

- I will be available for final questions/concerns

M !4

- Revision Project Due in my office by noon

FINAL PAPER PROMPTS

Unit One Final Paper

John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing*, states: “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe...we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (p. 97-98).

Berger also states:

What we make of that painted moment when it is before our eyes depends upon what we expect of art, and that in turn depends today upon how we have already experienced the meaning of paintings through reproductions. (p.116)

Berger describes original paintings as capable of ‘speaking’ if one approaches them properly, if one learns to “ask the right questions” about the people and objects and their relationship to the painter *and the viewer*. What paintings might be made to say depends upon the viewer’s expectations of artwork, his or her ‘situated-ness,’ and what he or she knows and believes.

For this assignment, begin to work against the silence and mystification Berger describes. ***Explore his theories, including his belief that what we see is affected by what we know and believe.***

- Find an image that is coherent with the images Berger uses: a classical, ‘old-master’ painting, but one you are unfamiliar with. With your chosen image, begin the process of interrogation. Explore the assumptions you make *initially* when viewing the piece, your own reaction and response to the artwork.
- Do a small amount of research on the painting you have chosen. Discover, to the best of your ability, the artists intentions and the meaning he or she wanted assigned to the piece. Learn more about the artist themselves, and how their own story may have influenced their artwork. You will only need to cite two sources for this essay, so be sure to choose the most reputable and exhaustive resources available.
- Articulate your experience with the image. How did the context of the reproduction (or the fractured nature of the reproduction) alter the meaning you formed? How might your own experience or beliefs shape the manner in which you perceive the image? How did your research alter or not alter your relationship to the composition? Think about everything we have discussed in class, and struggle to grapple with some of the larger concepts we’ve explored. You must use your interaction with your chosen

image as a lens to examine Berger's essay, and a means to explore, challenge and/or confirm what *you* take to be Berger's expectations.

Important Dates

September 4: Have the image you plan to use chosen and printed.

September 9: Bring to class the outline of your paper

September 11: Bring to class the rough draft of your paper

September 18: Final paper due by midnight on Blackboard Digital Dropbox

Unit Two Final Essay Prompt

In "Beauty (Re)discovers the Male Body," Susan Bordo writes:

"Think of [advertisements for men] as advertisement[s] of what it means to be a man." And, in regards to women, "it's the "business" of all of us to be beautiful."

Bordo also mentions John Berger's theory that "men act, women appear," and in her discussion of Sartre, she addresses the eye of the beholder.

It seems both Berger and Bordo are concerned with how we see and read images; both essays are written to teach readers how and why they should pay a different kind of attention to the images around them.

For this assignment, use Bordo's work to reconsider Berger's. Write an essay in which you consider the two chapters as examples of an ongoing project. Berger's essay precedes Bordo's by about a quarter of a century. If you look closely at one or two of their examples, and if you look at the larger concerns of their arguments, are they saying the same things? If so, how? And why is such work still necessary? If not, how do their projects differ?

Justify your ideas regarding the ways in which Bordo and Berger either agree or contradict one another by using the context of *your own experiences* with images of beauty presented culturally (through advertisements, films, etc.). Use your personal experiences to illustrate either: 1.) the ways in which Bordo has *developed* concepts presented by Berger, or 2.) the ways Bordo *challenges* Berger's claims. Your own experiences should provide the evidence for your argument, and your analysis should demonstrate the way in which your experience *proves* your claim.

This paper is similar to our first one: it is a hybrid of the academic and the personal, and although it is acceptable to incorporate a first-person voice and experience, your work must be anchored in the academic essays we have read. The challenge here is to improve upon your critical writing, but also paramount is using Bordo as a lens through which to re-examine Berger: I am asking you to build upon the concepts we discussed in Unit one, using Bordo to more fully explore the ideas of perception and observation.

Unit Three Final Prompt

The Connections:

Individual perceptive power:

In our first essay, John Berger stated that our individual perception is based upon what we know and believe, and his essay centers on the eye of the beholder and *power: the power* of the solitary viewer, and the *potential power* of images (p.101) on us: we choose to look, and to engage in the “languages of images,” which, if “used differently, would confer a new kind of power.” (p.118)

The power of the social gaze:

In our second essay, Susan Bordo complicated Berger’s claim, arguing that what we know and believe is influenced by what we see, and that individual perception is shaped by the *power* of social and cultural boundaries and histories, and that power hierarchies are inscribed in the images we see (p. 145--also think of the passive/active discussion, on page 149).

The power of disciplinary observation, or surveillance:

In our final essay, Foucault writes about the disciplinary power to observe, and that “visibility is a trap.” He states that “he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power...he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”

Your Task:

Foucault creates arguments about power and visual perception (or, ‘the gaze’), and the methods and goals of power. As you read through his essay, mark passages wherein Foucault presents and explains perceptive power---where it comes from, who owns it, how it works, etc.

Write an essay in which you explore the personal position you have chosen (the subject position of a skater, the career position of a nurse, or, more generally, the institutional position of daycare centers, etc.) Use this personal topic to present and explain the theories of perceptive power discussed by Foucault. *Use secondary sources to strengthen the connections you are making between your topic and the essay.* You may be as creative or unique as you like: the goal of this paper is to explore the intersections between your topic and the essay, and the ways in which they interact, using research to build upon their common concerns.

Revision Project

Paper Four is a Revision Paper, meant as an opportunity for you to revisit an earlier claim, and re-craft an earlier written text.

For this assignment, you have two options:

Option A: If you received a grade of C or below on any paper, you may revise this paper in accordance to the comments I made on your final draft, using what you have learned over the course of the semester regarding: textual evidence, central claims, sub claims, organization, structure, etc. to fully finesse your text. The completed revision should demonstrate substantial changes to the text, and evidence a comprehensive re-working of both the ideas and execution of the paper.

Option B: In class, we have discussed ways in which Paolo Freire's essay intersects with ideas presented by Foucault. We have discussed the textual evidence in Freire's essay that might influence the way in which you perceive paper Three. For Option B, you may revise Paper Three to incorporate ideas presented by Freire as further textual evidence to support the concerns of your paper. How do Freire's ideas bolster, complicate, or otherwise add to the concepts you presented in paper Three? The completed revision should demonstrate significant efforts to fully integrate Freire's text into your own written work, creating cohesion between this new evidence and the larger concerns of the piece.

This Revision Project should be viewed as a final opportunity to focus on your own writing: you should work to strengthen claims, add additional textual evidence, and provide more detailed critical analysis.

Goals:

- To strengthen your abilities in using secondary sources: to more fully incorporate textual evidence, and to better understand the relationship between your own claim and the evidence used to support and strengthen it.
- To allow you the opportunity to apply the skills we have learned this semester to a familiar piece: to give you the chance to examine and improve the claims, organization, and structure of an earlier text.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL USED: HANDOUTS, ETC

Mystification in Berger

Berger says, "Mystification is the process of explaining away what might otherwise be evident" (103). How does this happen with art? In what ways is art or even life more generally 'explained away' or presented with the intention of mystifying the viewer? Why does Berger think mystification distracts us from the "only confrontations that matter" (102)? What are these confrontations, why do they matter? Think **CRITICALLY** about this concept, and think about its application to your **OWN** life: sure, corporations mystify us, and we are at least partially aware of this, but who **ELSE** might be guilty of this action?