ever-more important skill in our ever-more meme-ified world; this chapter looks to shine a light on this impressive political, social, and cultural power and potential.

[9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn](#)

[9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity](#)

[9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment](#)

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9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn

Our reading for the week can be found [here](#)—who would've thought you'd be reading about memes for a college class?!

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9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity

Reading the Internet | Classroom Activity | Teddy's Build-A-Meme Workshop

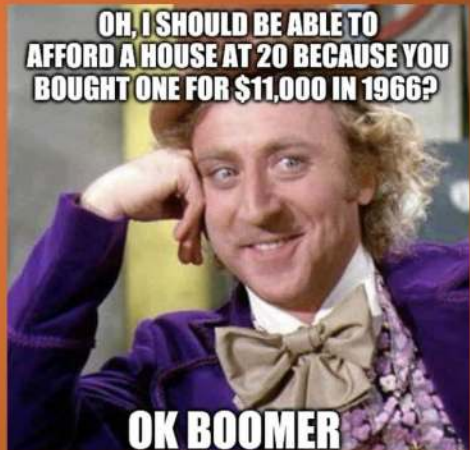
How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- This class activity is meant to compliment the reading “‘OK Boomer’: Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” by Morgan Anderson & Gabriel Keehn, aimed at helping students realize the social/cultural/political power of memes through hands-on experience, as well as remind them of their power within social media advocacy apparatuses
- The activity was designed in Slides; [a link can be found here](#), and screenshots are shared below. The opening slides are a recap of the general argument in “OK Boomer,” intended to help students remember some of the core ideas of the reading; the activity itself can be found on slides 4-5
- You should assign each student group a ‘topic’ to focus on (for instance: college/education, work/labor, taxes, social media, video games, internet ads, healthcare, etc.)
 - I’ve found this goes a long way to ensure students stay on track during the activity, but will also occasionally allow the groups to come up with their own topic (usually give them 2 minutes max to do so, to ensure it doesn’t take up too much class time)
- Tech note: I typically use [imgflip’s meme generator](#), but there are plenty of other free options available on the web as well; at least one student in each group will need computer access
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Activity

“OK Boomer” | Anderson & Keehn

- “The speed with which memes can be consumed, altered, and shared, in addition to their widespread accessibility have made them a unique form of social communication with... fascinating implications of political consciousness building” (57)
- “A recent notable example of memes as consciousness building is the emergence of the ‘OK Boomer’ meme. Meant to express the political frustrations of millenials and younger generations with what they see as a fundamentally inequitable and hostile political landscape, the OK Boomer meme has become a shorthand way of signaling one’s understanding of the deepening structural inequalities that present unprecedented challenges for our nation’s youth” (57)

Introducing the Activity

- While Anderson & Keehn look specifically at the 'OK Boomer' meme, their larger suggestion is that *many* memes uphold particular ideas about the world, and that the meme format is uniquely capable of spreading political, social, and cultural messages in a quick, digestible, and effective manner
 - Memes offer "internally consistent and intelligible narrative that reflects the type of nascent political theorizing necessary for building social movements" (57)
- Today's activity looks to showcase the power, potential, and properties of the meme format by putting you in the driver's seat, with each group assigned to create memes that speak to a larger social, cultural, and/or political concern



Teddy's Build-A-Meme Workshop

Step One: Discuss

What is your group's perspective on the assigned topic? Are you all in agreement, or do you have different opinions?

Step Two: Brainstorm

Any aspects or details of the topic that might lend themselves to a good meme? Any meme formats in particular you think might be effective?



Step Three: Make

Using the meme generator, each group will make memes that represent their position on the selected topic. You are free to make these alongside your group members, or independently. You should aim to make 2-4 memes per group member, and should engage with multiple meme templates while doing so

Step Four: Group Share

Each group member will share their memes with one another, noting which they think are most effective, and why. Each group will select at least 5 memes to share with the whole class.

Class Share: At the end of the activity, each group will have 3-5 minutes to share a 'best of' their created memes with the class, discussing what decisions they made, why they made them, and what they think of the meme's effectiveness

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9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment

Reading the Internet | Assessment | Meme Investigator

Introduction



Using the ‘OK Boomer’ meme as case study, Morgan Anderson and Gabriel Keehn argue that memes—while dismissed by many as little more than silly internet content—harbor far greater political, social, and cultural potentials: “the speed at which memes can be consumed, altered, and shared, in addition to their widespread accessibility, have made them a unique form of social communication with... fascinating implications for political consciousness building” (57). We explored this power and potential in class, too, using meme formats to spread messages, critiques, and other sentiments to promote the causes we believe in.

However, this viral consciousness-raising—this ability to generate awareness and conversation around any given issue through the sharing of an easy-to-create, easy-to-customize base image—can be directed towards movements, ideas, and politics we may not align with, and may in fact be outright dangerous. Being able to analyze, make sense of, and spot out a politically-motivated meme, in other words, is becoming an ever-more important skill in our ever-more meme-ified world.

With these thoughts in mind, the following writing activity asks you to think critically about what larger messages can be presented within a meme trend you’re familiar with.

Assessment

- Step One: Find a Meme
 - This one’s easy: find a meme. But not just any meme; I want you to find a meme that is commenting on some larger social/cultural/political phenomenon. Please share a link to your meme below, or attach the image to your post.
- Step Two: Identify a Position
 - What position is upheld by the meme? What leads you to this conclusion? Do you feel as though the meme properly speaks to the issue at hand?
- Step Three: Reflect
 - What do you think the potential real-world effects of the meme might be? How might this meme contribute—positively or negatively—to larger political, social, and cultural movements?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Reading the Internet - Coded Inequalities and Algorithmic Bias

We often see computer code, algorithms, and the like as objective, beyond the human, free from questions of bias; these collected materials look to help us better ‘read’ and make sense of the power, prevalence, and potential of algorithmic processes, as well as the larger social, cultural, and political biases which often become embedded in computing technologies.

[10.1: “The Age of Algorithms” | Butler, Sargent, and Smith](#)

[10.1.1: The Age of Algorithms](#)

[10.1.1.1: What are Algorithms?](#)

[10.1.1.2: The Influence of Algorithms](#)

[10.1.1.3: Algorithmic Bias](#)

[10.1.1.4: The Attention Economy](#)

[10.1.1.5: Algorithms and Polarization](#)

[10.1.1.6: Filter Bubbles](#)

[10.1.1.7: Conclusion](#)

[10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity](#)

[10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment](#)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.1.1: The Age of Algorithms

10.1.1.1: What are Algorithms?

10.1.1.2: The Influence of Algorithms

10.1.1.3: Algorithmic Bias

10.1.1.4: The Attention Economy

10.1.1.5: Algorithms and Polarization

10.1.1.6: Filter Bubbles

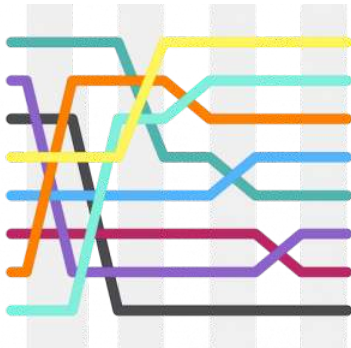
10.1.1.7: Conclusion

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10.1.1.1: What are Algorithms?

Overview

“Everyone who has accessed the internet has experienced the personalizing actions of algorithms, whether they realize it or not. These invisible lines of code can track our interactions, trying to game our consumer habits and political leanings to determine what ads, news stories and information we see....As tracking practices have become more common and advanced, it has become urgent to understand how these computer programs work and have widespread impact. How do students understand the hidden filters that influence what they see and learn, and shape what they think and who they are?” (Head et al. 13)



Algorithms are step-by-step instructions that computers follow to complete tasks, solve problems, and make automated decisions. They use data to make predictions about people, including their preferences, attributes, and behaviors. Algorithms power nearly everything we see online, including search engines, social media, video games, online dating, and smartphone apps. They are used to shape and filter content on the platforms many of us interact with daily, such as Google, YouTube, Instagram, Netflix, Facebook, Amazon, Twitter, and Spotify. For example, algorithms determine which websites you see first in your Google search results, which posts you see on Facebook, and which videos YouTube “recommends” and autoplays for you.

Data & Algorithms

The following TED Talk [9:44] with computer scientist Jennifer Golbeck provides a clear explanation of how data is collected on social media sites, and how this can be used to create algorithms that predict attributes like political affiliation, intelligence, sexual orientation, relationship strength, and even drug/alcohol usage.



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10.1.1.2: The Influence of Algorithms



“We live in an era of ambient information. Amidst the daily flood of digital news, memes, opinion, advertising, and propaganda, there is rising concern about how popular platforms, and the algorithms they increasingly employ, may influence our lives, deepen divisions in society, and foment polarization, extremism, and distrust” (Head et al. 1).

Positive & Negative

As companies, governments, and other organizations continue to collect and analyze massive amounts of our data, the use of algorithms has become pervasive. In fact, many are referring to this period as the “Age of Algorithms” or the “Algorithm Era,” and researchers are considering the significant impacts that these tools may have—both positive and negative.

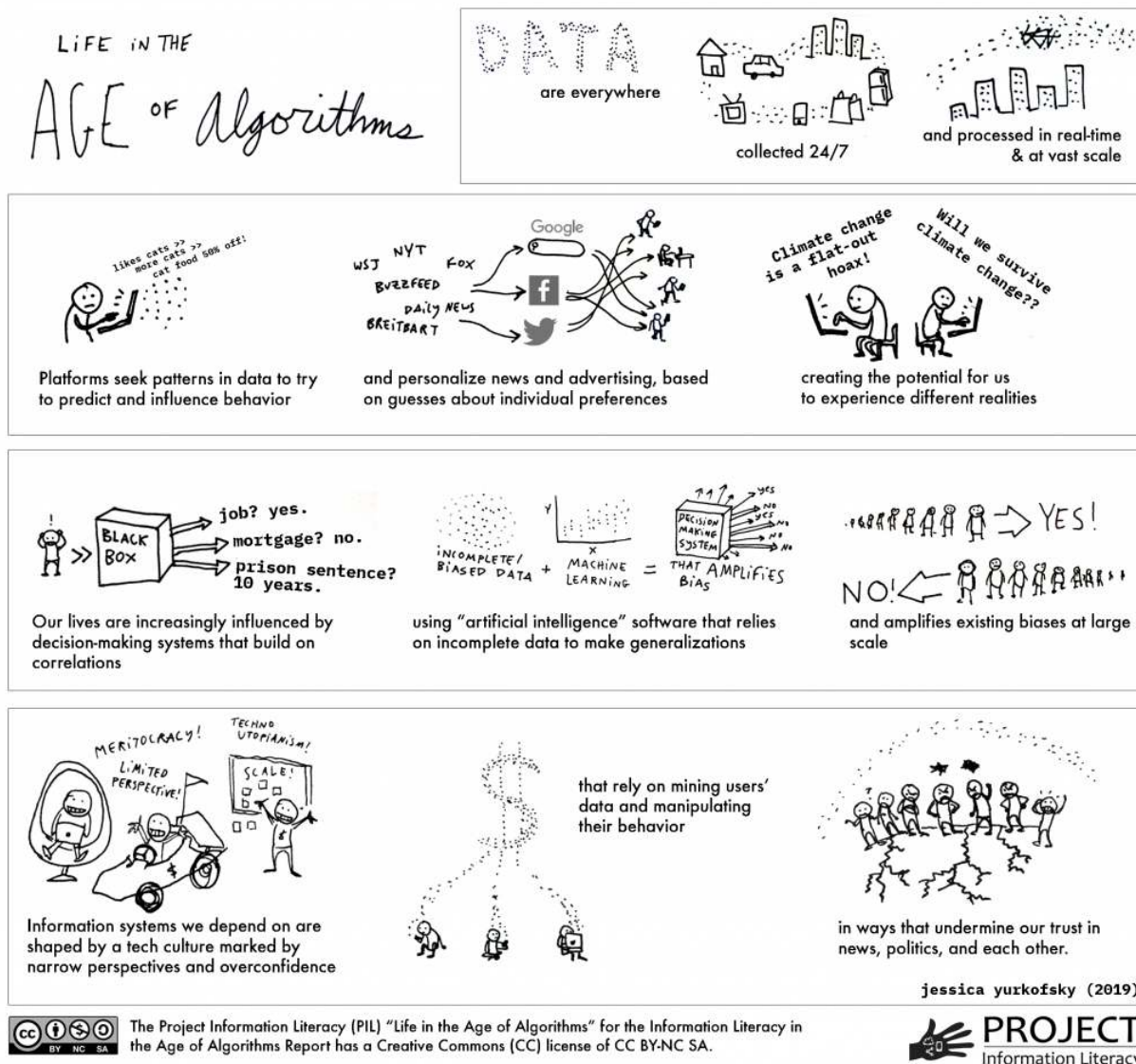
There is no doubt that algorithms can be useful and help to improve our lives. For example, it certainly saves a lot of time and frustration to be able to pull up a map on our phones and instantly determine the fastest way to reach our destination. However, as technology and social media scholar danah boyd has noted, “the same technology can be used to empower people...or harm them. It all depends on who is using the information to what ends” (qtd. in Rainie and Anderson). Eni Mustafaraj, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Wellesley College, similarly notes that “if we want more people in the world to have access to the total human knowledge accessible on the Internet, we need algorithms. However, what we need to object against are the values driving the companies that own these algorithms” (qtd. in Head et al. 42).

Concerns

What happens when algorithms are used to predict when college students are “cheating” on a test, or to predict who should be hired for a job or who should get a loan, or to decide the type of information we see in our social media newsfeeds, or to calculate credit scores, or even to predict criminal behavior and determine prison sentences? Are Google search results really an unbiased presentation of the best available information on a research question? How do algorithms impact our perception of a research topic, or of our own realities?



One of the most prominent examples in recent history is the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal, in which the personal profile data of at least 87 million Facebook users was harvested by a political consulting firm working for the Trump campaign. In this case, Cambridge Analytica used algorithms to develop psychographic profiles in order to more effectively direct its messaging and influence voter behavior in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.



The Project Information Literacy (PIL) "Life in the Age of Algorithms" for the Information Literacy in the Age of Algorithms Report has a Creative Commons (CC) license of CC BY-NC-SA.



PROJECT
Information Literacy

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Sources

Head, Alison J., Barbara Fister, and Margy MacMillan. "Information Literacy in the Age of Algorithms." *Project Information Literacy*, 15 Jan. 2020. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

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10.1.1.3: Algorithmic Bias

“Although the impulse is to believe in the objectivity of the machine, we need to remember that algorithms were built by people” (Chmielinski, qtd. in Head et al. 38).

Overview & Examples

Because we often assume that algorithms are neutral and objective, they can inaccurately project *greater authority than human expertise*. Thus, the pervasiveness of algorithms—and their incredible potential to influence our society, politics, institutions, and behavior—has been a source of growing concern.

Algorithmic bias is one of those key concerns. This occurs when algorithms reflect the implicit values of the humans involved in their creation or use, systematically “replicating or even amplifying human biases, particularly those affecting protected groups” (Lee et al.). In search engines, for example, algorithmic bias can create search results that reflect racist, sexist, or other social biases, despite the presumed neutrality of the data. Here are just a few examples of algorithmic bias (Lee et al.):

- An algorithm used by judges to predict whether defendants should be imprisoned or released on bail, was found to be biased against African-Americans.
- Amazon had to discontinue using a recruiting algorithm after discovering gender bias: The algorithm was penalizing any resume that contained the word “women’s” in the text, because the data was based on resumes historically submitted to Amazon, which were predominantly from white males.
- Princeton University researchers analyzed algorithms and found that they picked up on existing racial and gender biases: European names were perceived as more pleasant than those of African-Americans, and the words “woman” and “girl” were more likely to be associated with the arts instead of science and math.
- [Numerous articles](#) have examined the role that YouTube’s recommendation algorithm might play in radicalizing viewers.

Challenging the Algorithms of Oppression

Dr. Safiya U. Noble, Associate Professor at UCLA (Departments of Information Studies and African American Studies) is the author of the book, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. She is also Co-Director of the UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry, and co-founder of the Information Ethics & Equity Institute. In the video below [3:43], Dr. Noble discusses her findings about algorithmic bias in Google search results, particularly for women of color.



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Note: This video is auto-captioned. Accurate captions are available at the [Amara version](#). Use the [text transcript](#) if you prefer to read.

Fighting Bias in Algorithms

Joy Buolamwini, MIT researcher, Rhodes Scholar, Fulbright Fellow, poet of code, and founder of the [Algorithmic Justice League](#), found that the algorithms powering facial recognition software systems were failing to recognize darker-skinned complexions,

because they were based on data sets that were largely white and male. Now she's committed to fighting bias in machine learning, which she calls the "coded gaze." In the following video [8:44], she explains her work with facial recognition and also asks important questions about how algorithms influence critical decisions, like: Who gets hired or fired? Do you get that loan? Do you get insurance? Are you admitted into the college you wanted to get into? Do you and I pay the same price for the same product purchased on the same platform?



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Weapons of Math Destruction

Cathy O'Neil has written several books on data science, including *Weapons of Math Destruction*. She was the former Director of the Lede Program in Data Practices at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. In the following video [13:11], she explains how algorithms are not fair and objective, and may in fact "automate the status quo" and "codify" sexism and bigotry. She concludes that these secret "black box" algorithms, created by private companies, can hide ugly truths, often with destructive results.



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10.1.1.4: The Attention Economy



“Attention is a resource—a person has only so much of it” (Crawford 11).

“How do you focus your attention? How do you protect it? How do you apply it productively and strategically, and avoid giving it to bad actors or dubious sources? And how do you do that in a world where decisions about what to engage with are made in seconds, not minutes or hours?” (Caulfield)

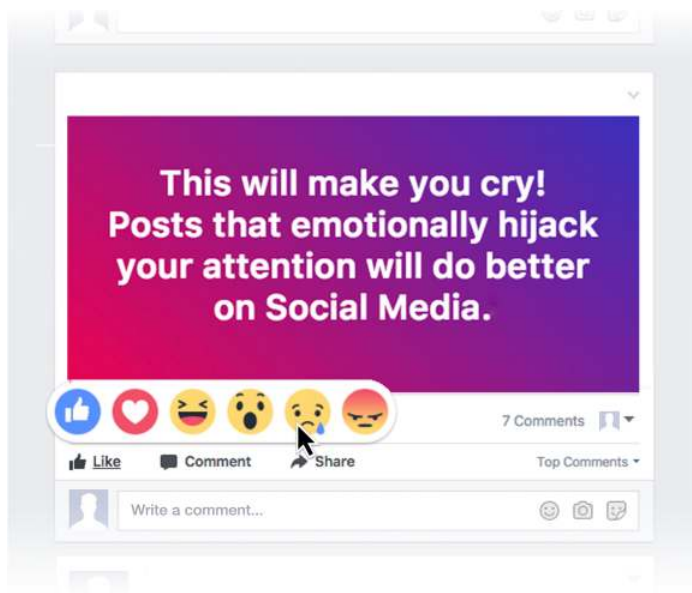
Overview

In a world where information is abundant, where we are overloaded and overwhelmed with information on a daily basis, **attention** is the scarcity (Caulfield).

Algorithms are being used by social media platforms and news organizations to keep our attention focused on their websites. These and other digital platforms have discovered that the best way to keep us engaged with their websites is to promote sensational, divisive, or outrage-inducing content. Emotional responses are what keep us clicking, liking, commenting, and sharing—when trying to capture attention, our anger, fear and disgust are a signal in the noise. “People tend to react more to inputs that land low on the brainstem. Fear and anger produce a lot more engagement and sharing than joy. The result is that the algorithms favor sensational content over substance” (McNamee).

“Engagement”

“Many of the biggest problems we face in this moment as a society result from decisions being made by the hidden creators of our digital world—the designers, developers, and editors that create and curate the media we consume....They do this by focusing on one over-simplified metric, one that supports advertising as its primary source of revenue. This metric is called engagement, and emphasizing it—above all else—has subtly and steadily changed the way we look at the news, our politics, and each other” (Rose-Stockwell, “This Is How Your Fear and Outrage Are Being Sold for Profit”).



Tobias Rose-Stockwell, a writer and technologist focused on ethical design, explains how emotional reactions are strong indicators of engagement, and how divisive content that captures our attention will be shown in our feeds first. We then share our moral judgments with our own followers, creating what he calls “outrage cascades” that dominate our conversations online.

Definition: **en-gage-ment**

noun

- 1) The metric by which companies evaluate the number of clicks, likes, shares, and comments associated with their content.
- 2) The currency of the attention economy.

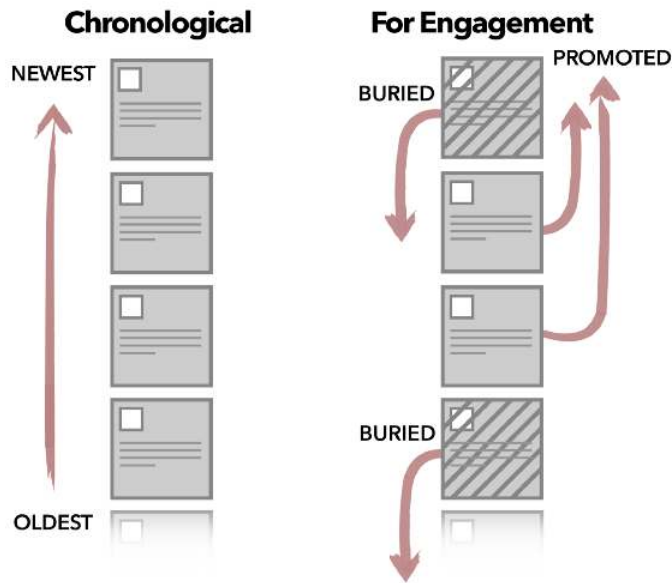
Definition: **affective engagement**

noun

- 1) An emotional reaction to content based on flashes of positive or negative feeling.

Indeed, in their report on “Information Disorder,” researchers Wardle and Derakhshan emphasize that: “Social networks are driven by the sharing of emotional content. The architecture of these sites is designed such that every time a user posts content—and it is liked, commented upon or shared further—their brain releases a tiny hit of dopamine (13).

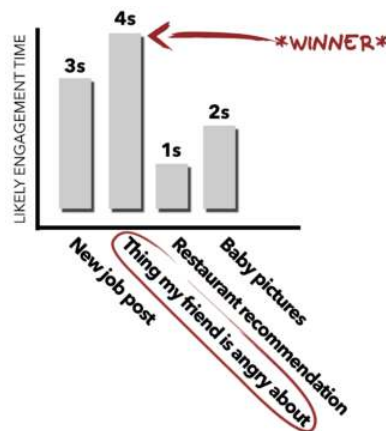
The most notable example of this idea? Most of our content feeds and timelines are no longer sorted chronologically or by relevance. Instead, the decision about which content to show us is instead based on **how likely we are to engage with it**.



Basic Sorting Algorithm

Which content should be shown first to keep people on-site longer?

1. Sort content in order of likely engagement time
2. Serve content in order of likely engagement time



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Graphics: "This Will Make You Cry," "Engagement" definitions, "Chronological vs. Engagement Feed," "Basic Sorting Algorithm" by Tobias Rose-Stockwell are licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

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10.1.1.5: Algorithms and Polarization

“At its best the net gives us voices and perspectives we would have never discovered otherwise....at its worst, our net-mediated digital world becomes an endless stream of binary actions—like/don’t like, share/pass, agree/disagree, all in an architecture that slowly segments and slips us into our correct market position a click at a time, delivering us a personalized, segregated world. We can’t laud the successes of one half of this equation without making a serious attempt to deal with the other side of the story” (Caulfield).

Polarization for Profit



Leading scholars in this field have argued that digital platforms are using algorithms to promote *polarization for profit*. That is, corporations use these algorithms to engage and outrage, to knowingly cause divisiveness and polarization, ultimately for one simple purpose: to sell ads. In other words, these platforms have used “massive surveillance of our behavior, online and off, to generate increasingly accurate, automated predictions of what advertisements we are most susceptible to and what content will keep us clicking, tapping, and scrolling down a bottomless feed” (Tufekci).

For a fascinating explanation of this, watch the following TED Talk [22:47] from Zeynep Tufekci, techno-sociologist and Associate Professor at UNC School of Information and Library Science:



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10.1.1.6: Filter Bubbles



The Problem With Personalization

“I’m more concerned about, like, the larger scale trend of predicting what we want, but then also predicting what we want in ways that push a lot of people towards the same cultural and political endpoint” (Anonymous student qtd. in Head et al. 20).

One significant and widely-discussed feature of the Age of Algorithms has been the “personalization” of information we see online. Algorithms will filter, sort, and personalize information in an attempt to provide content that is relevant to our interests, based on, for example, our search histories and patterns of past online activities. This type of algorithmic personalization may actually distort, manipulate, and amplify our own worldviews by creating so-called “filter bubbles” that limit our exposure to outside perspectives.

“Using algorithms to deliver content that we are most likely to enjoy, these platforms reinforce our worldviews and allow us to stay encased in our safe, comfortable echo chambers....The fundamental problem is that “filter bubbles” worsen polarization by allowing us to live in our own online echo chambers and leaving us with only opinions that validate, rather than challenge, our own ideas” (Wardle and Derakhshan 49).

Roger McNamee, an early Facebook investor-turned-critic, considers filter bubbles to be “the most important tool used by Facebook and Google to hold user attention” because they lead to an “unending stream of posts that confirm each user’s existing beliefs.” The result is polarization: “Everyone sees a different version of the internet tailored to create the illusion that everyone else agrees with them.” Further, this “continuous reinforcement of existing beliefs tends to entrench those beliefs more deeply, while also making them more extreme and resistant to contrary facts.”

For an explanation of this problem, watch Eli Pariser’s “Filter Bubbles” TED Talk [8:49], based on his influential 2011 book of the same name:



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New Research on Filter Bubbles

A 2018 study has called the filter bubble premise into question, finding that polarization could actually increase upon **exposure** to opposing views (Bail et al.). Most notably, this study found that “Republicans who followed a liberal Twitter bot became substantially more conservative” (Bail et al. 9216). This suggests that exposure to opposing viewpoints (which are often presented with a divisive and moralistic tone in order to capture our attention) may actually backfire, and create further polarization by causing negative or defensive reactions.

An interesting 2017 study examined polarization in the U.S. across different age ranges and surprisingly found that “growth in polarization in recent years is **largest** for the demographic groups **least likely to use the internet** and social media”—namely, those **over 75 years old** (Boxell et al.; emphasis added). Indeed, in a 2020 study, students expressed concerns about the ability of older adults to navigate systems designed for algorithmic attention, with one student noting that “everyone was so focused on making sure that kids learned that they forgot they also needed to teach grandparents” (Head et al. 26).

This idea might be further understood with the results of two 2017 studies which showed that:

- Users of social media and search engines experience more diversity than non-users
- People who are involved in politics online are “more likely to double-check questionable information they find on the internet and social media, including by searching online for additional sources in ways that will pop filter bubbles” (Wardle and Derakhshan 53).



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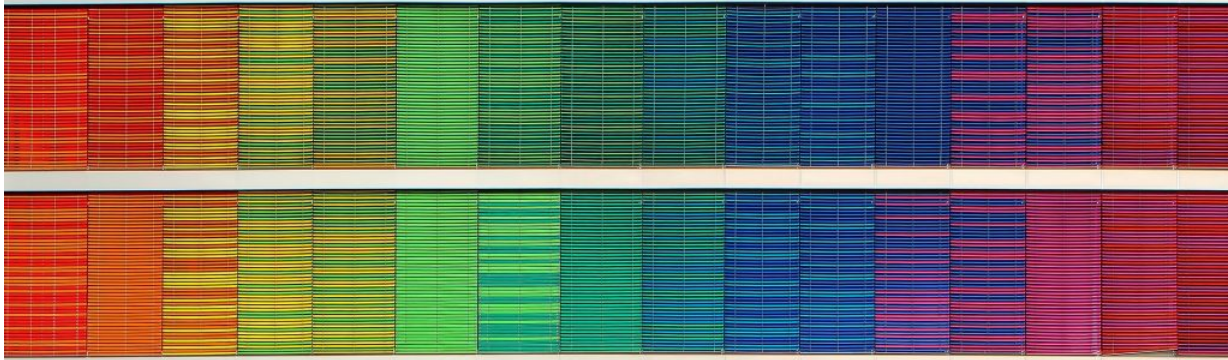
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10.1.1.7: Conclusion



This chapter introduced the often concerning effects of living in the Age of Algorithms, including algorithmic bias, the attention economy, and digital polarization. These overlapping and intersecting concepts will greatly shape the type of information we see online, and will influence our opinions, behaviors, decisions, and worldviews.

“Despite the emerging awareness of many of the terrible side effects of these platforms, we are dependent on them. They’ve become our local news channels, our emergency communication systems, our town squares, and the primary windows into the lives of our loved ones and governments. They are a critical part of how we rally around shared causes and engage with our politics. **How do we reconcile their toxicity with their utility?**” (Rose-Stockwell; emphasis added)

So what can we do? We are **not** suggesting that you completely abandon social media and other digital platforms like Google and YouTube. Instead, our aim is to increase awareness and understanding of the information environments that we inhabit on a daily basis, so that we can take advantage of the benefits they offer and **use them more effectively**.

Sources

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10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity

Reading the Internet | Classroom Activity | What's In A Name?

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

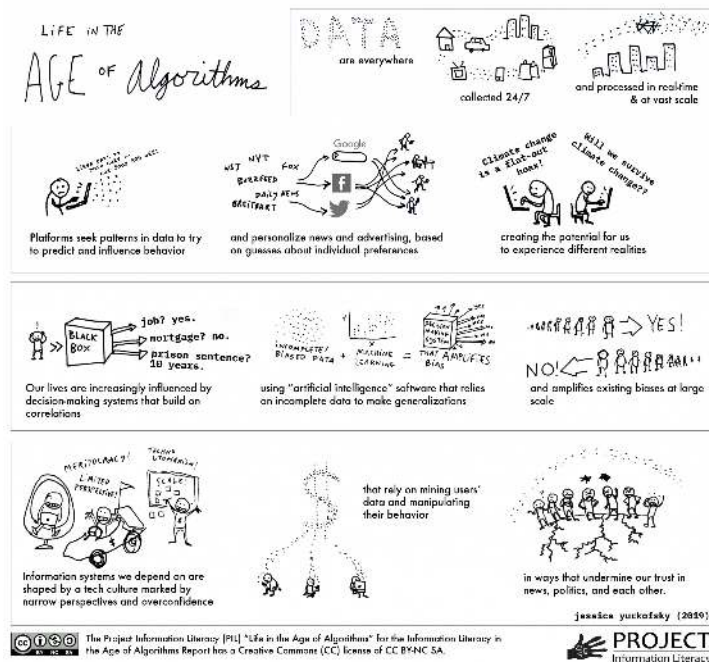
- The following is a general outline for a whole class discussion, where students are introduced to the concept of ‘the algorithm’ through an activity which has them think of their name like a kind of code
- The first section offers a general overview of the subject, before turning to introduce the particulars of the activity; I typically follow this with a 5-10 minute free write, before opening up the class to share
- This activity is meant to follow an engagement with Butler, Sargent, and Smith’s “The Age of Algorithms” chapter, but could certainly work as a stand-alone as well
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so
- Additional credit goes to Ruha Benjamin, who mentions utilizing a similar activity in her own courses, which inspired this one

Introduction

As the title suggests, “The Age of Algorithms” looks to better contextualize, explain, and, ultimately, problematize a digital technology we encounter each and every day, but don’t always stop and critically consider: algorithms. As noted early on in the chapter, “everyone who has accessed the internet has experienced the personalizing actions of algorithms, whether they realize it or not” (Head et al, as cited by Butler et al). It is algorithms, for instance, which fuel the auto-correct feature on our phones, laptops, and tablets. It is algorithms which power the search engine results we conjure each and every day. It is algorithms which allow map apps to correctly guide us around town. Algorithms are essential for digital life, but nevertheless remain technological processes we rarely consider, and often take for granted.

“There is no doubt,” Butler, Sargent, and Smith continue, “that algorithms can be useful and help to improve our lives.” However: they note, too, that we should look at these daily technologies with a bit more critical perspective. What happens, they wonder, “when algorithms are used to predict when college students are ‘cheating’ on a test, or to predict who should be hired for a job or who should get a loan, or to decide the type of information we see in our social media news feeds, or to calculate credit scores, or even to predict criminal behavior and determine prison sentences? Are Google search results really an unbiased presentation of the best available information on a research question? How do algorithms impact our perception of a research topic, or of our own realities?”

For many contemporary tech scholars, activists, and journalists, better making sense of the power and influence of the algorithm in modern life is one of fundamental importance, a pressing issue of our time. As our scholars for the week argue, “the pervasiveness of algorithms—and their incredible potential to influence our society, politics, institutions, and behavior—has been a source of growing concern.” The following image offers a great, over-arching look at the practice (and problems!) of modern algorithms:



Today's discussion is centered around helping us all better understand, spot, and call out the algorithm in our day-to-day lives. In particular, we'll be exploring the idea of 'algorithmic bias,' the ways in which algorithms can carry over biases, subjectivities, and stereotypes from our 'real' world, and manifest them in our digital one. We will do this by thinking through a code—and larger algorithmic system—we engage with each and every day: our names. But first: a bit of context.

Algorithmic Bias

While computing power is often discussed as an inherently apolitical, neutral, and objective force enacted through the cold, calculative properties of code, the reality is that these technologies are far more entrenched in the social than we often understand. We cannot forget that computer code, while based on mathematical processes, is created by humans, and therefore influenced by the social, political, and cultural just as much as we are; as Safiya Noble argues in *Algorithms of Oppression*, "part of the challenge of understanding algorithmic oppression is to understand that mathematical formulations to drive automated decisions are made by human beings" (1). Digital technologies, functionalities, and processes are innately tied to the humans who create them, and by that very fact, cannot be freed of all the nasty, lowly, biased, subjective qualities that mark the human experience—one's hands are not magically washed clean of all their biases and subjective worldviews when their fingers touch upon a keyboard.

And, unfortunately, the fingers upon the keys tend to hail from certain demographics as opposed to others: as Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein report, "according to the most recent data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, released in 2018, only 26 percent of those in 'computer and mathematical occupations' are women. And across all of those women, only 12 percent are Black or Latinx women, even though Black and Latinx women make up 22.5 percent of the US population." Moreover, a study done by the research group AI Now found that "women comprise only 15 percent of AI research staff at Facebook and 10 percent at Google." More alarming still, D'Ignazio and Klein discovered that these numbers are actually getting worse: a 2015 report from the American Association of University Women found that "women computer science graduates in the United States peaked in the mid-1980s at 37 percent," with the number dropping to around 26 percent at the time of the study (*Data Feminism*, 80).

These failures to create a diverse and robust computing community have real, damaging effects on the products they create. Take Google Search, for instance: when Safiya Noble searched "black girls" in Google in 2012, the first result was for pornography site "sugaryblackpussy.com." Rather than providing "relevant and culturally situated knowledge on how women of color have traditionally been discriminated against, denied rights, or been violated in society and the media," or how they "have organized and resisted this on many levels," the "fair" and/or "unbiased" code of Google's 'Universal Search' instead regurgitated the very same racist, exploitative, and sexualized representational frameworks of black girls that circulate in the so-called 'real' world. In another instance, first brought to light by teenager Kabir Ali on Twitter in 2016, Google Search offered up radically different results when searching "three black teenagers" and "three white teenagers": for the former, "the results that Google offered were of African American teenagers' mugshots, insinuating that the image of Black teens is that of criminality," while for the latter, the results were

“wholesome and all-American” (80). As Noble writes, these instances made clear that “search engine results don’t only mask the unequal access to social, political, and economic life in the United States as broken down by race, gender, and sexuality—they also maintain it” (40): all across the web “algorithms are serving up deleterious information about people, creating and normalizing structural and systemic isolation, or practicing digital redlining, all of which reinforce oppressive social and economic relations” (10).

It might be nice to think of digital tech as a roadway to a more just and egalitarian future, but the reality is far from it; code does not free one from their own encoded biases, perspectives, oversights, and hatreds. And thinking that it does is part of the problem. As Ruha Benjamin argues in *Race After Technology*, we are bearing witness to what she coins “the New Jim Code,” where we continually employ “new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities,” while they are nevertheless “promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era” (1). The illusion of objective, perfected code, in other words, is one of this new discriminatory regime’s greatest attests. Internet companies and tech developers “encode judgments into technical systems,” but at the same time “claim racist results are entirely exterior to the coding process,” which allows “racism [to] become doubled—magnified and buried under layers of digital denial” (6).

What’s In A Name?

Ruha Benjamin’s brilliant text on race and contemporary technology, aptly titled *Race Against Technology*, opens with what might seem, to many, a strange preamble: “naming a child is serious business,” she writes, “and if you are not white in the United States, there is much more to it than personal preference” (1).

As she argues, names may very well be “one of the everyday tools we use to express individuality and connections, [but] they are also markers interacting with numerous technologies, like airport screening systems and police risk assessments, as forms of data” (1). Names are not objective, neutral, all treated equally—“names are racially coded” (1), and can open up doors for some while shutting doors for others: “like a welcome sign inviting people in or a scary mask repelling and pushing them away, this thing that is most ours is also out of our hands” (2).

To begin her course on race and racism, Benjamin mentions starting in a similar place, turning to an activity she designed called ‘What’s In A Name.’ The goal is to get students thinking a bit about what larger social, cultural, and political values are embodied in a name. As Benjamin writes, “what’s in a name? Your family story, your religion, your nationality, your gender identity, your race and ethnicity? What assumptions do you think people make about you on the basis of your name? What about your nicknames—are they chosen or imposed?” (1).

By starting with something so familiar and immediate to students, Benjamin notes that the class “begin[s] to understand that all those things dubbed ‘just ordinary’ are also cultural, as they embody values, beliefs, and narratives” (2). Names, in other words, “are not neutral but racialized, gendered, and classed in predictable ways” (2).

One’s name, in other words, is not just their ‘title,’ but a piece of information, a marker for both who they are and how the world sees them. When this piece of information intersects with the world, different results are generated depending on what that name is. The assumed unimportance of a name, in other words, masks how very, very influential that information is. Similarly, data technologies are thought to be objective and mathematical, inherently non-human and thus free from all the biases that mark the human social experience. And yet: different results are generated depending on who you are, depending on what ‘name’ you plug in. Even more alarmingly, unless you’re sitting next to a friend who has a different ‘name,’ you’d have no idea of this difference, nor of the fact that what was generated for you was the result of a host of biases within the technology itself. This is what Benjamin is trying to get us to see: that technology works on us differently because of a variety of social/cultural/political factors, and yet these differences are so often lost, in part because we assume digital technologies to be objective agents. Which means these unequal results proliferate and grow in the world, making the inequities worse, not better. “Just as in naming a child, there are many everyday contexts—such as applying for jobs, or shopping—that employ emerging technologies, often to the detriment of those who are racially marked” (1).

5 Minute Free-Write

- Question: “What’s up with your name?”
 - Is it a family name, or something come up with out of the blue? Does it nod to some larger tradition, idea, or concept? Any ties to religion or pop culture? Any ties to your race, ethnicity, and/or culture? What do other people make of your name? Do you think anyone has ever made an assumption about you, because of your name? Have you ever used a nickname? When someone hears your name, what do you think they might imagine in their mind’s eye?

Class Discussion

- In my experience, students respond positively to the prompt/writing activity, and many want to share, so I start with a bit of an open free-for-all where students are invited to speak to their takes on the prompt, without much guidance or structure, before steering towards a more explicit connection between names and algorithms/code.
- Below are a few perspectives/quotes/frameworks/etc. you might find helpful, both in the early stages and as you try to shift into a larger conversation about code/algorithms

Discussion Aids

- “Usually, many of my White students assume that the naming exercise is not about them. ‘I just have a normal name,’ ‘I was named after my granddad,’ ‘I don’t have an interesting story, prof.’ But the presumed blandness of White American culture is a crucial part of our national narrative. Scholars describe the power of the plainness as the invisible ‘center’ against which everything else is compared and as the ‘norm’ against which everyone else is measured. Upon further reflection, what appears to be an absence in terms of being ‘cultureless’ works more like a superpower. Invisibility, with regard to Whiteness, offers immunity... a ‘normal’ name is just one of many tools that reinforce racial invisibility” (Benjamin 2)
- “Part of the challenge of understanding algorithmic oppression is to understand that mathematical formulations to drive automated decisions are made by human beings. While we often think of terms such as ‘big data’ or ‘algorithms’ as being benign, neutral, or objective, they are anything but” (Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, 1)
- “With emerging technologies, we might assume that racial bias will be more scientifically rooted out. Yet, rather than challenging or overcoming the cycles of inequity, technical fixes too often reinforce and even deepen the status quo” (Benjamin 3)
 - “All other things being equal, job seekers with White-sounding first names received 50 percent more callbacks from employers than job seekers with Black-sounding names. They calculated the racial gap was equivalent to eight years of relevant work experience, which White applicants did not actually have; and the gap persisted across occupations, industry, employer size—even when employers included the ‘equal opportunity’ clause in their ads” (Benjamin 3)
 - LinkedIn, 2016: recommended male variations of women’s names—Andrea would bring up a prompt asking if users meant ‘Andrew,’ suggesting that one gender was preferred over another
 - Target, 2012: gathered data points to infer when women customers were pregnant, even if they had not announced it, and then sharing that information with marketing partners—led to a high school girl being outed by ads served on the family computer
 - Spotify, 2019: women’s music recommended less consistently than men’s music
 - Nikon, 2010: cameras with ‘smart’ tools built-in kept warning Asian photo-takers that they were blinking in the photo, and prompting to take another shot
 - Google, 2015: image-identification algorithm kept identifying Black users as gorillas
 - Facebook, 2017: an algorithm designed to remove online hate speech was found to advantage white men over black children when assessing objectionable content, according to internal Facebook documents; while algorithms are used to track and block hate speech, some were found to be 1.5 times more likely to flag information posted by Black users and 2.2 times likely to flag information as hate speech if written in African American English
 - Uber, 2018: Trans drivers couldn’t be verified by the app’s facial verification tool (needed to drive for the company)
 - Stanford study, 2017: tested algorithms in a machine learning system that was said to be able to detect an individual’s sexual orientation based on their facial images; the model in the study predicted a correct distinction between gay and straight men 81% of the time, and a correct distinction between gay and straight women 74% of the time.
- “Such findings demonstrate what I call ‘the New Jim Code’: the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequalities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era. Like other kinds of codes that we think of as neutral, normal names have power by virtue of their perceived neutrality” (Benjamin 3)
- “Digital decisions reinforce oppressive social relationships and enact new modes of racial profiling” (Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, 1)
- “Algorithmic oppression is not just a glitch in the system, but, rather, is fundamental to the operating system of the web” (Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, 10)

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10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment

Reading the Internet | Assessment | Algorithmic Exploration

Introduction

It can be hard to strike a balance with digital technologies these days: we're aware how rapidly such innovations and inventions have altered contemporary life, and many of us know, too, that such technologies have some issues. Like: yes, social media sites may be damaging for our mental health and productivity; yes, our privacy is ever-more encroached upon; yes, algorithms wield massive influence in our day-to-day lives... but the solution can't be to just smash all the tech and burn up our digital world in one great, big bonfire.

If destruction isn't the answer, reform is. And much of that reform might be outside our hands, the responsibility of government and law and corporations and the like. But each and every one of us can be involved in a more immediate, day-to-day reform, where we strive to develop a more critical, conscientious relationship with the digital technologies we engage with. Which is exactly what Butler, Sargent, and Smith advocate for in the closing lines of the chapter: "our aim is to increase awareness and understanding of the information environments that we inhabit on a daily basis, so that we can take advantage of the benefits they offer and use them more effectively."

Our assessment for the week looks to improve our understanding of the power, importance, and potential of algorithms by asking each of us to choose a technology we use every day and critically consider some of its algorithmic functions.

Assessment

- **Step One: Choose a Topic**
 - Perhaps you want to look at a social media app you frequent, or a platform you use often. Maybe you want to look at a particular company (Google, Meta, etc.) or technology (like, say, iPhone). Please share what topic you will be focusing on, as well as any ways in which you feel as though you've 'seen' the algorithm at work in past experiences
- **Step Two: Investigate**
 - Use the search engine of your choice to learn more about your chosen topic's use of algorithmic technology. How does your chosen app/device/company engage with algorithms? Has any reporting ever discovered any algorithmic malpractice? Do any of the algorithmic practices send alarm bells to you, even if they haven't been publicly criticized?
 - This process will require you to be a critical internet user! Make sure you are properly evaluating your sources, and engaging with respected voices as you research
- **Step Three: Share**
 - What did you learn about your chosen topic's use of algorithmic technology? How might this newfound information change your engagement with the app/device/company?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital

We often experience digital technologies as a given, not thinking all too much about the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘why,’ and ‘where’s’ behind it all; in this chapter, we will explore these ‘hidden costs’ of the digital—from human rights violations to environmental concerns—as well as what we can do to change such practices.

[11.1: “Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study” | J. F. Lindsay](#)

[11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity](#)

[11.3: Digital Costs - Assessment](#)

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11.1: “Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study” | J. F. Lindsay

When’s the last time you thought about how the internet works? About where the bits and bobs inside your phone came from? About the energy required to charge all these things?

For me at least, more often than not, I kinda experience all these tools as a given: I’m not thinking about the minerals that power my iPhone when I’m searching for a song on Spotify, not thinking about the process of content moderation when I’m scrolling social media, not thinking about the workers who built my keyboard when my fingers are tapping away at the keys. When I get up in the morning, my iPhone is there, next to my bed, like it seemingly always has been; when I first boot up my laptop, the fact that I’m on a computer isn’t a marvel but a sign of my average day-to-day.

But, while a bit hard to glimpse at times, there is most certainly a “rootedness” to the digital. Our cyber-lives are powered not so much by the invisible forces of clouds or highways or satellites way up in the sky, but raw minerals mined from the earth and cables laid in the depths of continental oceans. The digital world is not an automatic, unconscious, and untoiled one, but a world built and maintained by many hands, all across the globe.

For example, two-thirds of the world’s supply of cobalt—a vital component of lithium-ion batteries—is sourced from a small, southern minefield in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where poor labor conditions and dangerous extractive practices have become the status quo. Of the roughly two hundred fifty-five thousand 255,000 miners in the DRC, [a report](#) found “at least thirty-five thousand 35,000 of whom are children, some as young as six,” earning little more than a dollar or two per day for hours of intensive, back-breaking labor. [Bolivia’s Cerro Rico mountains are close to collapse, and could claim the city of Potosí along with it](#), endangering hundreds of thousands of people.

As tech journalist Brian Merchant [reports](#), “to obtain the 100 or so grams of minerals found in a single iPhone, miners around the world have to dig, dynamite, chip and process their way through about 75 pounds of rock,” leading him to a rather biting assessment: “on just about every continent... miners are risking their lives to provide you with a device that lets you read this while you’re waiting in line for the bathroom.” This is to say nothing of the factories where these many materials will be assembled together and transformed from raw, humble commodity to great, grand shiny object. Moreover, and more painful still, these practices align with a much longer history of abuse, colonization, and extraction from the Global South: these are not so much new veins as they are brutally-established legacies of extraction. While perhaps a difficult point to address head-on, it is not an argument, but a fact: “the purchasing of digital devices funds worker and human rights atrocities” ([Precarity Lab](#) 26), atrocities often linked to a larger, longer history of abuse, exploitation, and marginalization.

The digital’s reach, of course, also extends far beyond the human, with the need for raw materials, electricity, and power placing the digital in a precarious relationship with life-worlds that extend far beyond those of laboring bodies alone. [As scholar James Bridle’s research shows](#), data centers account for 3% of the world’s electricity use, and 2% of total global emissions; in-and-of-itself a huge carbon footprint, but hardly the total cost required to keep the digital up and running: “these figures reflect processing power, but do not account for the wider network of digital activities empowered by computation. These activities—dispersed, fragmented, and often virtual—also consume vast resources, and are, by the nature of contemporary networks, difficult to see and string together” (*New Dark Age*, 63). Mark P. Mills of the Digital Power Group found that charging a cell phone, for instance, requires a small and largely insignificant amount of electricity; using a tablet device to watch an hour of video each week, on the other hand, consumes more electricity annually than running two refrigerators (as cited by Bridle, 64). Day-long Netflix binges, late-night YouTube explorations, toilet TikTok scrollings—the attention economy is fueled not just by our incessant watching, but by outdated energy systems with serious carbon impact, as well.

These observations are only the tip of the iceberg. Check out [this video](#) on the very-material needs that fuel the internet itself, or [this award-winning investigation](#) on cobalt mining, if you’d like to go a bit further. But, no matter which case one turns to, it’s important we realize that the same process rings. Very rarely does the digital make any of these costs visible to the user; they lie hidden beneath the allure of cat videos and Twitter updates. They lie hidden beneath the gloss of the digital device itself. They lie hidden beneath the languages we use to ‘think’ them in the first place: cyberspace, the cloud, oceans, webs.

None of these frameworks allow us to conceive of the many complex entanglements between the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’; these languages do not allow us to see the long chain of brutal operations that undergird our digital lives, do not allow us to make sense of the many atrocities our cyberspatial explorations enable. Part of the reason we fail to make sense of these many crises as crises—or even see them at all—is because we don’t have a linguistic and narrative framework that adequately speaks to them, one that is “checked and verified” by the very real processes required to keep the digital up and running.

But, of course, just because we don't currently have the frameworks to see and think about the costs of the digital today doesn't mean we can't create them tomorrow. And that goes for all things we seek to change in our world, too—not just the digital realm.

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11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity

Digital Costs | Classroom Activity | 'Digital Underbellies - An Investigative Report'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a group-based activity wherein students become experts on one of the 'hidden costs' of a digital technology in small groups and share their findings to the whole class
- This activity is meant to follow an engagement with the preceding reading from J.F. Lindsay, but could work as a stand-alone
- To set up the activity, you will need at least one student per group to have a computer/device; you may also want to provide additional materials to aid in more creative presentation (marker/poster board, costumes, etc.)
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to give credit and follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Digital Underbellies - An Investigative Report

This is a group-based activity where each of us will become 'experts' on one of the digitals' many hidden costs. Each group has been assigned a relevant topic, as well as a few places to get started for research. In addition to the sources provided, you should conduct your own research, looking to bolster what you've learned with additional information, statistics, and case studies. Each group will present their findings at the end of class, cosplaying as 'investigative reporters' delivering the results of their research into the 'digital underbelly.'

While each group will be looking at a different phenomena, and provided with different resources and 'key topics,' consider these overarching, guiding questions as well:

- **What is happening? What are the key facts, the key problem(s)?**
- **Who is impacted? Who carries the most risk?**
- **Why does this matter? What are the consequences?**
- **What solutions are out there? How might we make meaningful change?**

Instructions at a glance:

- **Step One: Research & Analysis** (20-30 minutes)
 - Research your topic with your group members, starting with the sources provided before branching out
 - Make sure you're practicing good media literacy, only engaging with high-quality, trusted sources!
 - **Step Two: Presentation Preparation** (10-15 minutes)
 - Consolidate your research into a quick, 5-minute presentation. Feel free to lean as much into the 'investigative report' theme as you'd like 😊
 - **Step Three: 'Exposé' Presentations** (20-25 minutes)
 - Each group will have about 5ish minutes to present their research. I encourage all of you to find a time to speak during the presentation.
 - **Step Four: All-Class Reflection** (5-10 minutes)
 - Guiding questions:
 - What surprised you the most about the hidden costs of digital technology?
 - Do any of these issues intersect with one another? How?
 - What role do consumers, governments, and corporations each play in addressing these problems, if at all?
 - Did this activity change how you think about your use of technology?
-
- **Group #1: Tech Minerals & Mining**
 - Starting off...
 - Read/Watch: ["Is my phone powered by child labor?"](#) | *Amnesty International*
 - Watch: ["DR Congo cobalt miners work in treacherous conditions"](#) | *Al Jazeera English*
 - Read: ["The Metals Inside Your iPhone Are More Precious Than You Thought"](#) | Sareena Dayaram | *CNET*
 - Key points to address...

- Child labor, and brutal labor conditions in general, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (and elsewhere)
- Environmental and human costs of unregulated mining practices
- **Group #2: Data Collection**
 - Starting off...
 - Video: [“Big data: why should you care?”](#) | Timandra Harkness | *The Guardian*
 - Video: [“What Is Big Data?”](#) | World Economic Forum
 - Research: [“Big Data”](#) | Vox (Archives)
 - Key points to address...
 - How tech companies monetize user data
 - Issues of surveillance, user consent, and influence of personalized media
- **Group #3: Energy Use**
 - Starting off...
 - Read: [“Why your internet habits are not as clean as you think”](#) | Sarah Griffiths | *BBC News*
 - Read: [“Updated calculation released on the carbon impact of online video streaming”](#) | Carbon Trust (White Paper)
 - Watch: [“How AI and data centers impact climate change”](#) | *CBS Mornings*
 - Interact: [“A guide to your digital carbon footprint – and how to lower it”](#) | *World Economic Forum*
 - Key points to address...
 - How everyday internet uses can collectively come to cost significant amounts of energy
 - Growing energy demands of the internet (new technologies like AI and cryptocurrencies), the exponential growth of digital energy use
- **Group #4: E-Waste**
 - Starting off...
 - Read/Interact: [“The Global E-Waste Monitor 2024”](#) | United Nations, ITU
 - Read: [“Fact Sheet: Electronic Waste”](#) | World Health Organization
 - Watch: [“Computer recycling \[in\] West Africa”](#) | *BBC News*
 - Watch: [“Planned obsolescence? It's gone too far!”](#) | Right to Repair Europe
 - Key points to address...
 - Export of e-waste to developing countries
 - Toxicity and permanence of e-waste
 - Planned obsolescence
 - Environmental costs of unregulated mining practices

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11.3: Digital Costs - Assessment

Digital Costs | Assessment | Digital Life Cycles & Me

As we've explored this week, the creation, use, and disposal of digital technologies come with hidden costs that are easy to go unnoticed, from cobalt mining to data mining and everything in between. **For this discussion, you're tasked with exploring the 'lifecycle' of a technological device, tracing a digital technology of your choice (smartphone, tablet, electronic car, computer, gaming device, etc.) from creation to disposal in an effort to better understand how an important technology in your life came to be, as well as what will come once you're done with it.**

Start by researching the four stages of the life cycle: extraction (mining of raw materials, for instance), production (manufacturing and labor conditions), use (both phenomena like energy consumption, as well as practices of data collection), and disposal (e-waste and recycling). Choose **one** stage to focus on and describe the following:

- **What** happens during this stage?
- **Who** (or what, or where) is affected (e.g., workers, local environments, global energy use)?
- **Why** does this matter to you or society as a whole?
- What **solutions** might you suggest (political, regulatory, personal, etc.)?

Be sure to cite at least one source in your response, be it from our class session(s) or something you found on your own. Your post should be at least 250 words.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Reading Social Media - TikTok, Instagram, and the Making of You

While we might think of our social media engagements as ‘mindless scrolling,’ the reality is anything but, with these continual engagements carrying great ideological influence; in this chapter, we look to better understand these processes—and their results—through a look at TikTok.

[12.1: "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Bhandari and Bimo](#)

[12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity](#)

[12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment](#)

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12.1: "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Bhandari and Bimo

Our reading for the week can be found [here](#).

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12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity

Reading Social Media | Classroom Activity | 'The Reel You'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a group-based activity wherein students are encouraged to think critically about the ways in which algorithmically-modified media streams serve to influence the ideological commitments to which they ascribe
- This activity is meant to follow an engagement with the preceding article in this chapter, Aparajita Bhandari and Sara Bimo's "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media," but could be implemented without it
 - A brief review of the article opens this activity, should you like to incorporate it
- To set up the activity, you will need each student group to have access to at least one internet-capable device (laptop, tablet, etc.), as well as a large sheet of construction paper for members to jot down their thoughts
- The opening material can be reviewed together as a class, outlining Bhandari and Bimo's conceptualization of 'self-making' before introducing the group work activity
- I typically bring the class back together for mini-presentations/discussions the last 15 or so minutes of class
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to follow the CC license mandates when doing so.

"Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Aparajita Bhandari & Sara Bimo

- Bhandari and Bimo's article is centered around media studies concepts of 'self-representation' and 'self-making,' or the ways in which we come to know ourselves through not just internal dialogue and social engagements and the like, but also with/through the engagement of "media objects that stand in for, transform, and recreate a person or object" (2).
 - A helpful way to think about this concept is to think about the '-core' and 'aesthetic' language on social media: "e-boy," "vanilla girl," "tradwife," "waterTok"
- Self-making on social media is nothing new, but there is a key difference found in TikTok's use of algorithmic models for content curation:
 - While, "at first glance, the particular services offered by TikTok seem to be similar to previously established social media platforms" (1), Bhandari and Bimo argue "there is one key new element that sets TikTok apart from other outwardly similar social media platforms: the prevalence of "the algorithm... on TikTok, unlike on other platforms, the user experience is obviously, unambiguously, and explicitly driven by what is commonly called the "For You" algorithm (2)
 - "This design decenters the traditionally 'social' activity on the platform: for example, users need not be following or otherwise engaging with other creators to see their videos" (5)
- This leads the authors to the central question: "how do algorithms influence the process of "self-making" on social media? How do everyday users make sense of their experiences on algorithmic social media streams?"

Introducing the Activity

- As Trevor Boffone argues in his introduction to *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, the app "teaches us how to act, what to listen to, what to buy, how to speak, how to interact with one another, and more. We learn how to be ourselves on TikTok... as TikTokers mimic, reenact, and reimagine the platform's trends and its influencers' activity, TikTok becomes embedded into our personalities, muddying where our online activity ends and where our offline lives begin" (5)
- Today's activity looks to have us better understand the ways in which social media application's provide a platform for self-making, with a particular look at the algorithmic influence Bhandari and Bimo identify
- While we will be using Youtube (no account required), you are welcome to modify the activity to engage with TikTok directly

Activity Instructions

- Once you've settled into your groups, select one member to be the 'tech person,' whose laptop/tablet will be shared amongst group members
- Open a window with your browser of choice and navigate over to youtube.com

- Be sure to select the ‘private’ browsing option (incognito mode, etcetera)—this is to ensure you’re starting with a ‘blank slate,’ without influence from your past searches
- Click on the ‘shorts’ tab on the left-hand side, and watch at least 3-5 minutes worth of content with your group
- As you’re watching, take notes on what kinds of ‘ideological coordinates’ are being offered by the Shorts content:
 - What identities, positions, world-views, and perspectives are being upheld? Are there certain ideologies that receive more frequent and/or favorable treatment than others? What do you think might be some social, political, and/or cultural ‘results’ from the content you’ve engaged with?
- After discussing your findings, start searching for particular content (shorts or full-length videos both fine). The goal is here is not necessarily to ‘watch’ this content, but to start to observe the ways in which your searches begin modify other content being shown to you. Spend at least 3 minutes building up a search history, then turn to the following questions:
 - What do you notice about the content being recommended to you? Are these recommendations serving to reinforce particular ideologies, or challenge them? Is the suggested content offering new perspectives, pathways, and approaches, or doubling-down on those you’ve already indicated interest in? What do you think the result of these algorithmic recommendations might be on users?

Works Cited

Bhandari, Aparajita, and Sara Bimo. “Why’s Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media.” *Social Media + Society*, 2022, pp. 1-11.

Boffone, Trevor. *TikTok Cultures in the United States*. Routledge, 2022.

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12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment

As Bhandari and Bimo note, TikTok's 'For You Page' offers users the ability to "assemble a collection of media objects that represents them and with which they identify." As we scroll through social media content, in other words, we inevitably pick up bits and bobs of that content and incorporate them into our own persona and personhood. Unique to TikTok is a hyper-sensitive, hyper-personalized algorithm, which provides an opportunity not to be exposed to a wide net of diverse content, but rather particularized media: when scrolling, we "engage with versions of [ourselves] as mediated through the algorithm."

For our discussion board this week, our goal is to think Bhandari and Bimo's argument on a personal level, investigating the ways in which our own social media engagements play into processes of self-making and identities we hold dear.

- Navigate to the social media application you use the most (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etcetera). If you don't have an app in mind, you're welcome to engage with Youtube, which does not require you to create an account
- Spend some time (5-10 minutes) using the app, paying particular attention to what kind of content is being served to you and what ideologies such content reinforces
- Once you've spent some time engaging with your personalized feed, reflect on the following questions:
 1. Does this content demonstrate a wide variety of ideological perspectives, or does it tend to reaffirm particular ones?
 2. If I was an alien trying to get to know you, would I be able to glean aspects of your person and personality from viewing your social media feed?
 3. In what ways does your feed accurately reflect who you are and how you see yourself?
 4. How might you challenge yourself to introduce a more diverse pool of content to your algorithm? What might be the result of this challenge?

Your post should be at least **250 words**, and, if possible, **contain a link to a piece of short-form content you found particularly reflective**.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological

Because AI models and algorithms and the like are trained on biased data, they serve to perpetuate dominant ideological positions far more often than they do challenge them; this chapter looks to bolster student's understandings of this bias in tech, as well as provide new critical frameworks for effecting change.

[13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock](#)

[13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity](#)

[13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment](#)

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13.1: “Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination” | Sasha Costanza-Chock

Costanza-Chock's piece can be found [here](#)—looking forward to hearing what you make of it!

This page titled [13.1: “Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination”](#) | [Sasha Costanza-Chock](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Erica McCormack](#) and [Jack Lindsay](#).

13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity

Reading Algorithms | Classroom Activity | Making Sense of/with Critical Frameworks

Introducing the Activity

- Sasha Costanza-Chock's article, "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" provides an exceptional entry point for not only thinking about algorithmic, AI-inflected bias, but for ulterior tools and perspectives one can use to lessen the crises
- That said, Kimberlé Crenshaw's conceptualization of 'intersectionality' and Patricia Hill Collins' framework of 'the matrix of domination' are not easy concepts to grasp
- As such, today's activity sees us breaking off into a series of small groups to not only better understand these conceptual tools, but become more comfortable with using them in our own lives
- Additionally, the activity looks to strengthen our understanding of the power, prevalence, and product of algorithmic bias

Activity Instructions

Step One: Concept Strengthening (10-15 Minutes)

- Divide the class into two equal groups, with one assigned to the concept of 'intersectionality,' and the other assigned to the 'matrix of domination'
- Together with your classmates, strengthen your understanding of your chosen concept by answering the following questions:
 - What is the concept 'about'?
 - Where did it come from, and what are the core features?
 - What does one need to know in order to make sense of the concept? What would be the 2-minute elevator pitch?
 - How does Chock-Costanza utilize the concept? How might you utilize it?
- Feel free to utilize internet searches and the like, in addition to Chock-Constanza's article, as you work on clarifying your understanding

Step Two: Teach-Out (10 minutes)

- Reorganize the students into new groups, with each made up of at least two members from the previous 'intersectionality' and 'matrix of domination' groups
- For 2-3 minutes each, student's should explain their understanding of their assigned concept with their new group members, so that all members have a more solid grasp of our core conceptual frames

Step Three: Apply (10-15 minutes)

- Still in the same groups, find a contemporary news story which speaks to the core algorithmic concerns Chock-Costanza identifies in her article (i.e., LinkedIn favoring profiles with 'masculine,' 'white-sounding' names)
 - I recommend searching 'algorithmic bias' and other, related terms into Google News to find relevant examples
- In addition to proving the power and pervasiveness of algorithmic bias through case studies, think about what the concepts of 'intersectionality' and the 'matrix of domination' bring to your understanding of the case study—how can we utilize these frameworks to not only make sense of the danger of the bias, but likewise intervene upon it?

Step Four: All Together Now

- Ask students to return back to their original groups, using the remaining time to share what they've learned through the activity
- Depending on the class, I will sometimes bring the whole class together for this final discussion, rather than dividing in half

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13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

Reading Algorithms | Assessment | Artifacts Have Politics

Sasha Costanza-Chock's article, "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination," begins with a personal anecdote which, she notes, "provide[s] a small but concrete example from my own daily lived experience of how larger systems—norms, values, assumptions—are encoded in and reproduced through the design of sociotechnical data-driven systems" (3). Calling on the language of media studies heavyweight Langdon Winner, Costanza-Chock reminds us that "artifacts have politics" (3)—the media we interact with, the tech we utilize, are not simply 'tools' or 'idle entertainment,' but rather constitutive: they serve to mold, adapt, alter, and shape us in particular ways.

For our discussion board this week, I'd like you to reflect a bit on the idea of "artifacts with politics" by examining your own engagements with technology. Our core question is: in what ways, if any, do technologies serve to 'curate' a particular kind of response? Perhaps you want to look into the ways in which an app like TikTok privileges a kind of narcissistic response. Maybe you want to think a bit about how Facebook serves as a cultural echo chamber (reinforcing perspectives and ideas we agree with, rather than offering diverse perspectives). Maybe you want to think about what kinds of narratives and stories are most common in video games. Where you go and what you choose to look into is up to you, but no matter your chosen subject, the goal is to think about how the technology (or media) privileges particular perspectives, actions, and ways of thinking, and identify what some of those privileges are. Additionally: in what ways might a perspective like intersectionality and/or the matrix of domination allow you to reevaluate these experiences, and commit to new ways of interacting, engaging, and making sense of the technologies you use on a day-to-day basis?

Your post should be at least **250 words** and should contain explicit mention of the 'artifact' you chose to investigate.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism

Social media allows each and every one of us an unprecedented opportunity to broadcast ourselves, our voices, and our beliefs out into the world; in this chapter, we'll explore a few case studies which speak to the power, potentials, and limitations of digital media activism, as well as practice strategies to harness social media channels in realization of our own political aspirations.

[14.1: "Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders" | Kimberly McNair](#)

[14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity](#)

[14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment](#)

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14.1: “Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders” | Kimberly McNair

Kimberly McNair's short chapter can be found [here](#). Excited to see what you make of her account of #BlackLivesMatter and the power and practice of digital activism.

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14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity

Digital Activism | Classroom Activity | 'Social Media Warriors - Practicing Digital Activism'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a small-group activity designed to strengthen student understanding of the power, promise, and difficulties of social media activism.
- They'll begin by researching a (preassigned) 'case study' in small groups to get a better handle on how digital activist campaigns work, what such campaigns have accomplished, and what challenges they've faced; then, they will step into the content creator chair themselves, designing a mock social media campaigns in their groups for a cause of their choosing.
- The activity ends with an optional TED Talk from Zeynep Tufekci, who fruitfully compares social media campaigns to more traditional, grassroots efforts to reveal what online movements are (and aren't!) good at.
- This activity was designed to follow a reading of Kimberly McNair's "Beyond Hashtags: Black Twitter and Building Solidarity across Borders," but can be done without it
- At least one member per group will need internet access/device
- You are welcome to make a copy of this material to edit and remix as you wish; please be sure to give credit and follow the CC license mandates when doing so

Social Media Warriors - Practicing Digital Activism

Today's activity has us strengthening our understanding of the power, promise, and difficulties of social media activism. We'll begin by researching a 'case study' in small groups to get a better handle on how digital activist campaigns work, what they've accomplished, and what challenges they've faced; then, we'll step into the content creator chair ourselves, designing a mock social media campaign with our group members for a cause of our choosing.

Step One: Case Study (15-20 min)

- Each group has been assigned to research a particularly notable, successful, and groundbreaking digital activist movement, listed below
 - Group 1: #BlackLivesMatter
 - Group 2: #MeToo
 - Group 3: #ASLIceBucketChallenge
 - Group 4: #ArabSpring
 - Group 5: #OccupyWallStreet
- As you research, your focus should be three-fold:
 - First, you want to look into the movement's *origins* and *growth*, asking questions like: where did the social movement get its start? How long did it take to become viral? How big did the movement become?
 - Second, you want to look into the *impact*: what did the movement result in? Did the online activism lead to real-world meet-ups? Did the movement accomplish real, meaningful change?
 - Lastly, you want to look into the challenges: where, if anywhere, did the movement run into trouble? How did the movement respond to these challenges? What is the lasting impact and impression of the movement?
- In addition to conducting your own research, you may find a few of the resources below helpful:
 - [Berkman Klein Center](#) (Harvard University)
 - [Global Voices](#)

Step Two: Mock Digital Activism Campaign (15-20 min)

- Once you have a solid handle on the successes, innovations, and challenges of your assigned social media movement, it's time to create your own!
- Your task is to create a mock digital campaign for an issue of your choice. The issue can be whatever you'd like, be it something pressing and serious (climate change, educational access, healthcare, trans rights) or a bit more light-hearted and whimsical (free cookies at all public establishments, abolish lawnmowers and replace them with goats, make Beyoncé the National Poet Laureate)
- Your campaign **must include...**

- A hashtag
 - Something buzzy, eye-catching, and engaging—think about what made the hashtag of your case study effective
- A mission statement
 - A clear, concise articulation off what you believe in and what you hope to achieve
- A mock social media post
 - [Canva](#) has a wide variety of free, customizable social media templates, but you're welcome to create your own with other tools (or draw something up with your own two hands!)
- An engagement plan
 - How are you going to grow your followers and increase awareness of your cause? What tactics from your case study might you employ? What other novel ideas for virality might you pursue?

Step Three: Share & Reflect (15-20 min)

- Each group will have 3-5 minutes to share their social media campaign with the class, making sure to mention all four components of the activity listed above
- We'll then have a bit of time to debrief as a whole class, sharing our thoughts and perspectives on both the activity and the group presentations
 - What similarities and differences do you notice between the campaigns of your peers? What larger 'truths' do these similarities/differences suggest about trends, approaches, and results of social media activism?

Step Four: Broadening Our Lens (16 min)

- Time permitting, [we'll leave the last word to Zeynep Tufekci](#), who provides an exceptional view on some of the challenges of digital activism, particularly when examined against tactics and strategies of older, more traditional political movements.
 - How might we better account for some of the difficulties inherent to successful online activism she outlines?
 - In what ways did our assigned case studies support or refute Tufekci's conclusions?

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14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment

[Digital Activism](#) | [Assessment](#) | [Digital Activism: Pro/Con](#)

Choose **one** of the following prompts to respond to. **Your response should be at least 250 words, and make specific reference to one of our assigned materials for the week.**

- Prompt #1: Material Reflection
 - Reflect on your overall experience learning about digital activism this week. What did you learn about digital activism that most surprised you this week? Coming into the week, were you well-tuned to the political power of the internet, or were you surprised to see just how impactful the space can be? Did you participate in any of the campaigns we discussed in class this week?
- Prompt #2: Activity Reflection
 - Reflect on your experience designing or analyzing digital campaigns. What challenges or limitations to digital activism did you encounter? How do you think activists can address these challenges? Do you have any concerns about 'clicktivism,' the idea that one can 'feel' as though they supported a cause when all they did was click on some link or share some hashtags? How might you ensure your digital cause makes it out into the 'real world'?
- Prompt #3: Tufekci Reflection
 - Reflect on the challenges to digital activism brought forward in [Tufekci's talk](#). How does digital activism compare to more traditional forms of protest? What are the unique strengths and weaknesses of each? Do you think digital activism can effectively create lasting change, or does it need to be combined with offline efforts?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change

While climate change is undeniably one of the most pressing, consequential issues of our time, the warming of our planet—because of the size, scale, and scope of the issue—is often hard to properly address; in this chapter, we will explore the power and potential of mediated communication to properly represent climate change, as well as mobilize a response to it.

15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials

15.1.1: “Exploring youth activism on climate change - dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent” | O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward

15.1.2: “Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change” | Vox

15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity

15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

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15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials

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15.1.1: “Exploring youth activism on climate change - dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent” | O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward

'Part One' of our materials for the week can be found [here](#).

This page titled [15.1.1: “Exploring youth activism on climate change - dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent” | O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Erica McCormack and Jack Lindsay](#).

15.1.2: “Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change” | Vox

A link to the video can be found [here](#), and embedded below—enjoy!



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15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity

Media & Climate | Classroom Activity | 'Duel Screening - *WALL-E* vs. *Sleep Dealer*'

How To Use This Material [Instructor Note]

- The following is a 'duel screening' activity where you screen two 90-minute films over the course of two class sessions
- The films—Pixar's *WALL-E* & Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*—both take a science-fictional lens to explore new ways of seeing and making sense of a whole host of technological issues, from climate change to migrant labor abuse
 - For those who have taught frequently from this textbook, you'll find the films offer an exceptional capstone to many of the core themes, lessons, and perspectives which have animated this text's core inquiries
- As the final chapter, this activity is designed to allow the instructor the opportunity to meet one-on-one for end-of-term conferences with their students—while they're watching the film, you can call your students out into the hall for a check-in
- Neither of these films are available for free. If your library cannot provide access, you have a few options: for *Sleep Dealer*, you can rent the film direct from the filmmaker [here](#) (for \$4.99) or YouTube [here](#) (for \$3.99) (If you have the extra dollar, I recommend supporting the filmmaker directly); for *WALL-E*, you can watch the film with a Disney+ subscription, or rent it [here](#) from Fandango At Home (for \$3.99).

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15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

Media & Climate | Assessment | Duel Screening Reflection

While perhaps sometimes cast aside as stuff for the nerds, geeks, and other fantastical fanatics, as our screenings this week make clear, science fiction can provide an exceptional platform through which to consider, make sense, and investigate a wide variety of societal/cultural/technological phenomena.

As [Brian Merchant's](#) argues, “the gap between ‘sci-fi’—that which was once imagined—and ‘sci-fact,’ that which becomes manifest and real, is shrinking,” making the ‘what’ of those sci-fi imaginations—the visions of the future that are/aren’t imagined—of increasing importance. As another notable scholar, [adrienne maree brown](#), [steadfastly attests](#), science fiction can prove to be a potent medium for thinking through social, political, and cultural concerns, as well as offering potential pathways forward, “visionary explorations of humanity” and “emergent strategies for being better humans” (13) for use back on our home planet, in our own timeline.

But! As always, it’s never enough to take someone’s word for it; instead, we must explore these claims for ourselves!

Following your viewing of *Sleep Dealer* and *WALL-E*, you are to write a 400ish word response, comparing and contrasting the two films. Your response should **consider the following**:

- Present Crises: What present-day crises do the films address? Consider issues such as labor, technology, climate, environmental degradation, and/or social inequality. How do the films' settings and narratives reflect these crises? What are the films 'saying' about the future of our current trajectory?
- Imagined Futures: How does each film imagine the future? Do these imagined futures provide hope? Solely critique current systems? Perhaps offer alternative possibilities for humanity?
- Style and Approach: How does each film's style and tone influence its message? For example, how does *Sleep Dealer*’s more brutal, dystopian narrative compare to *WALL-E*’s animated, family-friendly approach?
- Your Perspective: Do you find one film’s vision or critique more compelling? Why or why not?

Your response should **make explicit reference to scenes, moments, and/or dialogue within the film**, as well as **provide a direct quote from one of the week’s assigned materials** for full credit.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair

In 1893, Chicago became the host city of a recurring worldwide event [inaugurated in 1851 London](#) and which became known as the "world's fair."

This particular world's fair in Chicago was dubbed the '**World's Columbian Exposition**' in honor of Christopher Columbus and the 400th anniversary of what at that time was typically regarded as his 'discovery of America' or the "New World" in 1492, despite the fact that Indigenous people have been inhabiting the Americas (often referred to as [Turtle Island](#)) from time immemorial.



ABOVE: "[IL World's Fair 1893](#)" by [snapshotsofthepast.com](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

- In this chapter, you will explore some visual and textual [primary sources](#) made in the context of this spectacle and consider what messages and values were communicated to the original fair-goers through the exhibit spaces and designs. You will also review some [secondary sources](#) to shed light on aspects of the fair that challenged the dominant narrative being conveyed to the predominantly white audience.

Content Warning

Please note that images depicting historical events may contain themes or include verbal descriptions which do not reflect current understandings of topics like race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability status, and religious diversity. These are provided in a historical context.

Racist caricatures are included in some of this chapter's readings.

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16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

Your Readings

The first three readings from Smarthistory introduce you to the spectacle that was the [1893 World's Columbian Exposition](#), particularly the two main areas of the World's Fair known as the "[White City](#)" and the "[Midway Plaisance](#)."

- As you consider which segments of the American population's perspectives and values were the dominant forces that shaped the fair's overall structure, also consider which contrasting viewpoints were not given the opportunity to shape the fair's design. ***In other words, who had the opportunity to tell their own culture's stories? And who had their culture represented in ways dictated by others?***

After gaining that overview on the contents of those differentiated spaces of the fair, you will get to explore some additional dimensions of the fair's construction and public reception, including [critiques by Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass](#). Keep these in mind as you approach class activities and assignments for this chapter.

Content Warning

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16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

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Figure 16.2.1.1: Thomas Moran's watercolor of the Administration Building at the Chicago World's Fair shows a radiant sunset illuminating its golden dome and the building façades of the "White City." Viewers of Moran's landscape look west, just as the Fair's organizers promoted the westward march of civilization. Thomas Moran, *Chicago World's Fair*, 1894, watercolor on paper ([Brooklyn Museum](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org)).

16.2.1.1 Old and new frontiers at the Chicago World's Fair

Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. . . . And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.—FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER [1]

For six months, during the summer and fall of 1893, the city of Chicago hosted a World's Fair that drew more than 27 million visitors from all over the world. The official reason for the Fair was to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, but unofficially, it served as an opportunity to reflect on the state of the nation. In the three decades after its deadly civil war, the United States had seen rapid social and economic changes. Workers had moved from farms to factories and from country to city; European immigrants had flocked to American manufacturing centers; telephones had connected distant cities made artificially bright by electric lighting.

Within little more than a generation, the United States had become the world's leading industrial power, while its government systematically dispossessed Indigenous peoples, deployed state power against striking laborers, and abandoned efforts to ensure Black equality in favor of acquiescing to Jim Crow segregation. What had the United States become by the end of the nineteenth century, and where was it heading in the twentieth? Those who planned, built, and visited the Fair used it as an opportunity to assert their vision of the national character and global power of the United States at the height of the Gilded Age.



Figure 16.2.1.2: View of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851—the first major world’s fair. This view showcases Britain’s imperial possessions (note the stalls proclaiming “silks” and “India” at the left foreground). White, classical-style sculptures were displayed on the floor and the barrel-vaulted ceiling soared so high that full-sized trees had ample room. The design of the hall (called the Crystal Palace) suggested that the people and resources of the world were products in a grand department store arranged for the judgement and selection of British citizens. Ackermann & Co, *The transept from the Grand Entrance. Souvenir of the Great Exhibition*, lithograph, 1851 ([Victorian and Albert Museum](https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-crystal-palace)).

16.2.1.2 World’s fairs and the spectacle of colonialism

In the second half of the nineteenth century, grand exhibitions were all the rage among the imperial nations of the world. A world’s fair was a place to exhibit products, inventions, arts, and cultures, and holding one was a way for a country to lay claim to the authority to label, organize, and own the peoples and resources of the world. In 1851, the United Kingdom had hosted the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace near London; in 1889, the Eiffel Tower crowned France’s World’s Fair commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution. The Parisian fair included an ethnological exhibit displaying people who lived in France’s overseas colonies that both touted the reach of the French empire and implied that these “less evolved” peoples were incapable of self-rule.

Although the United States had celebrated its own revolutionary origins with the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, near the end of the century, U.S. civic leaders sought to bring international attention to its growing role as a world power. Why not another exposition, celebrating Columbus’s arrival in the Americas? That Columbus was Italian, and had never set foot on soil claimed by the United States, was immaterial. (Perhaps fittingly, delays prevented the Fair from opening in 1892 as originally planned, and so the commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s arrival was on neither the anniversary nor the site of his arrival). It was more to the point that the United States was, in the eyes of the Fair’s promoters, the fulfillment of the historic process set in motion by Columbus: the domination of Indigenous and Black peoples by white Euro-Americans, the westward march of “civilization.” Like those of the United Kingdom and France before it, the organizers of the 1893 World’s Fair intended to showcase the growing power of the United States in the world and assert that the coming century would be the “American century.”

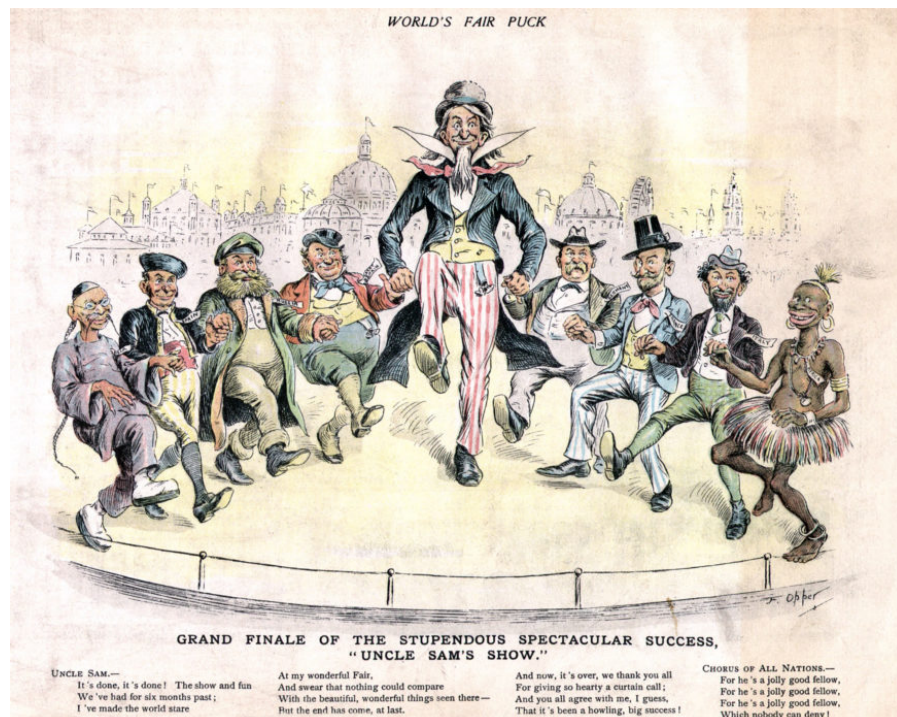


Figure 16.2.1.3: Cartoon depicting a “grand finale” song and dance number, with racist caricatures representing various countries and continents of the world. Uncle Sam, at center, is the largest figure, literally “head and shoulders” above the rest. On either side are figures labeled with the names of European nations in descending order of perceived level of “civilization”: on the left, from center out: Great Britain, Russia, and Spain, and on the right, from center out: Germany, France, and Italy. On the far left is a racist caricature representing “Asia” rather than a specific country, and on the far right, a racist caricature representing “Africa” rather than a specific country. The cartoon places the United States as the foremost nation in a world defined by racial hierarchy. J. Oppen, *World's Fair Puck*, 1893.

Suffused with the contemporary racist pseudoscience of Social Darwinism—which claimed that white people with northern European ancestry were the most “evolved” race—the World’s Fair cast other races and cultures as the living relatives of white people’s distant ancestors. In its treatment of Indigenous Americans, the Fair’s organizers openly celebrated imperialism and genocide as part of the “civilizing” force at work in this process, with exhibits showing how whites “educated” Indigenous children in boarding schools or conquered them in Wild West battle reenactments.

16.2.1.3 The defining event of its age

Conveniently for historians, the Fair’s organizers were convinced that it would be the defining event of its age, thoroughly documenting their every decision and publishing guide books with explanations of how visitors should understand and experience the Fair. For that reason, the 1893 World’s Fair is itself a kind of primary document about American society and culture at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to its physical exhibits—which included buildings dedicated to exhibitions of the arts and sciences, pavilions where the nations of the world as well as U.S. states could entice tourists and trade, and a carnival midway with cheap amusements and exoticized entertainments—the Fair also served as a site for intellectual discussions. The World’s Congress Auxiliary was a series of more than 200 international meetings, hosted at the newly-built Art Institute of Chicago, on topics ranging from women’s progress to dentistry.

It was at a special meeting of the American Historical Association as part of the World’s Congress that U.S. historian Frederick Jackson Turner articulated his famous “Frontier Thesis.” The American national character of rugged individualism and democratic virtue, Turner claimed, had been formed from white settlers’ ongoing experiences of “taming” a frontier that moved ever westward. But the 1890 census had delivered the startling news that white American settlement now stretched to the Pacific Ocean, and there was no more frontier to be found on the North American continent. What was to become of American culture?

The Chicago World’s Fair answered that question through every aspect of its design. Its exhibits (and the exhibits that organizers rejected); the paintings displayed in the Fine Arts Building; the site plan and architectural style of its exhibit halls; the racial othering of the Midway Plaisance: all of these contributed to an argument that white Americans, and middle-class white cultural

norms, represented the crowning achievement of the progress of the human race. Consequently, it was only right that American culture should expand its influence beyond its borders, finding new frontiers overseas.

This essay will provide a brief history of the planning and construction of the Fair, and the two that follow will focus on the Fair's two main areas: the White City, and the Midway Plaisance.

16.2.1.4 Origins and construction of the Fair

In the early 1880s, eager to recreate the cultural and commercial success of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, American civic and business leaders seized upon the upcoming anniversary of Columbus's voyage as a reason to hold another world's fair. The U.S. Congress invited bids from cities to host the fair, and New York and Chicago vied until the last moment to win the right to host. Chicago triumphed, thanks to generous boosters who raised an additional \$10 million of capital in twenty-four hours. The Fair ultimately cost over \$25 million to build, or more than \$735 million in 2021 dollars. [2]

The Fair's directors—a who's-who of Chicago's Gilded Age magnates and financiers, including department store owner Marshall Field, mechanical reaper inventor Cyrus McCormick, railroad baron George Pullman, and banker Lyman Gage—were determined to put on an exhibition that reflected the height of American sophistication. To design and supervise the building project, they hired Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, whose Montauk Building had been the first skyscraper built in Chicago.

Despite Chicago's emerging reputation as a mecca of modern architecture, Burnham hired mainly New York architects trained in the French Beaux-Arts style to design the Fair's exhibition halls. The Beaux-Arts style combined ancient Greek and Roman architecture with elements of Gothic and Renaissance styles to create opulent, often symmetrical buildings on a grand scale. Beaux-Arts architects believed these forms would inspire social harmony and moral uplift in communities, a theme taken up by the City Beautiful movement the Chicago World's Fair helped to inspire. With the exception of Adler & Sullivan's Transportation Building, the Fair's buildings were uniformly white and Beaux-Arts in style. [Louis Sullivan](#) (of Adler and Sullivan) would later gripe that the Fair directors' rejection of contemporary forms set American architecture back by fifty years. [3]



Figure 16.2.1.4: Frederick Law Olmsted, “Map of Jackson Park, showing location of proposed improvements by the World’s Columbian Exposition Co.,” 1891. Olmsted Papers ([Library of Congress](#)).

The responsibility for selecting and designing the site of the Fair was assigned to Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect who designed [Central Park](#). Olmsted chose Jackson Park, seven miles south of downtown Chicago, as the site for the Fair, due to its beautiful view of Lake Michigan and easy access to rail. His design for the 690-acre site featured a central “Court of Honor” surrounding a Grand Basin, as well as canals, a lagoon, and a man-made “Wooded Isle.” Olmsted believed that beautiful vistas and contact with nature would promote moral and civic virtue among city dwellers.

16.2.1.5 The steps of progress and civilization

Every decision about who and what to exhibit at the Fair was hard fought. The Smithsonian's assistant secretary, G. Brown Goode, devised the scheme for organizing the Fair's exhibitions. He proposed not only to showcase industrial and scientific achievements, but rather "the steps of the progress of civilization and its arts in successive centuries, and in all lands up to the present time and their present condition; to be, in fact, *an illustrated encyclopedia of civilization.*" [4]

To Goode, and the anthropologists who worked in his department, the process of becoming civilized was the process of attaining the contemporary beliefs and practices of white men. Unsurprisingly, women and people of color did not figure in this scheme, at least, not as representatives of civilization as it was understood. Although Congress created a Board of Lady Managers after prominent white women complained about their exclusion, every effort on the behalf of Black citizens to celebrate their achievements was rebuffed. ([Read more about representation at the Fair in the White City article](#)).

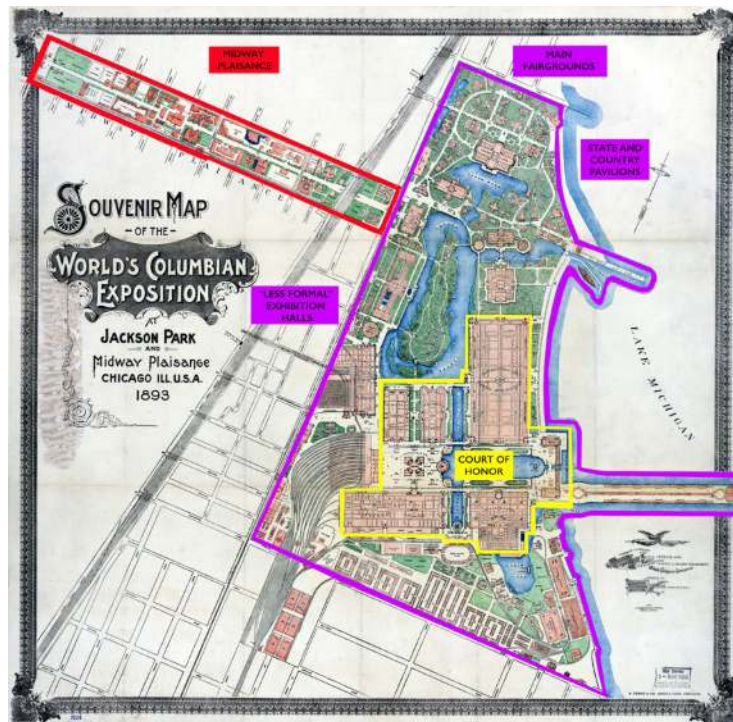


Figure 16.2.1.5: Map of the World's Columbian Exposition showing its major zones. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 ([Library of Congress](#)).

As Burnham and Goode designed it, the Fair would have two main zones: the main fairgrounds, with 14 exhibition buildings dedicated to modern achievements in arts and industry, along with pavilions representing the 46 U.S. states and countries of the world that chose to participate; and the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long carnival of amusements and exhibits drawn from the "uncivilized" regions of the world. Burnham explained how visitors should interpret these zones in the guidebook:

Those about the Grand Basin [in the Court of Honor]...—the Administration, Manufactures, Agriculture, Machinery, Electricity, Mines, and also the Art Building—are essentially dignified in style; those lying farther to the north—the Horticultural, Transportation, and Fisheries—being less formal, blend readily with the more or less homelike headquarters buildings of the States and foreign governments, which are grouped among the trees of the extreme northern portion of the grounds. Upon the Midway Plaisance no distinct order is followed, it being instead a most unusual collection of almost every type of architecture known to man—oriental villages, Chinese bazaars, and reproductions of ancient cities. All these are combined to form the lighter and more fantastic side of the Fair.—Daniel Burnham [5]

Although the Fair's organizers had originally balked at including such "low" entertainments in their splendid city of progress, the popularity of the recent Paris Exposition's "ethnological villages," in which representatives from French colonies in Asia and Africa demonstrated their dress, culture, and dwellings, convinced them to include a similar area. Guides to the Fair instructed visitors to see the White City first, and then head to the Midway Plaisance to gawk at the Javanese and Dahomean villages, so they could gain a true understanding of how far humanity had progressed. [6] Indigenous Americans appeared in both zones: as anthropological exhibits in the fairgrounds, and as savage curiosities on the Midway. ([Read more about these exhibits in the Midway Plaisance article.](#))

Construction of the Fair began in 1891. Laborers dug lagoons and canals and filled them with water from Lake Michigan. The exhibition buildings (intended to be temporary, they were essentially were steel-framed warehouses with intricate façades made of staff—a mixture of cement, plaster, and jute that could be poured into molds and quickly dried). Once assembled, the buildings were whitewashed, lending the attraction the nickname "The White City." Covered with electric bulbs, and three gargantuan spotlights, the Fair shone at night. The Fair opened to visitors on May 1, 1893.

[Visit the Fair: The White City and fairgrounds](#)

[Visit the Fair: The Midway Plaisance](#)

16.2.1.6 Notes:

1. Frederick Jackson Turner, "[The Significance of the Frontier in American History](#)," 1893.
2. Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Arcadia, 2008), p. 10.
3. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (Dover, 1956), p. 325.
4. G. Brown Goode, "[First Draft of a System of Classification for the World's Columbian Exposition](#)," 1891.
5. Daniel Burnham, quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 213.
6. Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 64–66.

16.2.1.7 Additional resources:

[Read the Official Guide Book to the World's Columbian Exposition](#)

[View the Official Photographs of the Fair](#)

[See colorized photos of the Fair](#)

Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984).

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16.2.2: The White City and Fairgrounds

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

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Figure 16.2.2.1: View of the Grand Basin in the middle of the Court of Honor, looking west toward the Administration Building. The statue in the foreground is *The Republic* by Daniel Chester French, an allegorical figure of the United States which held an eagle perching on top of a globe in its right hand (suggesting the nation's supremacy) and a staff topped by a Phrygian cap (an ancient Greek and Roman symbol of liberty) in its left hand. The Beaux-Arts style buildings that surrounded the Court of Honor exhibited the products and innovations of most "advanced" domains of science and manufacturing according to the Fair's organizers: mines, electricity, machinery, agriculture, and manufactures. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Looking West from Peristyle, in [Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.

Look here, old fellow, do you realize that this is the greatest meeting of artists since the Fifteenth Century?

—AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS, ARTISTIC ADVISOR TO THE WORLD'S FAIR
[1]

16.2.2.1 A visit to the World's Fair

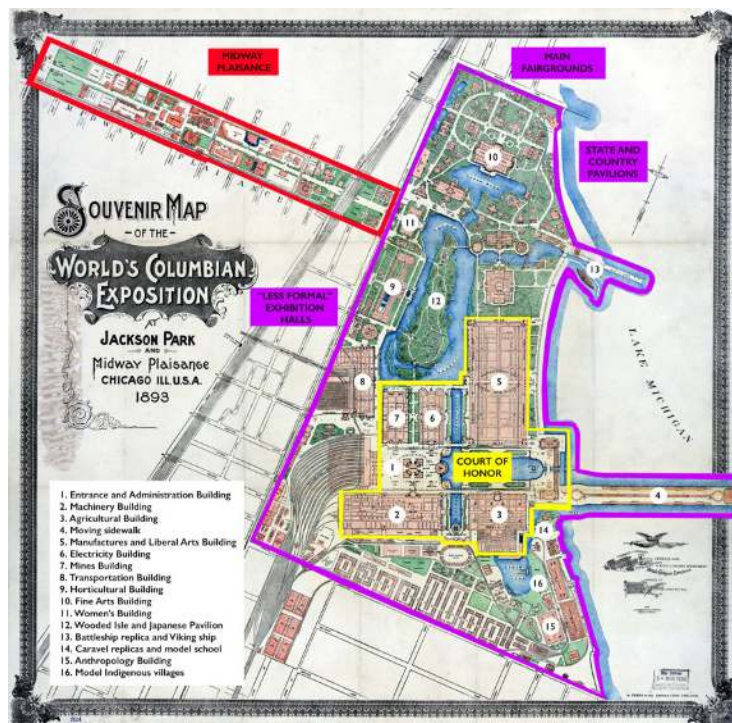


Figure 16.2.2.2: Major buildings and areas in the main fairgrounds of the World's Columbian Exposition. Numbers correspond to the fictional visitor's path in this essay. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 ([Library of Congress](#)).

In the summer of 1893, there was no more exciting destination in the United States than the World's Columbian Exposition. Conceived as a celebration of the anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, the Chicago World's Fair was a trade show, art gallery, lecture series, and museum exhibit rolled into one. ([Learn more about the ideas behind and construction of the World's Fair in this introductory essay.](#)) Author Hamlin Garland famously wrote to his parents to "Sell the cookstove if necessary and come. You *must* see the fair." [2] Everywhere the Fair was touted as a symbol of the "new era in the onward march of civilization" that heralded the ascendancy of the United States in world events. Two articles of American patriotic practice emerged from the Fair: Francis J. Bellamy (cousin to Edward Bellamy, the socialist novelist quoted above who was considerably less enamored with the Fair) composed the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States for school children to recite across the country in honor of the occasion, and Katharine Lee Bates composed the song "America the Beautiful" after a western trip that included a stop at the Fair (one of its later verses includes a reference to the "alabaster" White City gleaming). [3]

The Fair consisted of two main zones: the main fairgrounds, which included the White City, and the Midway Plaisance, an adjacent carnival area. [This essay will focus on the visitor experience within the main fairgrounds; you can read about the Midway Plaisance in this essay.](#)

16.2.2.2 The White City

If a visitor arrived at the Fair by rail, she would step off the platform looking east toward Lake Michigan, with the golden-domed Administration Building immediately in front of her. To her left, the soaring archways of the Mines and Electricity Buildings welcomed her inside, while a seemingly endless row of columns decorated the front of the Machinery Building. If she walked on, she would arrive at the western end of the Grand Basin, a 1,000 foot long man-made pool that was separated from the lake by a columned peristyle. The Grand Basin and the buildings surrounding it were officially designated as the "Court of Honor," which the Fair's Director of Works, Daniel Burnham, cast as the "most dignified" region of the Fair, but their uniformly whitewashed façades lent them the popular name "The White City." (Although the buildings' exteriors were painted white to resemble marble, they were in fact made out of staff, a plaster substitute for stone that could be poured into a molded and quickly dried).



Figure 16.2.2.3: View of the Court of Honor looking east toward Lake Michigan. The MacMonnies sculpture *Columbia in her Grand Barge of State* is in the right foreground. The Grand Basin ended in a colonnaded peristyle (horizontal at center) before which stood Daniel Chester French's statue *The Republic*. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *World's Columbian Exposition, 1893*, gelatin silver print, 1893 ([Library of Congress](#)).

All of the buildings on the Court of Honor, as well as almost every other major exposition hall, had Beaux-Arts style façades; the leading architects of the era had trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the style was employed for many of the public buildings commissioned during the Gilded Age. Beaux-Arts architects combined elements of Greek and Roman architecture with Italian Renaissance styles to produce buildings that were imposing, symmetrical, and ornate. The World's Fair architects found this style particularly appropriate for their buildings because the United States was in the midst of an era of renewed nationalism after its 1876 centennial, with cultural critics declaring that the nation was the modern heir to Greek democracy, Roman law, and Renaissance humanism.

The exhibition halls of the Court of Honor were dedicated to the disciplines Burnham considered the pinnacle of human achievement (it could be argued that these are the ones most closely associated with white men: Mines, Electricity, Machinery, Agriculture, and Manufacturing). Each was an enormous steel-framed warehouse with a staff façade, designed by one of the leading architects of the era: Charles McKim, of McKim, Meade & White (of [Pennsylvania Station](#) and Columbia University fame) designed the Agricultural Building, while Richard Morris Hunt (designer of the entrance façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the pedestal of the [Statue of Liberty](#)) designed the Administration Building. Taken together, the white, Beaux-Arts buildings dedicated to sciences stood as a declaration that the center of the world's innovation and influence had moved west from Europe to the United States; and it was and ought to be under the exclusive control of white men.



Figure 16.2.2.4: Photograph of the Columbian Fountain by Frederick MacMonnies. The statuary group, made of plaster and staff, represents Columbia, an allegorical figure of the United States, in a triumphal barge. A winged figure representing Fame holds a trumpet (to herald her coming) and a laurel wreath (to crown her with victory). Figures representing the arts and sciences row with oars, and a winged male figure representing Time guides the rudder. The references to ancient Roman sculpture associate the United States with empire.

If our visitor walked on, she could gaze on the Columbian Fountain, featuring Frederick MacMonnies's sculpture *Columbia in her Grand Barge of State*. Electrified and illuminated at night, the fountain's sculpture (which does not survive) represented a number of allegorical figures, "an apotheosis of modern liberty—Columbia enthroned on a triumphal barge guided by Time, heralded by Fame, and rowed by eight standing figures, representing on one side the Arts, and on the other Science, Industry, Agriculture, and Commerce," according to the Fair's official guidebook. [4] A protégé of the Fair's artistic advisor, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, MacMonnies was an emerging American sculptor who had been trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. On the far side of the Basin stood Daniel Chester French's statue *The Republic*, an allegorical figure of the United States (illustrated at the top of this page), which stood more than 65 feet tall, holding an eagle perching on top of a globe in one hand, and a staff topped by a Phrygian cap in the other. Though the official guide to the Fair called these symbols an "invitation of liberty to the nations of the earth," the eagle (the national bird of the United States) on top of the globe sent a message that all the earth was U.S. domain. [5]

Our visitor may have walked down the southern length of the Grand Basin, stopping to see the Machinery and Agricultural Buildings, the latter topped by an enormous glass dome and Augustus Saint-Gaudens's statue of Diana, goddess of the hunt, holding a bow (it was intended for the Women's Building but prominent women organizers objected to the statue's nudity). If our visitor crossed through the peristyle she may have chosen to ride a moving sidewalk nearly half a mile into Lake Michigan (an innovative people-mover which helped visitors arriving by steamboat to cross the long distance to the Fair), or she may have turned back and strolled along the northern side of the Grand Basin. There, she could browse the largest building of the Fair, with more than 40 acres of floor space: the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, in which nations of the world displayed their finest products, and institutions trumpeted their achievements in science, medicine, education, journalism, and more.

To complete her loop of the White City, our visitor could stop by the Mines Building to see rare gems amidst the displays of coal and crude oil, and the Electricity building to see the newest inventions from Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, and the Bell Telephone Company. The Fair was illuminated at night thanks to the new technology of electrification, and the scientific contributions of these corporations argued for their central role in U.S. society.

16.2.2.3 The Transportation Building, Horticultural Building, and Palace of Fine Arts

The Court of Honor was perhaps the most prominent section, but there was a great deal more to see on the grounds of the World's Fair. As Burnham described the Fair's layout, exhibition halls "lying farther to the north—the Horticultural, Transportation, and

Fisheries—being less formal, blend readily with the more or less homelike headquarters buildings of the States and foreign governments, which are grouped among the trees of the extreme northern portion of the grounds.” [6]



Figure 16.2.2.5: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, oil on canvas 18-1/2 x 26-1/4 inches / 47.0 x 66.7 cm (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1999.67)



Figure 16.2.2.6: Frank Russell Green, Golden Doorway of the Transportation Building: World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, oil on canvas. (45.7 x 66 cm (Chicago History Museum)

If our visitor turned north after visiting the Court of Honor, she would encounter the lagoon, which was surrounded by these “less formal” exhibition halls: the Horticultural Building, whose great glass dome allowed in sunlight in order to sustain fruits, vegetables, and flowers from all over the world, and the Transportation Building, with its celebration of railroads and steamships.

Designed by Sullivan & Adler, the Transportation Building was the only exhibition hall that departed from the white, Beaux-Arts scheme: with its red walls, arched windows, and Golden Door (composed of a gold-painted quintuple arch decorated with a botanical motif) the building showcased Sullivan's search for a new, organic American style matching form to function: an exhibition hall dedicated to transportation symbolized by a door opening to the world and arches recalling a train station.

Beyond the lagoon and north pond stood the Palace of Fine Arts (one of the only Fair buildings still extant, today it houses Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry). Fine arts comprised painting and sculpture: works produced solely for their aesthetic value, rather than practical function. A boat dock allowed weary visitors to take advantage of the services of a gondolier to reach it, the northernmost exhibition hall. The gondolas, which cruised around the lagoon and Grand Basin, reinforced the sense that the main fairgrounds were a dream city of the Italian Renaissance, featuring not just the architectural styles but also the transportation of Venice.

Within the Palace, every available inch of wall space was crowded with pictures. Still smarting from American art's poorly received showing at the Paris Exposition of 1889, the Palace's curators determined to include more than a thousand works showing the history and progress of American painting and sculpture. The selection of the head of the Department of Fine Arts and the members of various juries was highly contentious; bitter rivalries between the art establishments of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, the artists of eastern and western American cities, and those trained in Europe and those trained in the United States soured the process of choosing which works to exhibit. Well-known American artists, including Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, and James McNeill Whistler exhibited the most paintings, with curators hoping that their all-star team would prove that U.S. artists were finally capable of competing head to head with the French.



Figure 16.2.2.7: Thomas Hovenden, *Breaking Home Ties*, 1890, oil on canvas, [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#). Hovenden's painting of a young man leaving home, clasped by his mother and surrounded by several generations of family, was the most popular painting at the Fair among visitors. The American subject matter and simple narrative of an important moment in family life was seen as proof that—despite industrialization, urbanization, and commercialism—the essential American character remained honest and kind. [7]

Critics gushed about the technical mastery of works like Sargent's [Portrait of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth](#) and Whistler's [Lady with the Yellow Buskin](#), although many complained that American artists relied too heavily on European subjects, like Dutch tulip fields or the coast of Brittany. [8] Thomas Hovenden's picture of a young man striking out on his own, *Breaking Home Ties*, was purported to be the most popular picture among visitors to the Fair, who appreciated its simple, "homely" sentiment. Philadelphians selected no fewer than 10 paintings by Thomas Eakins to exhibit at the Fair, among them [The Gross Clinic](#) (which had been painted for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition but rejected for its depiction of gore). [9]

16.2.2.4 The Women's Building



Figure 16.2.2.8: Madeline Lemaire, illustration in *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building*, lithograph, 1893. This frontispiece to a guide detailing the Woman's Building shows a well-dressed, conventionally beautiful white woman holding a brush and palette amid objects representing art and craftwork. Sophia Hayden's design for the Italian-Renaissance style palazzo forms the backdrop. The objects in the foreground suggest particularly feminine forms in art: a draped female marble statue gazes toward the building, while below it, a vase with a curvilinear profile suggests the female body. A spinning wheel below the main figure connects fiber arts with other pursuits, including reading, writing, and drafting. The poster casts the Women's Building and women's art as the delicate and refined work of upper-class white women.

If our visitor had not yet collapsed from exhaustion, she may have turned toward the Women's Building, the Fair's second-smallest building, situated at the intersection between the White City and the Midway Plaisance. Despite a petition to name some women to the Fair's governing body, Congress instead created a "Board of Lady Managers." [10] They hoped to steer the Fair away from giving visitors the impression that the progress of civilization was entirely the work of men. Led by Bertha Palmer, a savvy businesswoman and wife of real estate magnate Potter Palmer, the Lady Managers attempted to secure exhibits from women in all of the Fair's exhibition halls. Nearly all their applications for space, however, met with rejection. (Pressed to appoint women to judge submissions of fine art, the male directors deliberately appointed female artists who were either living abroad or lacking money to travel, thus preventing their participation.) [11] Eventually, the Lady Managers consigned themselves to exhibiting only in a dedicated Women's Building.

The Women's Building was the only one in the Fair whose design was open to competition, as professional women architects were just beginning to enter the field. The winning design, an Italian-Renaissance style palazzo, was the work of Chilean-American architect Sophia Hayden, the first female graduate of MIT's four-year architecture program. Hayden's design echoed those of the other exhibition halls in celebrating the styles of Italy as the highest form of architecture, but contemporaries, like the *New York Times*, remarked on the building's "soft and soothing atmosphere of womanliness" and the evidence within that women's achievements were the "more refined avenues of effort which culminate in the home, the hospital, the church, and in personal adornment." [12] Within the structure, murals by women artists depicted the mythical progress of women over the centuries: the two largest, on either end of the building, were the murals by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (painter and wife of Frederick), "Primitive Woman," showing women carrying jugs of water on their heads and welcoming men back from the hunt, and [Mary Cassatt](#), whose "Modern Woman" featured a triptych of young women pursuing fame, knowledge, and dance.

Despite their own frustrations with a Fair that sequestered women's contributions, the Lady Managers nevertheless strongly supported its narrative of triumphant white civilization. They vociferously opposed appointing even a single Black woman to the

Board, choosing instead to appoint a white woman to represent Black women's interests. The only acknowledgement of the work of women of color in the Women's Building was in a display of African, Asian, and Indigenous women's crafts: baskets, netting, and blankets. Although they were made by contemporary artists, the exhibit suggested that they were the work of white women's evolutionary ancestors: displays of what women's arts had been like in the distant past, before modern white women had been able to devote themselves to the fine arts of painting and sculpture. [13]



Figure 16.2.2.9: Ho-o-den, the Japanese national pavilion, was situated on the Wooded Isle. Designed by Masamichi Kuru, the pavilion showcased Japanese history and aimed to strengthen the relationship between Japan and the United States. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, *The Japanese Ho-o-den*, in [Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.

16.2.2.5 Naval power and new horizons

Having left the Women's Building, our visitor may have chosen to browse some of the state and country pavilions at the north end of the fairgrounds, perhaps refreshing herself at the tea house at Ho-o-den, the beautiful Japanese pavilion situated on the Wooded Isle. Ho-o-den (the Phoenix Palace) was an authentic Japanese Pavilion designed by Masamichi Kuru, a Japanese architect who had studied western architecture. Situated within the main fairgrounds, but near the margin between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" worlds demarcated by the boundary leading to the Women's Building and the Midway beyond, the position of the Japanese national pavilion symbolized its developing trade and cultural relationship with the United States. Or perhaps she would have stepped out to breathe some fresh air from Lake Michigan, seeing the display of emergent U.S. naval might in the concrete-and-wood replica of a U.S. battleship in the north harbor, a stark contrast to the replica of a diminutive Viking ship docked next to it. The Viking ship was built in Norway and sailed to the World's Fair by way of the Atlantic, Hudson River, Erie Canal, and Great Lakes.

These were not the only ships at the Fair; if our visitor walked down the eastern border of the Fair past the Peristyle, she could marvel at exact reproductions of the three ships from Columbus's voyage: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Docked in the South Inlet, the Agricultural Building dwarfed the small caravels, which had been constructed in Spain and sailed to the Fair.

16.2.2.6 Indigenous Americans at the Fair

If our visitor continued into the southeastern corner of the Fair, she may have been greeted by a few unusual sights: a set of Penobscot bark tipis from the Northern Woodlands region of Maine and Quebec, a Kwakwaka'wakw village, a simulated [mountain cliff dwelling of the southwest](#), plaster casts of Maya ruins, and a model boarding school for Indigenous children set up by the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs. Perhaps among this diverse and ersatz display of Indigenous cultures she may even have seen Indigenous men in elaborate Plains war dress: members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show (set up just outside the Midway) touring the main fairgrounds in costume as "free advertising" for the spectacle. [14] What was she to make of these contrasts?



Figure 16.2.2.10: Totem poles in front of the Kwakwaka'wakw village at the World's Fair. At right, the "Cliff Dwelling" exhibit is visible (topped by a flag). C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Houses and Totem Poles of Alaskan Indians, in [Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.

Just a few short years after the U.S. army massacre of Lakota Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, the Chicago World's Fair was a site of contestation over the future of Indigenous people in the Americas. With the model boarding school—a working version of the schools that U.S. officials forced Indigenous children to attend in order to make them abandon Indigenous cultural practices and adopt white attitudes—the U.S. government made its commitment to exterminating Indigenous people and cultures clear. It was at the World's Fair that many non-native peoples formed their impressions of Indigenous cultures, from the notion that they constituted a “vanishing race,” to the symbols of the feathered war-bonnet and the totem pole.

The Kwakwaka'wakw village was the work of the Department of Anthropology at the Fair. Directed by Frederic Putnam, with the help of his young assistant Franz Boas (who, as a professor at Columbia University, later became the “father of modern anthropology”), the Department of Anthropology enticed fourteen members of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation of British Columbia to live in a simulated village on the fairgrounds for the duration of the exposition and demonstrate their lifeways. Boas and other anthropologists also collected artifacts from Indigenous cultures across North America for display—the Smithsonian's exhibit deployed these objects in museum dioramas featuring mannequins engaged in various handicrafts.

The anthropologists believed that Indigenous people were a dying race whose culture and objects must be preserved before they were either exterminated or made inauthentic by the influence of Euroamerican culture. The objects they collected for the Fair—along with the dioramas—would go on to form the basis of the collections at Chicago's Field Museum. Indeed, anthropology as an academic discipline “came of age” at the Fair: the exhibits organized by the Smithsonian and the Peabody Museum introduced fairgoers to the nascent field, and museums across the country copied the geographically-arranged dioramas introduced there. [15]

But while the boarding school exhibit prescribed their extermination and the anthropological exhibits undertook to preserve objects that whites perceived as remnants that needed saving, Indigenous people themselves worked for their own benefit at the Fair, taking advantage of opportunities to earn money and resist repression. [Kwakwaka'wakws performed ritual ceremonies](#), including the potlatch, which the Canadian government had outlawed. Even Buffalo Bill's performers had found a way to earn a living through their traditional cultural practices. [16]

16.2.2.7 Left out of the Fair: Black Americans and protest

Within the main fairgrounds, our visitor would have had few if any opportunities to appreciate the contributions of Black Americans to the United States. Historians have characterized this era as the “nadir” of American race relations. Jim Crow laws

received the stamp of constitutionality from the U.S. Supreme Court. The year 1893 had the greatest number of lynchings on record between 1882 and 1940. [17]

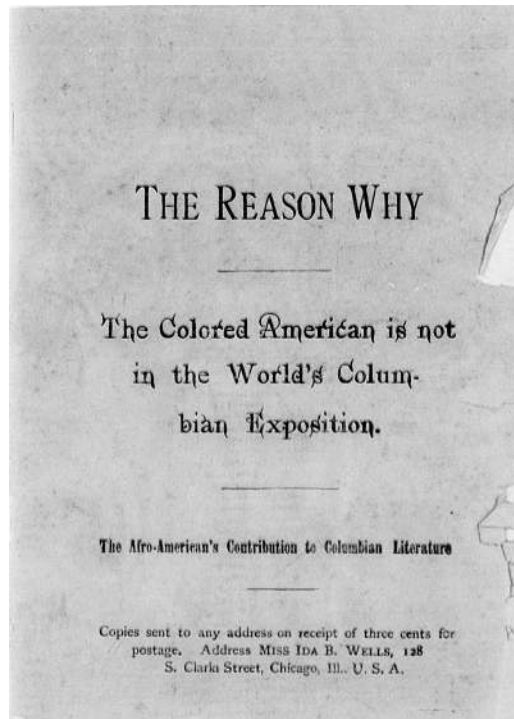


Figure 16.2.2.11: Frontispiece to Ida B. Wells's pamphlet, *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*. Wells and Frederick Douglass led an effort at the Chicago World's Fair to distribute more than 10,000 copies of the pamphlet, which detailed racial discrimination in the United States, especially lynching, alongside the achievements of Black Americans that the Fair ignored ([Library of Congress](#)).

At first, the Black press promoted the World's Fair as an opportunity to showcase the great accomplishments that Black Americans had made just one generation removed from slavery. But soon it became clear that Black citizens were faced with obstacles in every attempt they made to participate in the Fair. President Benjamin Harrison refused to appoint a Black representative to the organizing commission, and Black workers found there were only menial roles available to them in the construction and operation of the Fair. Decisions about the state pavilions were made by state legislatures and organizing commissions, which excluded Black participants and ignored Black contributions to society. Even a proposal for a segregated Colored Exhibit was denied. In short, the White City was a thoroughly and deliberately segregated space.

To protest the exclusion of Black Americans from the World's Fair, anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells and famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass (who had been appointed as a delegate for Haiti, not the United States) circulated 10,000 copies of a pamphlet at the Fair entitled *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*. With its introduction translated into French and German in order to reach a broad audience, the pamphlet explained the history of slavery, the ever-growing horrors of lynching, and contrasted those with the achievements Black citizens had made in business, education, science, and the arts. The pamphlet went on to expose how each effort made to participate in the Fair had been rebuffed, making plain the discrimination operating at every level.

Douglass wrote, furious, that the only real representation of Black people at the Fair were the Dahomeans, "here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage." [18] Although he employed the same rhetoric of savagery as white observers, he was right to identify the unique problems that the Fair's racial narrative posed for Black Americans. "Perhaps one of the most striking lessons which the Columbian Exposition taught was that African slavery in America had not, after all, been an unmixed evil," concluded one 1894 book dedicated to the Fair, "for of a truth, the advanced social conditions of American Africans over that of their barbarous countrymen is most encouraging and wonderful." [19]

16.2.2.8 Conclusion

On July 5, 1894, more than eight months after the official close of the Fair, a massive fire destroyed all that remained of the White City. It was the fourth and largest fire that had taken place on the fairgrounds, and the only one set deliberately: strikers from the

nearby factory town of Pullman set it ablaze. [20] Despite its triumphant narrative of cultural and scientific supremacy, the World's Columbian Exposition arrived in the midst of a grim economy and an increasingly vocal working class. The Panic of 1893 led to the greatest economic depression the country had yet experienced, and the Great Strike of 1894 showed that beautiful architecture did not ensure a compliant labor force, not when their wages were slashed and rents increased.

But if the Fair's ideas about art and capitalism failed to take hold, its messages about race and empire were widely embraced. In 1896, the Supreme Court permitted "separate but equal" public accommodations for white and Black citizens in its *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, and in 1903 ruled that Congress did not have to honor treaties made with Indigenous nations. The numbers of Indigenous people living in the United States reached a "demographic nadir" of between 200,000 and 300,000 individuals around 1900, or less than 10% than had lived in North America before the arrival of Columbus. [21] And—although debates about the proper extent of U.S. imperialism abroad continued for several years—by the end of the century the U.S. government had taken possession of Hawai'i, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

The World's Columbian Exposition both reflected the dominant white theories of race and evolution of its day and reproduced them as spectacle, suggesting to its 27 million visitors that all the people of the world were on a continuum of civilization. But, to accomplish this, the White City had to exist in a constant state of comparison with the "uncivilized" portion of the Fair: the Midway.

16.2.2.9 Notes:

1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 217.
2. Hamlin Garland in a letter to his parents, 1893. See [A History of the Fair](#).
3. See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 46. This early version of the pledge was shorter: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The Catholic fraternal order, the Knights of Columbus, urged Congress to add "under God" to the pledge in the 1950s. On America the Beautiful, see Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Arcadia, 2008), p. 10.
4. John J. Flinn, [Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition](#) (The Columbian Guide Company, 1893), p. 39.
5. Flinn, p. 40.
6. Quoted in Trachtenberg, p. 213.
7. Carolyn Kinder Carr, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair* (National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993), p. 178.
8. Carr, p. 178.
9. Carr, p. 100-102.
10. Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 33.
11. Carr, pp. 81-82.
12. Quoted in Bederman, p. 34.
13. Bederman, p. 38.
14. David R. M. Beck, *Unfair Labor? American Indians and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), p. 39.
15. See Curtis M. Hinsley and David R. Wilcox, eds., *Coming of Age in Chicago : The 1893 World's Fair and the Coalescence of American Anthropology* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016).
16. Beck, p. xvii.
17. See Charles Seguin and David Rigby, "[National Crimes: A New National Data Set of Lynchings in the United States, 1883 to 1941](#)," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, May 6, 2019.
18. Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass, [The Reason Why The Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.
19. Quoted in Rydell, p. 53.
20. Trachtenberg, p. 209.
21. Douglas H. Ubelaker, "[North American Indian population size, A.D. 1500 to 1985](#)," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol. 77, no. 3 (Nov. 1988), pp. 389-294.

16.2.2.10 Additional resources

[Learn more about the architecture of the Court of Honor](#)

[Watch a lecture on the anthropology exhibits at the White City](#)

[See an interactive map of the Fair from the Harvard Worldmap Platform](#)

Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982).

Carolyn Kinder Carr, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 2893 World's Fair* (National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993).

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16.2.3: The Midway

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID

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Figure 16.2.3.1: View of the Midway Plaisance during the Chicago World's Fair, looking east. The Ferris Wheel, at center right, was the towering attraction of the Midway, built to rival the Eiffel Tower. Also visible here is the captive balloon, a hot-air balloon that would rise and descend in place, and the pagoda-like tower of the Chinese theatre just to the left of the base of the Ferris wheel. C.D. Arnold, "World's Columbian Exposition, Midway Plaisance," from *World's Fair: General Views and Midway*, 1893 ([Art Institute of Chicago](#)).

This essay focuses on the experience of a visitor to the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long carnival area adjacent to the main fairgrounds, featuring carnival rides, performances, food stalls, and inhabited "villages" purporting to display architecture and customs from around the world.

16.2.3.1 A human curiosity shop

The Midway Plaisance is a sort of curiosity-shop, in which the curiosities are mainly men and manners.

—Julian Hawthorne [1]

When the Fair's boosters originally conceived of the World's Columbian Exposition, they did not intend to set aside any space for a side show, where popular amusements and "exotic" exhibits could titillate spectators. The fair was to be what they considered "high culture" (the ideas and achievements of white westerners) without any "low-brow" (a recently coined term borrowed from phrenology, which popularized the racist idea that non-whites were less evolved, or closer to heavy-browed neanderthals) entertainments.

But the popularity of the ethnological exhibits at the 1889 Paris Exposition—not to mention its handsome profits—convinced the Chicago Fair directors to include such a space. For this purpose, they decided to reserve the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long shady pleasure drive ("plaisance") that connected Jackson Park with nearby Washington Park. In this way, the pre-existing name, Midway Plaisance, was shortened to "midway" and entered the English lexicon as a term denoting any carnival area with games, rides, and vendors.

To give the Midway the sheen of educational value, the directors put Frederic Putnam, the head of the Fair's Department of Ethnology and Archaeology, in charge. Putnam and his associates hired impresario Sol Bloom to plan the Midway's exhibits, explaining its curious mix of spectacle and "education." Consequently, visitors were encouraged to see the Midway not just as a carnival but as a kind of living museum of human evolution, as imagined in the racist theory of Social Darwinism then prevalent among anthropologists. At the far end of the strip were exhibits from those the Fair directors considered the "least evolved" peoples of the world (the Dahomeans and the Indigenous Americans), near the center were the "half-civilized" (Middle Easterners and Pacific Islanders), and closest to the fairgrounds were those most nearly approaching the evolutionary heights of white Americans (the Japanese, Irish, and Germans). In reality, space constraints and some turnover in attractions over the course of the Fair meant that the exhibit areas could not be so easily categorized, but the implication of the scheme was not lost on visitors. The Chicago Tribune reported that on the Midway, "an opportunity was here afforded to the scientific mind to descend the spiral of evolution, tracing humanity in its highest phases down almost to its animalistic origins." [2]

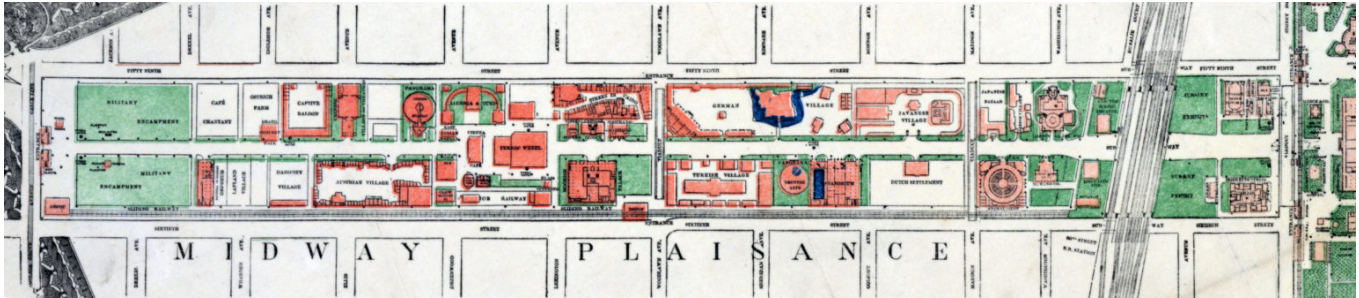


Figure 16.2.3.2: Detail of the map of the World's Fair, featuring the Midway Plaisance. The entrance to main fairgrounds was located on the right side. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 ([Library of Congress](#)).

16.2.3.2 A visit to the Midway

If a visitor arrived at the Midway, perhaps on the day after her trip to the White City, she might be overwhelmed by the variety of sights and sounds. Unlike the white Beaux-Arts buildings of the Court of Honor, the Midway was deliberately diverse in its landscape: from the west entrance alone she may have spied an ostrich farm from California, the towers of the Chinese Theatre, a mock Bedouin encampment, and painted reindeer adorning the entrance to Lapland village. A mile long and six hundred feet wide, the Midway included popular amusements along with pavilions constructed by national delegations. Most shows and exhibits charged an additional entrance fee, as opposed to the White City exhibitions, which were free with an entrance ticket.

For many visitors, the Midway was the real attraction of the World's Fair. Those looking for thrills could ride the 264-foot high Ferris wheel (the first ever engineered on such a scale, built by George Washington Gale Ferris himself), ascend in a captive hot air balloon, or zoom around on the refrigerated "ice railway" (toboggan roller coaster). The Midway also offered an education (of questionable accuracy) in world cultures, with food, exhibits, and performances from countries that both were, and were not, officially represented within the White City. Several nations sent delegations to inhabit "villages" where they would exhibit their homes, style of dress, and customs to visitors, while selling food and merchandise.

16.2.3.3 The western end of the Midway: The Wild West, the Wild East, and Dahomey village



Figure 16.2.3.3: Exterior of the Sitting Bull exhibit, topped by a stuffed buffalo. The paintings on the exterior depict both “Custer’s Last Stand” at the Battle of Greasy Grass and the death of Sitting Bull outside his cabin. “Entrance to Sitting Bull’s Log Cabin, Midway Plaisance,” 1893 ([Chicago00](#)).

It’s possible that our visitor may have come to the Midway after taking in a performance at Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World, a touring rodeo of cowboys, Indigenous Americans, and sharpshooters that was unaffiliated with the World’s Columbian Exposition but located a few blocks away from the Fair. The showman and entrepreneur Buffalo Bill had originally intended to exhibit at the Midway but balked when the Fair’s organizers demanded 50% of his profits. They would bitterly regret their decision not to negotiate a smaller cut after the Wild West show’s six-month run reportedly raked in a million dollars, the equivalent of \$30 million in 2021 dollars. [3] Among other acts, the Wild West show offered reenactments of famous battles of the Indian Wars, which cast Plains peoples as savages whose attacks on white settlers and the U.S. military must be avenged by white frontiersmen.

Within the Midway, exhibitors tried to capitalize on the popularity of the Wild West show by adding both a “Wild East Show” (featuring trick riders from North Africa and the Middle East) and a display of Sitting Bull’s Log Cabin. The cabin—disassembled and transported from its South Dakota location after Sitting Bull’s death at the hands of police—reinforced the idea that Indigenous Americans had been conquered, along with the frontier, and what had been theirs was now the property and even plaything of white Americans. The parade of symbols showing defeated Indigenous people reinforced the Fair’s overall message that Manifest Destiny in North America was complete.

If our visitor progressed, the next most notable exhibit she would encounter was the Dahomean village, where more than 100 Fon people from the Kingdom of Dahomey demonstrated music, dance, and religious rituals. Amid the Second Franco-Dahomean War, a French impresario named Pené brought the Dahomeans as an exhibit to Chicago. Known for their fierce female warriors—often called ‘Amazons’ in popular culture—and for their rumored cannibalism, the ethnology department felt that the Dahomeans would serve as an example of the state of nature from which humanity had arisen. The Chicago press portrayed the Fon as savages, “blacker than buried midnight and as degraded as the animals which prowl the jungles of their dark land,” and they were frequent targets of racist caricature, depicted as the least-evolved people at the World’s Fair. [4] At the far end of the Midway, billed as a carnival attraction, the Dahomeans were cast as the antithesis of everything that the White City represented.



Figure 16.2.3.4: Exterior view of the Dahomey Village, with painted advertisements depicting Dahomean men and women wielding weapons. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Dahomey Village—On the Midway, in [Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.

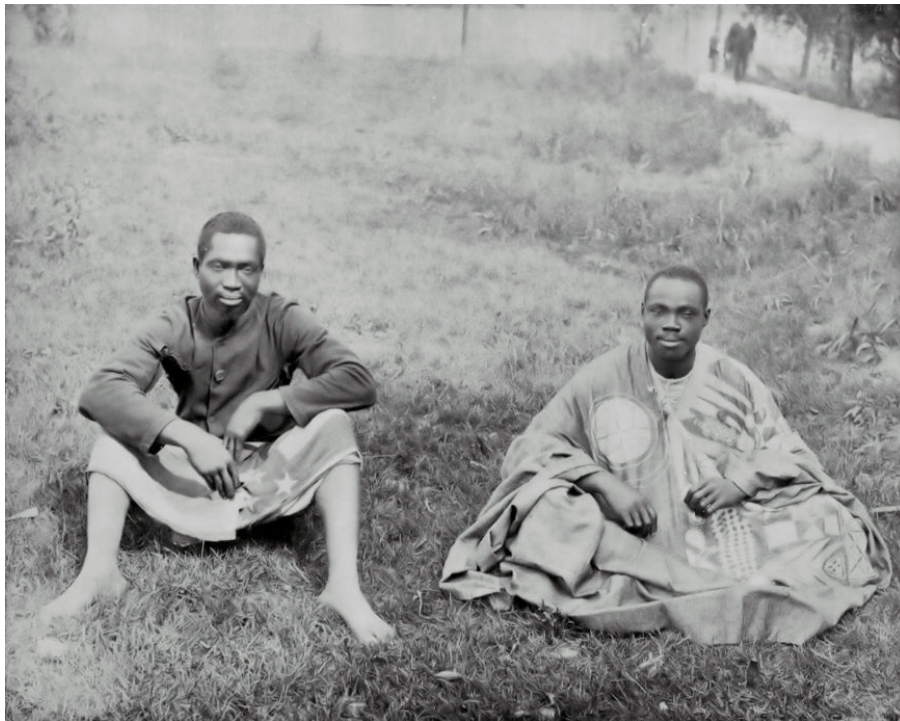


Figure 16.2.3.5: Two Dahomean men. The man on the left is dressed in an American flag and jacket, while the man on the right wears traditional clothing. "From Far Away Dahomey," 1893 ([Friends of the White City](#)).

16.2.3.4 The center of the Midway: rides and orientalist spectacles



Figure 16.2.3.6: The Ferris wheel was the monumental attraction of the Chicago World's Fair. Standing 264 feet tall, its cars could each hold up to 60 people at a time. Approximately 38,000 passengers rode the Ferris wheel each day it operated. Also visible in this photograph is the ice railway in the right foreground, the dome of the Moorish Palace, and some of the minarets of Cairo Street. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, The Ferris Wheel, in [Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition](#), 1893.

Not everything on the Midway was intended to be an object lesson in Social Darwinism. Past the Dahomey village our visitor could see a panorama of the eruption of Kilauea (the U.S.-backed coup of the Hawaiian throne in January 1893, still being contested that summer, had increased white Americans' interest in the island nation), ride the enormous Ferris wheel or the ice railway, or stop into the Zoopraxigraphical Hall, the world's first commercial motion picture theater, where [Eadweard Muybridge](#) gave lectures on locomotion and demonstrated moving pictures on his "zoopraxiscope."

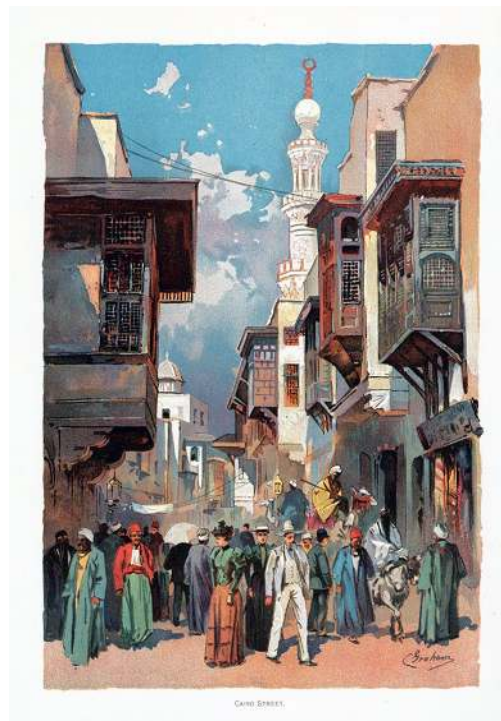


Figure 16.2.3.7: Charles S. Graham, *Cairo Street*, plate in *The World's Fair in Water Colors*, Springfield, 1893.

But this central part of the Midway was also devoted to North Africa and the Middle East, with an Algerian and Tunisian village, a Moorish Palace, and Egypt's popular Midway attraction, Cairo Street. Cairo Street aimed to immerse visitors in an Egyptian streetscape featuring houses, shops, a Temple of Luxor replica, and a mosque topped with a minaret (thought to be one of the first mosques in the United States, it was a site of worship for the Muslim citizens who worked at the Fair in addition to a landmark). Visitors could ride camels, see a simulated wedding procession, and view a belly dancer called "Little Egypt," whose "hootchy-kootchy" dance became an international sensation. These exhibits contrasted an [orientalist](#) view of the east as exotic, sexualized, unchanging, and superstitious, against the rational, chaste, developed, and pious West exemplified by the White City.

16.2.3.5 The eastern end of the Midway: Pacific and European connections

As our visitor drew closer to the White City, there were villages celebrating Europe: a German village and an Irish village featuring a replica of Blarney Castle. These were interspersed with a Javanese village, a Samoan village, and a Japanese bazaar. Unlike the Dahomeans, the Javanese were lauded in the American press as friendly and hardworking, but childlike. (Japan, like its European counterparts, had both an official national pavilion in the main fairgrounds and a village on the Midway thanks to its early and enthusiastic participation in the Fair; China, whose government understandably resented the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, had refused to participate, and the Chinese village on the Midway was operated by Chinese Chicagoans who saw the Fair as an

opportunity to promote cultural understanding). [5] The incorporation of Japan reflected U.S. interests in the newly open nation, while the positive, if patronizing, images of the Samoans in the American press helped to lay the groundwork for popular support of annexing American Samoa in 1899.



Figure 16.2.3.8: Samoan performers singing in front of a dwelling. ([Friends of the White City](#))

There was a certain logic to this combination of European and Pacific nations: the former—especially the Irish and Germans—were the most recently assimilated ethnicities in the American body politic. The latter were among the nations with whom the U.S. government was most keen to open trade relationships, and whom they eyed as potential imperial subjects. Each was next door to the grand celebration of American cultural and industrial might that was the White City, but remained separate.

16.2.3.6 Conclusion: “The World as Plaything”

Julian Hawthorne, son of Nathaniel and keen cultural critic, claimed that the Midway should be named “The World as Plaything,” a set of humans, landscapes, and objects that invited American visitors to view them as toys. [6] Although the Fair’s promoters had not originally intended to include the Midway attractions, they were integral to the narrative of evolution and empire at the Chicago World’s Fair. Within the main fairgrounds was the “civilized” world, capped by the homogenous order of the Court of Honor, which represented what the Fair directors considered the highest achievements of men and whose architecture looked back to ancient Greece and Rome to claim the heritage of western civilization. Outside was the deliberately disordered Midway, with its carnival barkers, jumble of architectural styles, and exoticized cultures. And all of it was for sale, or there for the taking, encouraging white visitors to view the resources and lands of Asia, Africa, and the Americas as theirs for the taking.

Just five years after the World’s Fair and the Midway closed in 1893, the United States expanded its empire outside the bounds of North America, formally annexing Hawai’i (after staging a coup that deposed Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani in 1893) and taking possession of former Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific after its victory in the Spanish-American War. Was it a coincidence that the United States, having claimed ownership of Christopher Columbus’s mantle with its World’s Columbian Exposition, now claimed the lands his voyages had brought into the Spanish empire? Or that the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Philippines found themselves part of an American empire that would cast them as members of a permanent sideshow, adjacent to but never able to enter the white city of Washington, D.C.? Perhaps, but the Chicago World’s Fair certainly primed white Americans to think in these terms as it transitioned from one frontier to the next.

16.2.3.7 Notes

1. Julian Hawthorne, “The Lady of the Lake,” *Lippincott’s Magazine*, Aug 1893.

2. “Through the looking Glass” Chicago Tribune 1 Nov 1893, 9, quoted in Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 65
3. Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 129.
4. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, p. 66.
5. Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community since 1870* (Stanford University Press, 2021), p. 63.
6. Hawthorne, “Foreign Folk at the Fair,” *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 15 (1893), pp. 569- 570, quoted in Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, p. 64.

16.2.3.8 Additional resources

[Walk down the Midway with the Chicago 00 Project](#)

[Read the autobiography of Sol Bloom](#)

[See more images of the Midway at Friends of the White City](#)

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16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)

"Early Chicago: The 1893 World's Fair" from *DuSable to Obama: Chicago's Black Metropolis*

Now that you have gained an overview of the contents of those extensive spaces of the 1893 World's Fair from the Smarthistory segments of this chapter, you will get to explore some additional dimensions of the fair's construction and public reception, as shared by PBS member station WTTW Chicago in their program *DuSable to Obama: Chicago's Black Metropolis*: "[Early Chicago: The 1893 World's Fair](#)."



- Please read the short articles focusing on critiques of the fair made by Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass and watch the brief videos (2 min. and 3 min.) in which Dr. Christopher Reed further elaborates on the roles played by prominent Black speakers at the fair as well as the various contributions of Black workers at the fair.
- Keep these various dimensions of the World's Fair in mind as you approach class activities and assignments for this chapter.

RIGHT: "The Haiti Pavilion at Chicago's World Columbian Fair was the center for Black American visitors and a site of protest against the exclusion of African Americans and the depiction of people of color as savages in the "colonial exhibits." Courtesy of the Field Museum." [National Museum of American Diplomacy](#)

Content Warning

Please note that images depicting historical events may contain themes or include verbal descriptions which do not reflect current understandings of topics like race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability status, and religious diversity. These are provided in a historical context.

Racist caricatures are included in some of this chapter's readings.

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16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

16.4.0.1 Assessment

Select one of the following three options, and write an essay according to the instructor's directions and rubric, if applicable.

- **Option 1:** The 1893 World's Fair was intended to honor Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas, and this decision provides us with insight into the organizers' values and perspective on history. If you were to design a World's Fair today, is there a specific historical event you would want to commemorate? Which one, and why? Where would you suggest hosting such a World's Fair, and how would you name and design the World's Fair in order to make that inspiration understood by visitors?

You are encouraged to add visual details to enhance your proposal but must at least describe your vision in words.



LEFT: "Chicago World's Fair 1893" is marked with CC0 1.0.

- **Option 2:** The 1893 World's Fair was often described by visitors as a *spectacle*. Based on your exploration of primary source [visual](#) and textual records of the World's Columbian Exposition, select at least *three* of the numbered points in Guy de Bord's *La Société du Spectacle* (refer to [this English translation](#) *The Society of the Spectacle* by Ken Knabb) that would support this application of the term.

Specify who acts as spectator as well as who and/or what is treated as the spectated object in the World's Fair. Please elaborate on which of the aspects of the "spectacle" you view in a positive light, and which you view in a negative light, and why.

- **Option 3:** Compare the images and description of the "White City" portions of the 1893 World's Fair with the sections relegated to the "Midway Plaisance." Describe at least three characteristics of each space's contents (what each displayed), visual details, and message conveyed to the audience.

Then pick one cultural institution that exists today (such as a museum or library) whose collections and presentation of those collections either remind you of the White City or the Midway Plaisance, and explain how/why.

OR select a cultural institution that exists today which you instead see as challenging some of the assumptions or values that shaped those two World's Fair spaces, and explain how/why this one is different from those.



LEFT: "Village of Penobscot Indians - Chicago World's Fair 1893" by

Aussie~mobs is marked with [Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

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17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

Your Readings

The first couple readings assigned for this chapter explore two of the [pseudosciences](#) that were prominent in the late 19th century (1800s): [physiognomy](#) and [phrenology](#).

The other two, both from Smarthistory, explore some of the ways photography as a medium was employed to give [pseudoscientific](#) processes the impression of having a scientific foundation. Both Francis Galton and Alphonse Bertillon developed methods of using photography that still have implications on our lives today, particularly in terms of mugshots along with facial recognition and profiling.

- Does knowing the origins of some of these methodologies shape our understanding of or opinions about their uses today?
- 1. "[Physiognomy: The Beautiful Science](#)" from Getty: *The Iris* and by Sarah Waldorf
 - All text on *The Iris* is copyright J. Paul Getty Trust and licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless marked "All rights reserved." Images and other media are excluded.
- 2. "[Algorithms Associating Appearance and Criminality Have a Dark Past](#)" from Aeon and by Sally Davies
 - You may republish this article online or in print under our Creative Commons licence. Additionally, we permit oral recordings or translation of Ideas into languages other than English. In all cases, you may not edit or shorten the text, you must attribute the article to Aeon and you must include the author's name in your republication.
- 3. "[Francis Galton, Eugenics, and Photography](#)" from *Smarthistory* and by Dr. Kris Belden-Adams
- 4. "[Alphonse Bertillon, Mugshot and Record of Francis Galton](#)" from *Smarthistory* and by Dr. Kris Belden-Adams

Content Warning

Please note that images depicting historical events may contain themes or include verbal descriptions which do not reflect current understandings of topics like race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability status, and religious diversity. These are provided in a historical context.

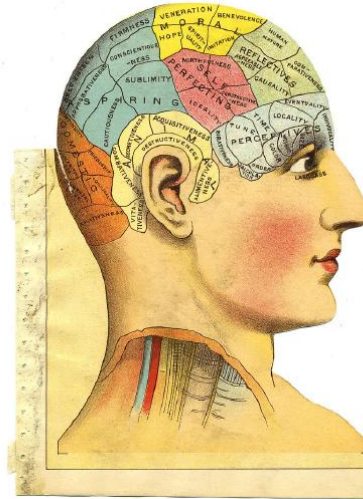
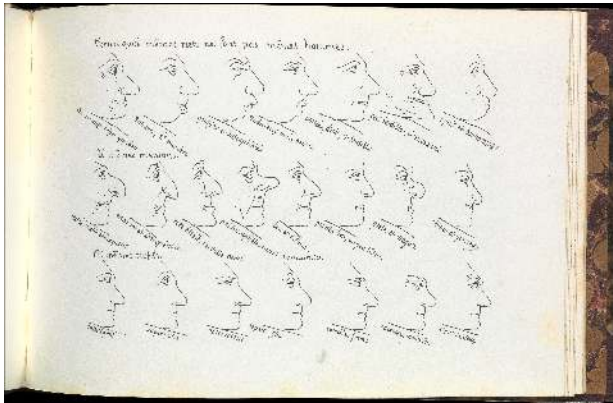
Racist caricatures are included in some of this chapter's readings.

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17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity

Introduction

Today's discussion is centered around helping us consider the ways in which our physical identity, especially a detail of our face or its entirety, is already used or could be used to gather data and justify drawing conclusions about who we are as people.



"File:Essais d'autographie- Essai de physiognomie MET DP242863.jpg" by Rodolphe Töpffer is marked with CC0 1.0.
 "Phrenology head from The Household Physician, 1905" by crackdog is marked with Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Reflect and Connect

- On a spectrum like the one below (which you may copy or draw for yourself), fill it in with at least *four* ways in which you know or can imagine your own face being used to gather data or make assumptions about who you are as a whole person (ex: facial recognition on your personal electronic device(s), facial recognition by law enforcement, etc.)
- After you fill yours out, talk to two other classmates and compare your spectrum with theirs.
 - How do yours and theirs compare?
 - Did any of your classmates think of contexts that you hadn't yet considered?

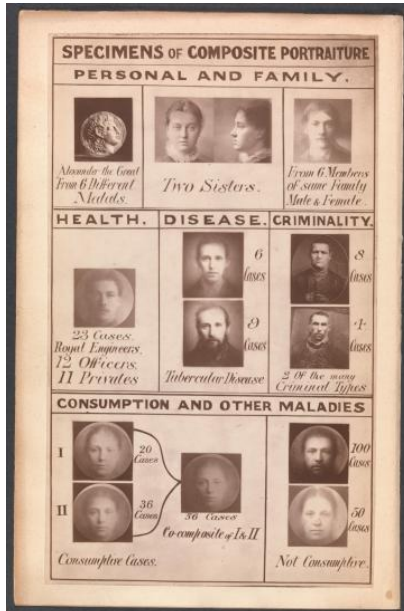


β Uncomfortable Neutral Comfortable α

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17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

Assessment



"Frontispiece of *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*" by Francis Galton is

marked with [CC0 1.0](#).

- Step One: Ponder and Self-Examine
 - How would you describe the enduring appeal behind wanting to be able to look at the surface of a person to discern the reality of who they are?
- Step Two: Develop a Mantra
 - In future moments where you notice you might be falling into the error of “judging a book by its cover” (or a person’s moral character by their outward appearance), what can you do to remind yourself to shift away from those assumptions derived from surface-level details?
 - Based on what you learned about the history of the mugshot and pseudosciences like phrenology and physiognomy, write or make an audio or video recording of a mantra you could apply to future situations that acknowledges the impulse to make that immediate and superficial judgment while reminding yourself of reasons why such judgments lack validity or are otherwise problematic.
 - You may stick to logical arguments or arguments that appeal to emotions, or your mantra may combine the two.

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18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

There are four resources to explore within this chapter--one about "truth claims" in photography and other media, and one that will introduce the concept of salvage anthropology or salvage ethnography like Edward S. Curtis' photographic project.

To better contextualize why so many white Americans in the late 19th century erroneously believed that Indigenous people were a "vanishing race" and that their cultural objects and images required "salvaging," please explore the multimedia presentation from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian focusing on just one tribal nation's experience before, during, and after the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Finally, there is also a 25 minute video about the many ways in which photographs can and do lie to us.

1. [Section 1.3](#) in *Truth Claims Across Media*
Schirmacher, B., Mousavi, N. (2024). Truth, Truth Claims, Truthfulness, and Trust. In: Schirmacher, B., Mousavi, N. (eds) *Truth Claims Across Media*. Palgrave Studies in Intermediality. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-42064-1_1
2. "The Clash of Cultures, from Both Sides" in *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Miller, Berlo, Wolfe, and Roberts)
3. Video "How Photographs Can Tell Lies" from the Gwinnett County Public Library (25 mins)
4. Progress through an [online multimedia resource from the National Museum of the American Indian](#) (NMAI) about the experience of one Indian Nation--the Muscogee (Creek)--to better understand the impact of the [Indian Removal Act](#) that was signed into law by Pres. Andrew Jackson after being approved by the US Congress in 1830. The resource "[The Removal of the Muscogee Nation](#)" is explored by clicking on the right arrow, which will provide access to short text excerpts and videos related to the the Muscogee experience before, during, and after "Indian Removal."

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18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

Plains Indian people presented their own views of their culture and history in art during the same decades that they were so widely represented by white artists. Theirs is a story of displacement by post-war white expansion. Chronicle, commemoration, loss, witness, and removal from history, all play a role in their story, as told by both sides.

The year 1876—that of the Philadelphia Centennial marked both celebration (the republic was one hundred years old) and setback (the defeat of George Armstrong Custer by Plains warriors just a few months into the great national birthday celebration). "Custer's Last Stand" became a symbol of the nation beset by hostile Indians, immigrant anarchists, and striking workingmen, common enemies of the republic's westward progress and industrial expansion. The Plains Indian wars—of which the Battle of Little Big Horn was but one episode—concluded in 1890 when federal troops massacred 146 Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Methodically deprived of their way of life and confined to the reservations, Plains Indians would no longer threaten western settlement. For older Native Plains cultures, this was a time to commemorate the losses that accompanied forced assimilation and displacement.

18.2.1.1 Plains Ledger Drawings: Native Commemoration in an Era of Change

In the years around the Centennial, white Americans were not alone in looking to the past. For Plains cultures at war with the U.S. army this era was shrouded by an atmosphere of crisis and loss. Their treaty rights ignored, their ancestral lands invaded and exploited, their hunting grounds diminished, their dignity in question, Plains artists seized a new medium—drawing on paper—to commemorate a disappearing way of life, recording traditional scenes of armed combat and horse capture. They also chronicled their painfully changing circumstances, situated between worlds. Although white and Indian shared an impulse toward recollection and commemoration, they did so under radically different conditions. Confronting modernization, white Americans indulged in wistful fantasies of a simpler time; for Plains peoples, facing a loss of their way of life through forced removal and confinement, the ability to recollect and express spiritual meaning and personal accomplishment was a matter of survival.

Plains artists eagerly adopted the paper and pens provided by traders and explorers early in the century and by military men and Indian agents later on. Often the paper they drew on was discarded from lined account books, or ledgers, hence the name "ledger drawings." In other instances, they were given artists' notebooks or small writing tablets. Ledger drawings miniaturized the imagery painted on the much larger hide robes. In some instances, men carried their small books of autobiographical pictures into battle; such books were among the plunder taken by army soldiers from dead braves on the battlefield. In other instances, drawings were readily sold or exchanged as gifts with whites. From 1865 to 1890, Plains artists made thousands of these drawings, many of which still exist in museums and historical societies, though a few remain in Native hands.



Figure 9.35: FOUR HORNS (LAKOTA), Sitting Bull Shoots a Frontiersman, 1870. Ink and watercolor on paper, 7¼ x 10½ in (19.6 x 26.6 cm). National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

SITTING BULL'S EXPLOITS AS DEPICTED BY FOUR HORNS. While men most often depicted their own exploits, occasionally they might also record the brave deeds of a relative. In 1870, Four Horns, by then one of the most respected chiefs of the Hunkpapa band of the Lakota, drew fifty-five images of his nephew Sitting Bull's war record (fig. 9.35). In order to make clear that he was not claiming these deeds as his own, but simply recording his illustrious nephew's accomplishments, Four Horns drew an extra-large name glyph—a sitting bull—behind the horseman on the right, and connected it to his face by a line. (A knowledgeable

Lakota examining the drawing would also recognize the raptorial bird on the shield as Sitting Bull's distinctive emblem.) Sitting Bull's victim is a frontiersman in a buckskin jacket. While facial features were unimportant to the artist, Four Horns carefully rendered the flintlock rifle, saddle, war shield, and name glyph with great accuracy. While it was not uncommon for a fine draftsman to be commissioned to draw the exploits of a comrade, it may be that Four Horns was documenting Sitting Bull's bravery and generosity to promote his nephew for the new role of paramount chief, who would speak for all the Sioux.

These drawings not only provide a record of one man's career, but also reveal the pride an elderly uncle took in the successes of his beloved nephew. Sitting Bull earned his first war honor at the age of fourteen. By 1870 he and his uncle had traveled on many war parties together, captured many horses, and fought many Crow enemies. An army doctor, James Kimball, bought fifty-five drawings of Sitting Bull's life from Four Horns in 1870 at Fort Buford in Dakota Territory. Eleven years later, the illustrious chief Sitting Bull, who had taken his followers to Canada rather than submit to reservation life, surrendered to the U.S. army at the same fort.

PRISON DRAWINGS FROM FORT MARION. In 1875, several dozen Kiowa and Cheyenne men, accused of crimes against white settlers in "Indian Territory" (present day Oklahoma), were incarcerated for three years at Fort Marion, formerly the Spanish Castillo San Marcos, in St. Augustine, Florida (see fig. 3.22). In an unusual experiment, their jailer, Lieutenant Richard Pratt (who later became the head of the first Indian boarding school), gave these prisoners drawing supplies and encouraged them to make drawings to sell to the tourists who frequented this seaside resort, as well as to influential reformers such as the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple, who visited the men at what was considered to be a model prison.



Figure 9.36: ZOTOM (KIOWA), On the Parapet of Fort Marion Next Day After Arrival, 1876-7. Graphite and colored pencil, 8½ x 11 in (21.5 x 27.9 cm). The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City. Arthur and Shifra Silberman Collection.

The artists at Fort Marion recorded scenes of warfare and the hunt, common in the Plains pictorial tradition, but they also added scenes from their new experiences as warriors who had been transported by train and paddle-wheel steamer far from their prairie homes. The Kiowa artist Zotom (1853-1913), for example, drew a scene of the prisoners standing on the parapet of the massive stone fort, the day after they arrived in humid St. Augustine (fig. 9.36). They stare out at the harbor lighthouse and ocean beyond a vista far from home. Though each figure is tiny, and all face away from us, Zotom makes the viewer confront the grim realities of displacement, and the poignant despair of those who have been torn from the fabric of their culture.

With access in prison to chromolithographs, newspapers, and photographs, Zotom and some of the other warrior-artists mastered the rudiments of perspective, depth, and foreshortening. Their works stand somewhere between the flat pictorial depictions of their forebears on the Great Plains, and the complex perspectival spaces of nineteenth-century painters. In this drawing, Zotom depicts a heart-rending moment: the prisoners have not yet been stripped of their traditional blankets and leggings and forced to wear army garb; yet their fate as captives in hostile territory is painfully clear.

Zotom's life story exemplifies the complexity of Native experience between cultures at the end of the nineteenth century. Raised as a traditional warrior, he converted to Christianity during his imprisonment in Florida. After his release in 1878, he trained as a deacon in the Episcopal Church in New York. Finally, after some years of preaching Christianity in Indian Territory, he renounced his ministry and returned to traditional Kiowa spirituality.



Figure 9.37: WOHAW (KIOWA), Wohaw Between Two Worlds, 1876-7. Pencil and crayon on paper, 8¾ x 11¼ in (22.2 x 28.5 cm). Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

WOHAW IN TWO WORLDS. Another artist-prisoner at Fort Marion stands alone among Plains graphic artists of his generation in his remarkable fusion of reality and metaphor in *Wohaw Between Two Worlds* (fig. 9.37). In a poignant expression of Native ambivalence at being trapped between two incompatible ways of life, Wohaw (1855-1924) depicts himself extending a peace pipe to symbols of both realms: the wild buffalo and tipi of traditional Kiowa life, and the domesticated steer, plank house, and plowed field of the western settler. The sun, crescent moon, and falling star look on in mute witness to this moment of historical transition. Wohaw uses one figure-himself-to depict the plight of all Indian people in the last third of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the metaphor of "standing with a foot in two worlds" is still invoked by Native artists (see fig. 18.24: T. C. Cannon, "the Collector"). Wohaw's drawing-while presenting loss-locates the artist at the center of the encounter and the conflict between cultures, trying to make peace with both.



Figure 9.38: WOHAW (KIOWA), Warrior on Horseback with Three Portraits, 1876-7. Pencil and crayon on paper, 8¾ x 11¼ in (22.2 x 28.5 cm). Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

Wohaw juxtaposes the expressive modes of two different cultures in another unusual composition in which a warrior on horseback looks up at three portrait images of Kiowa people (fig. 9.38). The framed portraits, with their stiff frontal and three-quarter views, derive from the conventions of portrait photography, a genre familiar on the Great Plains by the 1870s. The formal photographic portrait was also familiar to the prisoners at Fort Marion, for they posed for such portraits, and the photographic process was an occasional subject of their drawings. The double image of the Indian, in both indigenous and western garb, was a standard trope of

late-nineteenth-century photographic portraiture, suggesting to the white viewer of the time the uplifting effect of "civilization." To the Native artist and audience, however, such imagery may have held a different meaning.

The men at the upper left wear plumed U.S. cavalry dress hats and officers' fancy-dress frock coats, complete with shoulder insignia and gilt buttons. One prominently displays his peace medal, suggesting he is a man of social stature. The figures in the other portraits, both male and female, wear equivalent Kiowa finery: breastplates made of bone pipes, fine cloth blankets with beaded rosettes, and dresses of patterned trade cloth. Negotiating between two worlds, the artist may be playing with the idea of cultural equivalence, equating U.S. military and Kiowa formal dress. Below, the Kiowa equestrian also wears his sartorial best: the eagle-feather war bonnet is among the most impressive items of Plains ceremonial regalia.

BLACK HAWK'S VISION OF A THUNDER BEING. While captive Kiowa and Cheyenne artists at Fort Marion were chronicling new themes, graphic artists on the reservation also depicted both traditional and innovative imagery. In 1880, a Lakota holy man and artist named Black Hawk (c. 1831- c. 1890), who lived on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, made seventy-six drawings encompassing a wide view of the Lakota world. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he seems deliberately to have avoided drawing scenes of white men, though some of his drawings depict their imported goods, such as trade cloth and guns. Black Hawk's spiritual power came from his potent visionary experiences.



Figure 9.39: BLACK HAWK (LAKOTA), "Dream or vision of himself changed to a Destroyer and riding a Buffalo Eagle," 1880. Ink and pencil on paper, 9½ in (24.1 cm) high, 15½ in (39.3 cm) wide. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York.

In a picture captioned "Dream or vision of himself changed to a destroyer and riding a buffalo eagle" (fig. 9.39), Black Hawk sought to convey what was surely one of the most sacred moments of his life. His composition is based on the image of a horse and rider—a ubiquitous theme in Plains iconography. Yet the steed and rider are anything but ordinary. Their extremities have been transformed into eagle talons, and buffalo horns curve from their heads. The intensity of the rider's clenched teeth in his round head is enhanced by his mesmerizing yellow eyes. Both figures are covered with small dots, representing hail, and are connected by lines of energy radiating between the rider's talons and the animal's mouth. Horse and rider fly through the sky, encircled by a rainbow formed from the beast's multicolored tail.

While Black Hawk called this a "destroyer," it clearly represents a Thunder Being—a powerful supernatural creature said to appear to supplicants in vision quests. Depictions and descriptions of Thunder Beings often combine attributes of eagle, horse, and buffalo, all sacred animals. The rainbow, too, is not only an entrance to the spirit world, but a symbol of Thunder Beings. Various descriptions of Thunder Beings emphasize their powerful eyes. Another Lakota holy man, Black Elk, who saw these creatures in his own visions, commented that every time the beast snorted, "there was a flash of lightning and his eyes were bright as stars." When men performed public dances impersonating such figures, their black-horned head coverings had mirrors where the eyes should be, in order to flash and glitter in the same manner as these lightning-eyed spirit beings. The bringers of summer's powerful electrical storms, Thunder Beings are the sacred embodiment of thunder, lightning, wind, and hail.

18.2.1.2 The Noble Indian and the "Vanishing Race." Once Again

If Wohaw placed himself at the center of historical change in the decades surrounding the Centennial, eastern artists in these same years consigned Indians to noble defeat at the margins of history, reinforcing the widely held idea that they no longer possessed any

cultural existence. White artists memorialized a "dying" culture whose tragic fate was sealed by the inevitability of continental empire. In photography, painting, and popular imagery the idealized figure of the Native American consistently appeared in a posture of defeat. Measured against the standards of "civilization," Native cultures appeared maladapted, backward, disadvantaged by history itself.



Figure 9.40: JAMES EARL FRASER, *The End of the Trail*, c. 1894. Bronze, 44 in (111.7 cm) high. Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

THE END OF THE TRAIL. This sculpture by James Earl Fraser (1876- 1953) (fig. 9.40) was first modeled in 1894 and exhibited in a monumental version at the San Francisco Panama Pacific Exposition of 1915. Fraser's statue took its inspiration from the poet Marion Manville Pope: "The trail is lost, the path is hid and winds that blow from out the ages sweep me on to that chill borderland where Time's spent sands engulf lost peoples and lost trails." A mounted Plains Indian slumps over, the lines of his body mimicking those of his steed, whose bowed neck, closed eyes, tail between legs, and hooves meeting on a contracted point of land, all signify defeat. The downward-pointed spear suggests a cessation of hostilities, defeated manhood, and a draining of virile energies. Fraser's treatment of the conquered recalls the defeated barbarians subdued by the Roman empire. Raised in South Dakota, and having seen at firsthand the demoralizing effects of the reservation, Fraser sympathized with the Indians' plight.

THE DAWES ACT. In 1887, the federal government passed the Dawes Act, which subdivided communal reservation lands into individual allotments, enforcing an agricultural order on western Indians. Federal policy toward American Indians was directed at the systematic eradication of Native languages, dress, and ritual life- all those things that tied Native Americans to their own past, obstructing the process of willed assimilation that was the official intention of the government. "We must kill the Indian in order to save the man," as Richard Pratt, the jailor of the Fort Marion prisoner-artists, put it. Pratt went on to found the Carlisle School, the first in a network of "Indian schools" that endeavored to turn Indians into good citizens and workers.



Figure 9.41: HENRY FARNY, *The Song of the Talking Wire*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 22 1/16 x 40 in (56.1 x 101.6 cm). Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio. Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phelps Taft.

THE SONG OF THE TALKING WIRE. Contemporary audiences understood the defeat of the Indian as the inevitable triumph of a technologically and culturally superior nation over a backward race. The evidence was there in the establishment of a nationwide industrial system connecting space by railroad and telegraph. Henry Farny's (1847-1916) *The Song of the Talking Wire* of 1904 (fig. 9.41) examines the clash of cultures as an aging Indian brave, wrapped in a buffalo robe and cradling a gun in his arm, encounters a voiceless technology. Leaning against a telegraph pole, he strains to hear the mysterious codes transmitted along the lines—an image of two cultures unable to communicate. Pictured against a bleak wintry landscape, the old man gazes toward the viewer with a pained expression. To the left of the telegraph poles is a buffalo skull, a memento mori marking the demise of the animal on which Plains cultures depended for survival. Like the earlier expressions of the "vanishing American" theme, these later works mingle regret over the plight of Native people in an era of technological progress with a sense of fatalism regarding their inability to adapt to the direction of history.

Myths and Legends

The Past as Spectacle: Buffalo Bill Cody's "Wild West"

FROM 1883 TO 1916, William F. Cody ("Buffalo Bill") thrilled audiences throughout the United States and Europe with his "Wild West," a heart-pounding spectacle combining live animals and human performers who restaged the life and times of the Old West (fig. 9.42). Scholars such as Joy Kasson see in Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" the birth of mass entertainment and of a media culture that blurred the differences between history and spectacle, truth and fiction. Despite its claims to present the real history of the conquest and settlement of the frontier, the "Wild West" offered a fictional version of the past as it lived on in the popular imagination, conflating history with public myths about the progressive unfolding of American civilization across the continent. Later generations recoiled at the underlying violence that lay at the heart of the spectacle of Buffalo Bill. Yet this exhibition of manly prowess, adventure, and death-defying courage left its imprint on twentieth-century images of the frontier, from the movie Western to the "tall in the saddle" style of American diplomacy.

Buffalo Bill, however, saw the "Wild West" not as entertainment but as education for a public eager to know "how the West was won." In 1886, the "Wild West" began reenacting Custer's Last Stand by situating it within a historical context of preordained triumph. Year after year, as it toured throughout Europe and the United States, the "Wild West" dramatized, in the words of the cultural historian Richard Slotkin, "the principle that violence and savage war were the necessary instruments of American progress."¹¹

Blurring the line between history and myth even further, Indian warriors at the forefront of the Plains wars such as Sitting Bull were later recruited to be part of the "Wild West." While it is tempting to view this as an example of Native peoples being manipulated for economic gain, each Native participant made something different out of the experience. Some returned to reservation life with substantial amounts of cash for their families. Sitting Bull, shocked at the sight of homeless children begging in the heart of New York City, distributed most of his earnings to these children, as any honorable Lakota would do. The famous Lakota holy man Black Elk, who as a young man went to Europe in the 1880s as part of Buffalo Bill's entourage, revealed his hope of learning some secrets of the white man that would help his people.

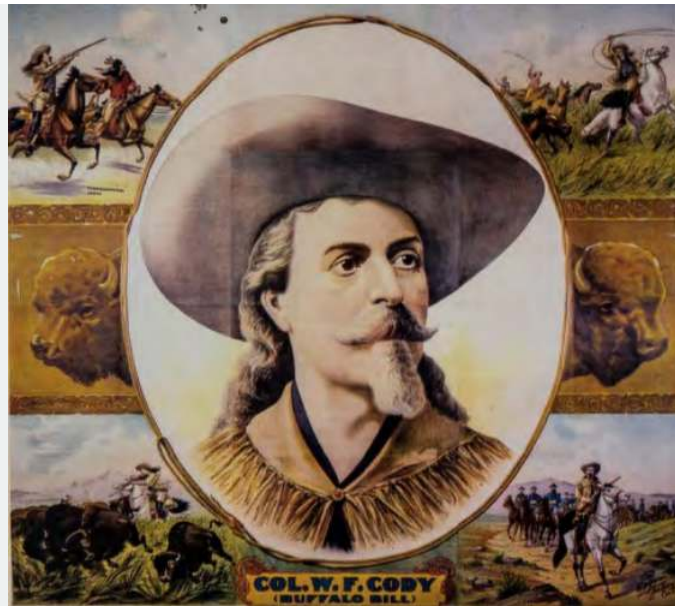


Figure 9.42: Buffalo Bill's Wild West, c. 1898. Lithographic 12-sheet poster. Circus World Museum of Baraboo, Wisconsin.

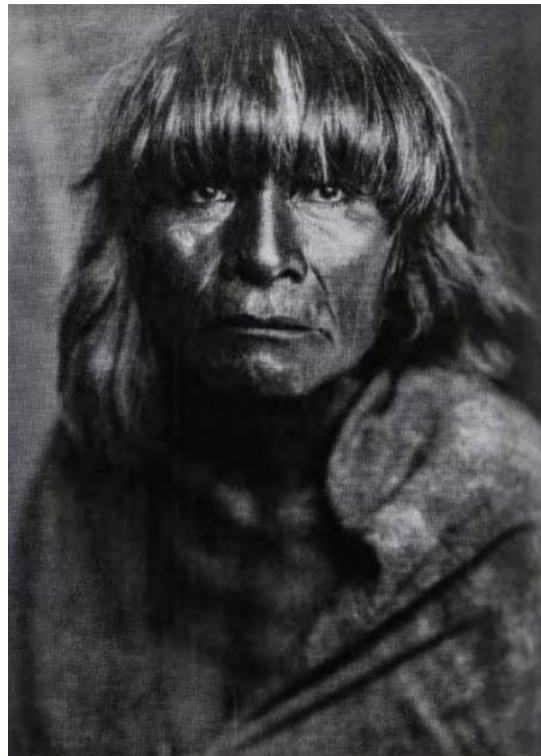


Figure 9.43: EDWARD CURTIS, Hopi Man from *The North American Indian*, vol 12, plate 420, 1907-30. Photo-engraving. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

THE NORTH AMERICAN IND/AN BY EDWARD CURTIS. Beginning in the Centennial years, the new technology of the camera was put to the service of documenting Indian culture. Over a quarter-century after the Centennial, the photographer Edward Curtis began a project that would eventually become his twenty-volume *The North American Indian*. Begun in 1907 and completed in 1930, nearly a century after Catlin, *The North American Indian* resembled the earlier artist's project in many respects. Compelled by a desire to preserve in photographs the threatened traditions, knowledge, and sacred rites of Native people throughout the West, Curtis devoted his life to completing this vast project, comprised of some twenty-two hundred photoengravings (photogravures) taken from eighty Indian nations (fig. 9.43). Earning the trust of sympathetic elders and medicine men through "weeks of patient endeavor," in his words, he also won the support of some of the wealthiest men in America, including]. P. Morgan.

The North American Indian surveyed Native peoples at a time when they were living on reservations and struggling to maintain their ceremonial life and art forms. In many cases- as for instance in his images of Plains war parties- Curtis asked his subjects to reenact traditional cultural practices. Like Catlin one hundred years earlier, Curtis wished to preserve the image of Native culture in a pristine condition, as he imagined it, prior to clocks, blue jeans, generators, and sewing machines. The velvety chiaroscuro of his portraits suggests a world already transformed into art. Curtis's work shared in the pictorialist aesthetics of his generation, aesthetics that distanced his subjects from the present. He saw his project as a form of what is called today "salvage anthropology" - involving the collection and cataloguing of detailed observations about everything from music, dance, and dress, to food preparation, language, religion, and burial customs-an archive of knowledge that framed the individual Indian subject.

From the beginning, Native people had viewed photography warily. Was the photographer robbing Native subjects of their inner lives by pinioning them to a photographic archive, or did the camera capture the fleeting spirit on film? The photographic image, associated with death and memorialization from the mid-nineteenth century on, helped entrench the idea that Native societies were threatened with extinction. On the other hand, photography also served Native cultures' desires for images of their traditions. Native Americans themselves used the camera for purposes of self-documentation. Each party to the photographic encounter played an active role.

In meticulously documenting reenactments of vanishing ways, Curtis furnished what proved to be a vital record, enriching cultural memory for later generations of Indians. George P. Horse Capture, for example, first came across his great-grandfather, a Gros Ventre tribal leader from Montana, in 1969, through a Curtis photograph he was shown in a historical archive. Seeing Curtis's photograph of the tribal elder launched his great-grandson on a journey into tribal history and identity.

"ALASKA VIEWS." Unlike Curtis, who staged idealized portrayals of the "vanishing" American Indian, some photographers matter-of-factly recorded the changing realities of life in turn-of-the-century Native America. Lloyd Winter and E. Percy Pond were commercial photographers who operated a studio in Juneau, Alaska, from 1893 to 1943. Both were from San Francisco, where Winter had studied art at the California School of Design. In Alaska they provided the burgeoning tourist trade with images of: Alaska Views. Choicest and largest collection of Views of Alaska Scenery, comprising illustrations of Indian Life, Totems, Glaciers, Seal Islands, Mines, Yukon, Sitka, Juneau, Wrangel, and other Points of Interest in Alaska," as they advertised in an Alaskan newspaper in 1894.



Figure 9.44: LLOYD WINTER & E. PERCY POND, Totem poles, Chief Shake's House, Fort Wrangell, Alaska, c. 1900. Photograph. Alaska Historical Society, Juneau.

Winter and Pond used dry glass-plate negatives, a technological improvement over the previous generation's wet-plate negatives, which had to be developed immediately after exposure. This made working in remote areas an easier proposition. In bracing contrast to Curtis's romanticism, Winter and Pond documented the bustling commercialism and the hybrid nature of turn-of-the-century Alaskan villages. In their work, ceremonial regalia exists comfortably alongside tailored shirts and suspenders (see fig. 7.22, Interior of Whale House of Raven Clan), and Tlingit mortuary poles stand proudly in front of a chiefs modern frame house with glass windows (fig. 9.44).

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18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity

Introduction

As a small group, watch the brief (4 min.) video from the *Smithsonian Magazine* called "[Edward Curtis: Photographing the American Indian](#)." Pay particular attention to the alterations that the video shows Curtis made between generating some of the photographic negatives and developing the corresponding positive prints, especially in the context of what you learned in the longer (25 min.) video you watched for homework about "[How Photographs Can Tell Lies](#)."



Left: Edward S. Curtis, *Girl and Jar--San Ildefonso*, c. 1927. Published in Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian* (1907-30) volume 17, plate 590.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Edward S. Curtis Collection, [LC-USZ62-117709] [Public Domain](#).

Right: Edward S. Curtis, *Flint Smoker's Daughter [Piegan Woman]*, c. 1910. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Edward S. Curtis Collection, [LC-USZ62-112265] [Public Domain](#).

Examining the Evidence and Imagining Backwards from Product to Process

In a small group, pick **one** of the photographs on this page or one of the photographs shown in the [Smithsonian video](#), and consider the kinds of communication between photographer and sitter that would have likely occurred to produce *this specific* photograph. Refer to what you see (**visual evidence**) and what you know about the **historical context** in which the photo was taken to support each of your answers.

- Compile a list of *at least 4* choices made by Curtis as the photographer when creating the portrait, beyond what the video narration shared. Consider the space in which the photograph is taken along with details about who the person is and how they are depicted here.
- In comparison, what are *at least 2* choices you think were made by the sitter (subject) of the portrait? What would have been within their control, and what went beyond that?
- Finally, how would you describe the goal of these portraits? Who were these portraits for? What evidence (visual evidence you see, or evidence from the historical context you investigate) supports that assertion?
 - And how does that compare to your own personal experiences sitting for a photographic portrait (even school photos count!)? What do those similarities and differences reveal about power dynamics in each situation?

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18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

Assessment

Explore photographic portraits and generate an annotated version of a personal photograph, according to the instructor's directions and rubric, if applicable.

- Step One: Look and Think
 - Explore contemporary Indigenous artists Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke (Crow)) (<https://smarthistory.org/wendy-red-star-1880-crow-peace-delegation/>) and Will Wilson's (Diné (Citizen of the Navajo Nation)) (<https://smarthistory.org/will-wilson-critical-indigenous-photographic-exchange/>) artistic responses to the pictorial legacy left by Anglo-American artists in the late 19th century (1800s) working on salvage anthropological projects, such as Edward Curtis.
 - Consider what message or mood was conveyed to you in Curtis' original photo and what message or mood was conveyed in these contemporary artists' responses.
- Step Two: Create
 - Make a copy of a photograph that pertains to you or your family. Add annotations—in any style you want—to the copy, like Wendy Red Star does in the work *1880 Crow Peace Delegation*, to provide further insight into the subject(s) and event(s) being depicted.
 - Add a written description of the choices you made and what additional information or insight you hoped to convey through your additions.

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19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

Your Readings

There are three readings assigned within this chapter--the first two introduce you to specific examples of mural projects in urban environments, and the third will delve into best practices related to public art.

Please also explore the [Public Art Archive](#)

1. [Gallery of Pilsen Murals, Chicago](#)
2. Judy Baca, [The Great Wall of Los Angeles](#)
3. [National Assembly of State Art Agencies: Best Practices](#)

- As you consider how individuals and groups have communicated messages through art in public spaces, also ponder how a message that you care about could be conveyed through visual elements.

Keep these techniques and messages in mind as you approach class activities and assignments for this chapter.

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19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity

Introduction

Today's discussion is centered around reflecting on our experiences noticing and responding to art in public as well as private spaces and sharing specific examples that are prominent for each of us.

Reflection

On the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#) website, it lists “Ten Great Reasons to Support Public Art.”

Which *two* of those ten reasons are most compelling to you?

Based on your various experiences up to this point in your life, how would you characterize your interactions with art in public spaces (outdoors or somewhere anyone can access with no ticket of admission or payment required) compared to in private spaces (like a museum or other cultural institution)?

Discussion

Have a conversation with classmates (in groups to be assigned by the instructor) sharing some of the thoughts or feelings you remember having while looking at art in museum spaces (if you have been inside them) and how you have felt when seeing artwork in outdoor, public spaces.

- When you think about public artwork, is there a particular artwork (sculpture, mural, etc.) that comes to mind? Whether it's one you see on your daily commute or whether it's one you've only seen reproductions of, do your best to **sketch it** out based on your memory images of it (all levels of artistic ability are valued—just do your best!)
- Then, when you complete your sketch, **share and describe** to your classmates the artwork that came to mind for you along with the memorable features of it that you attempted to capture in your drawing.
- **After** you complete the drawing and that initial conversation with your group members, then you may share a photograph of the actual public artwork if you can find one.
- Once everyone in the group has had a turn describing the visual aspects of the artwork they selected and sketched, continue by discussing whether there are particular emotions or thoughts that seeing the public artwork tends to elicit from you.



Ten Great Reasons to Support Public Art

1. **It's public!** Everyone has access to public art. It's directly in the public sphere and not confined to galleries or museums.
2. Public art **enriches physical environments**, bringing streetscapes, plazas, government buildings and schools to life.
3. Public art is a great tool for **civic engagement**, building social capital and encouraging civil discourse.
4. Public art installations provide professional **opportunities for artists** and cultivate an environment in which the creative class thrives.
5. It **boosts local economies**. Businesses supply materials and labor; restaurants, hotels and transportation companies benefit from a site that attracts visitors.
6. Public art is an investment in place making—measured by livability and quality of life—that also engenders **community pride**.
7. Through documentation and celebration, public art connects citizens to their neighbors and their **shared history**, making cultural heritage a tangible community asset.
8. Public art enlivens places where people work, which can improve employee **morale, productivity and respect**.
9. Public art creates **supportive learning environments**. It opens eyes—and minds! It attracts students to environments conducive to both learning and fun.
10. Public art can raise **public awareness** about important community issues, such as environmental stewardship and respect for diversity.

Want more? See NASAA's [Percent for Art Policy Brief](#).

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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David Franklin, Cultural House of Cards, 2014. Washington State Arts Commission in partnership with Department of Social & Health Services. Photo courtesy of the artist.



James Seiborn, Zacti, 2004. Iowa Art in State Buildings Program. Photo courtesy of Iowa Arts Council and University of Iowa.



Cynthia Patterson and Hank Sawe, Mark's Minarets, 1997. University of New Mexico, Taos. Photo courtesy of New Mexico Arts.

"Public Art - Sculpture of Worker in Manhole - Omsk - Russia"

by [Adam Jones, Ph.D. - Global Photo Archive](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

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19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

Assessment

Select one of the following two options, and generate a tour guide or design a model with accompanying artist's statement, according to the instructor's directions and rubric, if applicable.

• Option 1

- Step One: Explore and Document
 - Explore your neighborhood or another of your choice. Find two examples of public art (murals, sculpture, etc.). Take photos.
 - Describe how the subject matter (content) and formal elements (colors, textures, shapes, etc.) of each artwork function together to convey a message or mood to viewers.
- Step Two: Reflect
 - Do either of the artworks seem to engage with themes relevant to that specific neighborhood space or community, or would either of them potentially fit just as well in another neighborhood context?
- Step Three: Write and Create
 - Compile your observations and analyses with your photos in order to generate a brief tour guide pamphlet that will introduce others to the artworks you chose.

"People viewing distorted image reflection, straight surreal shot, people, Cloud Gate, The Bean, a public sculpture by Indian-born British artist Sir Anish Kapoor, Plaza at Millennium Park, Loop community area, Chicago, Illinois, USA" by Wonderlane is marked with CC0 1.0.

OR

• Option 2

- Step One: Ponder and Design
 - Design a small-scale model of a public artwork that you would advocate for creating. Make it clear what materials would be used, what kind of form it would have, what subject matter (whether it's representational or abstract) it would depict, and where you think the best place for it to be located would be.
- Step Two: Write and Explain
 - Provide a title, and write two to three paragraphs (of 5-7 complete sentences each) to function as an artist's statement explaining the choices you made in designing the artwork and selecting its placement. Elaborate on whether viewers are primarily meant to appreciate its beauty, recognize a message about a cause that is important to you, etc.



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20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

Your Readings

The first two readings introduce you to the artistic style of Pop Art.

- "Popular, Transient, Expendable: Print Culture and Propaganda in the 20th Century" from *SmartHistory* and by Dr. Allison Young
- "[Think You Know Pop Art?](#)" from the TATE Museum

After gaining that overview on the artistic style, you will get to explore the influence Pop Art has had on fashion over the decades and consider the ways in which it still shows up today.

- "[How Andy Warhol Influenced the Fashion Industry](#)" from L'Officiel and by Lauren Gruber

Keep these in mind as you approach class activities and assignments for this chapter.

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20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

Introduction

Today's discussion is centered around considering how the more overt references to consumer culture in fashion that is inspired by Pop Art compares to other ways those consumerist values infuse other styles or trends in fashion that are familiar to students. From obvious to subtle, students will be asked to converse (collegially and respectfully) about a range of fashion statements "say" about the industry and commerce aspects of dressing ourselves.

"Marilyns pop art" by [MEDIODESCOCIDO](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Personal Reflection

Clothes cost money: money to make and distribute, money to purchase, money to launder or repair, etc.

But some clothes are designed with an apparent aim to *emphasize* the connection between the garment or the wearer and money while other clothes are designed to avoid being implicated, or at least to suggest *less* of a connection, with their role and value in commerce.

Consider the ways in which a garment or style may make a statement about the cost of the clothes being worn (this may be a statement about the *high* cost, or a statement about a *low* cost, or something in between) or about the financial status of the wearer of those clothes.

How and to what degree are various garments or styles making clear to wearers (as well as others who see and interact with that wearer) the connection between fashion and consumerist culture?

Consider, for example, how a style of your choice (such as "quiet luxury/stealth wealth" or "thriftcore" or "old money" or "minimalism" or "maximalism") is similar to and different from the Pop Art-inspired fashion you have been reading about in terms of what each says about money and the wearer's involvement in a consumerist landscape.

Group Dialogue

Each group member is encouraged to pick an influencer from a social media platform of their choice or a celebrity and analyze some of the style choices being presented there. The influencer or celebrity does not have to focus on style explicitly in order for their style to be analyzed.

Your focus should not be on whether or not you personally like or don't like the person or their style, but instead on how fashion as a commodity is acknowledged or hidden by certain garments or overall styling approaches.

Be prepared to present your analysis to your group members, keeping in mind that many people may have strong beliefs about fashion that may contrast with other group members' beliefs.

This activity is not an opportunity to denigrate any particular person or style, but to consider thoughtfully the range of ways in which choices about fashion may gesture to consumer culture and commercial industry. It might be most illuminating to honestly analyze one's *own* style choices and bring some subconscious values to the surface.

These are some questions you and your group members may consider:

- How are the influencer's or celebrity's style choices reflecting economic values? Which economic implications are being communicated?
- Which styles--or which elements of certain styles--seem designed to assert the individuality of the wearer?
- Which styles--or which elements of certain styles--seem designed to emphasize the wearer's recognition and display of cultural and aesthetic norms?
- Which styles--or which elements of certain styles--acknowledge overtly the role of money in the acquisition and wearing of these garments?
- Which styles--or which elements of certain styles--are subtle about the role money plays in the acquisition and wearing of these garments?



- Which styles--or which elements of certain styles--suggest an exemption or "opting out" position regarding one's participation in the economic dynamics of fashion consumption?

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20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

Assessment

- Step One: Select inspiration
 - Consider a variety of logos tied to different companies
 - Select one for its shape, colors, symbolism, or whatever other criteria are important to you.
- Step Two: Design
 - Design a garment (the type of garment is up to you: shirt, dress, socks, hat, etc.) inspired by the logo or that incorporates this logo. Design something you think could be fashionable (according to your own sense of what 'fashionable' means); you are not designing an employee uniform.
 - You may sketch by hand or digitally; you may use a stencil or template for the shape of the garment or design the shape of yours completely from scratch.

"Banana purse and Warhol dress..." by [ultrakickgirl](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

- Step Three: Think through your decisions
 - What individuals or groups of people do you envision as potential customers for this garment?
 - Why did you choose this particular logo or emblem as your inspiration?
 - Why did you choose to incorporate it into this particular type of garment?
 - Were you aiming to create a garment that matched the vibe of the original logo or that created tension with that original?
 - Why did you make the choices you did about how to incorporate the logo?
 - Did you keep it the same colors or modify the color palette?
 - Did you keep the logo intact or modify it some way? (If you made a modification, will its original reference still be discernible to viewers?)
 - What scale did you pick for the logo, and did you include the logo just once or multiple times?
 - Where on the garment did you place the logo or the design elements inspired by that logo?
 - What else did you do and why?
- Step Four: Explain
 - Write two paragraphs (of 5-7 sentences each) to explain your choices and what you think the impact of those choices on the wearer and other viewers' responses is likely to be.
 - Address at least four of the questions listed in step 3, but feel free to elaborate beyond the suggestions offered here.



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17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity

Critical Analysis

1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity
2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity
2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment
4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the 'Always/Already' of Ideology
4.1: "Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" | Cassandra Stover
4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity
4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment
6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
6.1: "Introduction to SIFT" | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
6.3: Reading the News - Assessment
7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language
7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman
7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment
8: Reading Television - The Cultural Shifts of Streaming Media
8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno
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8.3: Reading Television - Assessment
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12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity
12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment
13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological
13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment
16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment
17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
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17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment
19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment

19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment
20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

critical media strategies

1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
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9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
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13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

critical media studies

- 3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity
- 3.3: Semiotics - Assessment
- 5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
- 11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
- 11.1: "Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism
- 14.1: "Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders" | Kimberly McNair
- 14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity
- 14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment
- 15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
- 15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials
- 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

critical perspective

- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
- 2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
- 2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment
- 7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

critical theory

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critical thinking

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- 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment
- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
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- 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment
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- 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

cultural analysis

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- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
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- 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity

cultural studies

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- 15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
- 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

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- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

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Daniel Burnham

- 16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
- 16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
- 16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction
- 16.2.2: The White City and Fairgrounds
- 16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
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- 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

Dawes Act

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

digital activism

- 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
- 10: Reading the Internet - Coded Inequalities and Algorithmic Bias
- 10.1: “The Age of Algorithms” | Butler, Sargent, and Smith
- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
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digital culture

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digital justice

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digital literacy

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digital media

- 12.1: “Why’s Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media” | Bhandari and Bimo

digital rights

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- 11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity
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- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
- 10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment

Diné (Navajo)

- 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

Disney

- 4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the ‘Always/Already’ of Ideology
- 4.1: “Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess” | Cassandra Stover
- 4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity
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E

Edward S. Curtis

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
- 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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- 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
- 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

emblems

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
- 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

environment

- 11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
- 11.1: “Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study” | J. F. Lindsay
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- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

Erica McCormack

- 16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
- 16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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- 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment
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- 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment
- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
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- 19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment
- 20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
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- 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

eugenics

17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition

17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

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exoticism

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16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction

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16.2.3: The Midway

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facial recognition

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fact checking

6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies

6.1: "Introduction to SIFT" | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield

fake news

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fashion

20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume

20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

fashion design

20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume

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fashion industry

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20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

feminism

4.1: "Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" | Cassandra Stover

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5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

Ferris wheel

16.2.3: The Midway

film

7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language

7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman

7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity

7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

film analysis

3: Reading Culture - Semiotics and the Fundamentals of Meaning-Making

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7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

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3: Reading Culture - Semiotics and the Fundamentals of Meaning-Making

3.1: "Semiotics and Advertising - Hypertext Essay" | Tom Streeter

3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity

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15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

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19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity

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20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

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18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

Four Horns

18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

Francis Galton

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Frederick Douglass

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16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

G

Gilded Age

16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction
16.2.2: The White City and Fairgrounds
16.2.3: The Midway
16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

graffiti

19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

graphic art

19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

H

Henry Farny

18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

high art

20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

HUM 105

1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity
2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity
2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment
3: Reading Culture - Semiotics and the Fundamentals of Meaning-Making
3.1: "Semiotics and Advertising - Hypertext Essay" | Tom Streeter
3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity
3.3: Semiotics - Assessment
4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the 'Always/Already' of Ideology
4.1: "Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" | Cassandra Stover
4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity
4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment
5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment
6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
6.1: "Introduction to SIFT" | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
6.3: Reading the News - Assessment
7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language
7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman
7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment
8: Reading Television - The Cultural Shifts of Streaming Media
8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno
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8.3: Reading Television - Assessment
9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes
9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
10: Reading the Internet - Coded Inequalities and Algorithmic Bias
10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment
11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
11.1: "Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
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12.1: "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Bhandari and Bimo
12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity
12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment
13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological
13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment
14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism
14.1: "Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders" | Kimberly McNair
14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity
14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment
15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials
15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

HUM 107

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16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment
17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment
18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical

Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment
19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment
20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

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19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

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13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

Humanities 107

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20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

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Ida B. Wells

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ideology

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 - 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
 - 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

imperialism

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 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

inclusivity

- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity

Indian Removal Act

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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Indian reservation

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 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

Indigenous genocide

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Indigenous Studies

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
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 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

inequality

- 10: Reading the Internet - Coded Inequalities and Algorithmic Bias
 - 10.1: "The Age of Algorithms" | Butler, Sargent, and Smith
 - 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
 - 10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment

influencer

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

information

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies

informed citizen

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies

innovation

- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
 - 2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
 - 2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity
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Instagram

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 - 12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment

interpretation

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
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intersectionality

- 13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
 - 13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
 - 13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
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J

Jack Lindsay

- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
- 7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
- 7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment
- 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
- 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
- 10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment

James Earl Fraser

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

journalism

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
 - 6.1: "Introduction to SIFT" | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield

- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
- 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

journalistic activism

- 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

Judy Baca

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity

K

Kiowa

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

L

labor

- 11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
 - 11.1: "Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
 - 11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity
 - 11.3: Digital Costs - Assessment

Lakota

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

Laura Mulvey

- 5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
 - 5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
 - 5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

ledger drawing

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

Lindsay

- 1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
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- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
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Little Bighorn

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
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- 20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
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Los Angeles

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
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- 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity

luxury

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

M

male gaze

- 5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
- 5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
- 5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

mantra

- 17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

Marilyn Monroe

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

mass media

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- 9.1: "'OK Boomer' - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building" | Anderson and Keehn
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- 13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

master's tools

- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology

matrix of domination

- 13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological
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- 13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

maximalism

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

media

- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
- 2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
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- 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

media convergence

- 9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes
- 9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn
- 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
- 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
- 10: Reading the Internet - Coded Inequalities and Algorithmic Bias
- 10.1: “The Age of Algorithms” | Butler, Sargent, and Smith
- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
- 10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment

media culture

- 3: Reading Culture - Semiotics and the Fundamentals of Meaning-Making
- 3.1: “Semiotics and Advertising - Hypertext Essay” | Tom Streeter
- 3.2: Semiotics - Classroom Activity
- 3.3: Semiotics - Assessment
- 5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
- 5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
- 5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment
- 11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
- 11.1: “Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study” | J. F. Lindsay
- 11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity
- 11.3: Digital Costs - Assessment
- 14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism
- 14.1: “Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders” | Kimberly McNair
- 14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity
- 14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment

media literacy

- 1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity
- 2: Reading Culture - Critical Perspectives on Technology
- 2.1: "Technology 101- What Do We Need To Know About The Future We're Creating?" | Howard Rheingold
- 2.2: Thinking Technology - Classroom Activity
- 2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment
- 4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the ‘Always/Already’ of Ideology
- 4.1: “Damsels and Heroines - The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess” | Cassandra Stover
- 4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity
- 4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment
- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
- 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
- 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment
- 7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language
- 7.1: “How To Watch A Movie” | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman
- 7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
- 7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment
- 8: Reading Television - The Cultural Shifts of Streaming Media
- 8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno
- 8.3: Reading Television - Assessment
- 9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes
- 9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn
- 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
- 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
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- 10.2: Coded Inequalities - Classroom Activity
- 10.3: Coded Inequalities - Assessment
- 12: Reading Social Media - TikTok, Instagram, and the Making of You
- 12.1: "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Bhandari and Bimo
- 12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity
- 12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment
- 13: Reading Algorithms - Parrot of the Ideological
- 13.1: “Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination” | Sasha Costanza-Chock
- 13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
- 13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

media power

- 1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
- 4.2: Reading Disney - Classroom Activity

Media Representation

- 15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
- 15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials
- 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

media studies

- 1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
- 1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
- 1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity
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- 4.3: Reading Disney - Assessment
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- 5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment
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- 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
- 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment
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- 7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
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- 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment
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- 14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment
- 15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
- 15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials
- 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
- 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

meme analysis

- 9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes
 - 9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn
 - 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
 - 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment

meme communication

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 - 9.1: “‘OK Boomer’ - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building” | Anderson and Keehn
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 - 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment

memes

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 - 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
 - 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment

Michael Caulfield

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
 - 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield

midway plaisance

- 16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
 - 16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 16.2.3: The Midway
 - 16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
 - 16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
 - 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

minimalism

- 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

movies

- 7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language
 - 7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman
 - 7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
 - 7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

moving image

- 7: Reading the Movies - An Introduction to Cinematic Language
 - 7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman
 - 7.2: Reading the Movies - Classroom Activity
 - 7.3: Reading the Movies - Assessment

mugshot

- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
 - 17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
 - 17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

multimedia

- 7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman

mural

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
 - 19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

mural program

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
 - 19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

Muscogee (Creek)

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos

Museum Studies

- 16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
 - 16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction
 - 16.2.2: The White City and Fairgrounds
 - 16.2.3: The Midway
 - 16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
 - 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment

N

neighborhood

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
 - 19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

neoliberalism

- 12.1: "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media" | Bhandari and Bimo
- 12.2: Reading Social Media - Classroom Activity
- 12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment

Netflix

- 8: Reading Television - The Cultural Shifts of Streaming Media
 - 8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno
 - 8.2: Reading Television - Classroom Activity
 - 8.3: Reading Television - Assessment

news

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
 - 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
 - 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity
 - 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

news indsutry

- 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

news industry

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
 - 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
 - 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity

news practices

- 6: Reading the News - Critical Media Strategies
 - 6.1: “Introduction to SIFT” | Check, Please! | Michael Caulfield
 - 6.3: Reading the News - Assessment

news pratices

- 6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity

Noble Indian

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity

O

octavia butler

- 2.3: Thinking Technology - Assessment

online activism

- 14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism
 - 14.1: “Beyond Hashtags - Black Twitter and Building Solidarity Across Borders” | Kimberly McNair
 - 14.2: Digital Activism - Classroom Activity
 - 14.3: Digital Activism - Assessment

oppositional gaze

- 5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
 - 5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
 - 5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
 - 5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

orientalism

- 16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
 - 16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction
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 - 16.2.3: The Midway
 - 16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
 - 16.3: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Classroom Activity
 - 16.4: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Assessment
- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
 - 17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

P

patronage

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

philosophy

- 1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
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 - 13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
 - 13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
 - 13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

philosophy

- 12.3: Reading Social Media - Assessment

photography

- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
 - 17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
 - 17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment
- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

phrenology

- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
 - 17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
 - 17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

physiognomy

- 17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
 - 17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
 - 17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

Pilsen

- 19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
 - 19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity

Plains Indian

- 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides

political communication

- 9: Reading the Internet - The Political Power of Memes
 - 9.1: "'OK Boomer' - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building" | Anderson and Keehn
 - 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
 - 9.3: Power of Memes - Assessment

political economy

- 11: Reading the Internet - The (Hidden) Costs of the Digital
 - 11.1: "Digital Costs - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
 - 11.2: Digital Costs - Classroom Activity
 - 11.3: Digital Costs - Assessment

political messaging

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 - 9.1: "'OK Boomer' - Internet Memes as Consciousness Building" | Anderson and Keehn
 - 9.2: Power of Memes - Classroom Activity
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political protest

- 14: Reading Culture - Digital Activism

political theory

- 1: Reading Culture - A Primer on Power and Ideology
 - 1.1: "Power and Ideology - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
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 - 13.1: "Design Justice, A.I., and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" | Sasha Costanza-Chock
 - 13.2: Reading Algorithms - Classroom Activity
 - 13.3: Reading Algorithms - Assessment

Pop Art

- 20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
 - 20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
 - 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

pop culture

- 1.2: Power and Ideology - Classroom Activity
- 4: Reading Culture - Children's Media and the 'Always/Already' of Ideology
 - 20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
 - 20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
 - 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

popular culture

- 5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
 - 20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
 - 20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
 - 20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

portrait

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
 - 18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

portraiture

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
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 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

power

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 - 3.3: Semiotics - Assessment
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 - 15: Reading the Environment - Media Representation and Climate Change
 - 15.1: Media and Climate - Reading Materials
 - 15.2: Media and Climate - Classroom Activity
 - 15.3: Media and Climate - Assessment

power differential

- 18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
 - 18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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 - 18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
 - 18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

power dynamics

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18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

propaganda

20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

pseudoscience

17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

public art

19: Reading Public Art - Inscribing Our Environment
19.2: Inscribing Our Environment - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
19.3: Inscribing Our Environment - Classroom Activity
19.4: Inscribing Our Environment - Assessment

Q

queer reading

5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

queer theory

5: Reading Culture - Oppositional Viewership and You
5.1: "Oppositional Viewership - An Introduction to Study" | J. F. Lindsay
5.2: Oppositional Viewership - Classroom Activity
5.3: Oppositional Viewership - Assessment

quiet luxury

20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity

R

racial bias

6.2: Reading the News - Classroom Activity

racial profiling

17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

racial stereotypes

17: Reading Photographs - A Close Look at Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition
17.2: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
17.3: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Classroom Activity
17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment
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18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

racism

16: Reading Spectacle - A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair
16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
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16.2.3: The Midway
16.2.4: "Early Chicago - The 1893 World's Fair" (readings and videos from WTTW Chicago)
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18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

racist caricature

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16.2: A Close Look at the 1893 World's Fair - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
16.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition - Introduction
16.2.3: The Midway
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17.4: Photographic Origins of Mugshots and Facial Recognition - Assessment

Ramon Lobato

8.1: "Widening landscapes of TV storytelling in the digital media environment of the 21st century" | Milly Buonanno

Reservation

18: Reading Photographs - Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography
18.2: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
18.2.1: The Clash of Cultures, From Both Sides
18.3: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Classroom Activity
18.4: Truth, Lies, and Power Dynamics in Historical Photography - Assessment

Roy Lichtenstein

20: Reading Pop Art in Fashion - Commerce, Consumption, and Costume
20.2: Pop Art in Fashion - Introduction to Chapter Readings and Videos
20.3: Pop Art in Fashion - Classroom Activity
20.4: Pop Art in Fashion - Assessment

Russell Sharman

7.1: "How To Watch A Movie" | Moving Pictures | Russell Sharman

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