

Essay 4: A Cultural Critique

Write a one- to two-page (250-600 words) essay in classic style that analyzes and comments on a specific feature of modern culture, both describing it in detail and presenting its significance to your reader.

Focus on a concrete, recognizable object or phenomenon, not on some broad historical or political trend. Look closely at your object or phenomenon: describe it, describe who uses it, account for its popularity, and explain the values or beliefs it embeds or conveys. You will choose your own topic for the essay, but you must clear your choice with me first.

Cultural analysis depends on closely observed details and on original insights. Your essay should help your reader to understand your object or phenomenon in a deeper and richer way.

Your analysis should present both your own observations and library research. The essay must include at least FOUR sources documented in proper MLA format, with in-text, parenthetical references and a list of Works Cited. At least ONE of your references must come from a print source. (Encyclopedias—including on-line encyclopedias like Wikipedia—do not count as sources for this assignment.)

Begin your paper with a genuine question about the object or phenomenon you will analyze. Make that question the last sentence of your first paragraph. The rest of the essay should answer this question.

Present your analysis in a clear and well-organized manner. Each paragraph should deal with a specific aspect of the object or phenomenon, explain how that aspect works, and present its main point in a clear topic sentence. If you list the topic sentences of each paragraph, you should create an outline of your essay that would make sense by itself, would proceed logically, and would contain all of your main points. Support your analysis with detailed evidence from both your own observations and from insights provided by your research. Draw your conclusions in your final paragraph and briefly sum up the answers to the question posed at the start of your essay.

Use the cultural critiques we will read (“Why We Crave Horror Movies,” “Java Man,” “Enclosed. Encyclopedic. Endured: The Mall of America,” “The Beatles Now,” and “Consider the Lobster”) as models for how to write an engaging and compelling cultural analysis.

Write your essay in classic prose style: clear and concise, specific and engaging.

Make every word count.

Paper Topic Approved by: November 22

Essay Due: November 29

(Bring THREE copies of your essay to class for Peer Critiques.)