

Composition Essay: Research and Argument

The final essay for this class is a research paper that draws on sources outside of those assigned for this class, though you should, of course, also employ any useful assigned texts. Because this essay is research-based, you will have slightly more leeway with your topics. If neither of the options below appeals to you, and if you would like to do something else, be sure to approve your topic with me.

Paper Option 1: Research a single product mascot from the list below. Find several images, dating (if possible) from the product's inception to the present day, and construct an argument that accounts for the changes it undergoes. Why, for instance, is Kellogg's Tony the Tiger more musclebound today than it was in the 1960s? And what are the social or ideological implications of this change? You will want to take into consideration our discussions of branding, as well as any other key concepts we've addressed during the term. Some knowledge of the product's corporate structure might also be useful for your argument. Here are some products the mascots for which you might consider:

Quaker Oats	Mrs. Butterworth's
Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix	Chiquita Banana
Tropicana	Chicken of the Sea Tuna
Green Giant	Nestle Quick
Frosted Flakes	Bob's Big Boy
Cream of Wheat	Mr. Clean
Sue Bee Honey	

Paper Option 2: Research a trend or pattern in advertising. Find several advertisements for similar products. What similarities do you see among them? What differences? And what does this pattern imply? For instance, what trends are visible in advertisements for women's shaving products during the 1950s—and what does this trend tell us about gender in the 1950s? You will want to limit your research topic, as I've done above. You have several options here, and the list below is far from exhaustive.

- You can limit your topic across media (print advertisements or television spots).
- You can limit your topic to a particular historical period (post World War II, the 1930s, and so on).
- You can limit your topic to a single magazine (*Harper's Bazaar*, *Newsweek*, *Golf Digest*, *Cosmopolitan*)
- or magazine genre (women's magazines, health magazines, sports magazines, news magazines, and so on)
- or magazine genre in a particular time period (women's magazines in the 1940s).
- You can limit your topic to commercials airing at a particular time (Superbowl commercials, commercials that air during popular sitcoms, and so on).
- You can compare and contrast advertising trends among time periods, media, or magazine (women's shaving products in the 1950s vs. women's shaving products in the 2000s; women's shaving products on TV vs. women's shaving products in print; women's vs. men's shaving products, and so on).

Paper Option 3: Research a particular corporate identity, and construct an argument around the relationship between its image and its practice. For instance, Nike advertises itself as a tool with which to unlock human potential; yet, it produces its product with sweatshop labor, essentially rendering some human potential inaccessible. You will want to look at several advertisements in order to establish corporate identity, and then you will want to compare this image with your research on corporate practice. You might want to start by looking at some ad parodies at adbusters.org. As a variation of this option [3a], you can research a particularly powerful corporate identity or ad campaign and examine the controversy it inspires—Benetton, for instance, or Abercrombie and Fitch. Some corporations you might consider:

Benetton	Pharmaceuticals
Abercrombie and Fitch	K-Mart
Tommy Hilfiger	Hummer
McDonald's	US Armed Forces
AIDS prevention awareness	Milk
Wal-Mart	Political advertising spots

Paper Option 4: Research a particular marketing strategy, and critique it. This option is more nebulous than the first three, so if you want to do this, you might think about seeing me first. Some possible topics include:

- DTC (Direct to Consumer) marketing strategy
- Unconventional advertising forms (Jones Soda, for instance)
- Human Billboarding (using human skin to sport corporate logos)
- Pyramid schemes
- Product placement (in films, during television shows)

Paper Option 5: A research topic of your own choice. Please be sure to approve your topic with me early, or you will be penalized.

Guidelines

- You should use at least three outside critical sources. None of these three should be web sites. Be sure to include a works cited page at the end of your essay, and document every use of an outside source.
- You may use no more than four (accredited, reliable) websites. Be sure to include any websites you use in the works cited page, and document every use.
- If you're working with print advertisements, use at least five; if you're working with TV spots, use at least three. Be sure to include these images or spots in your works cited page. As a general rule, the more extensive data base you have, the more accurate your analysis will be.
- This essay should be approximately 10 pages in length, doublespaced.
- Please use a wordprocessor. Typeface should be something with a serif (Times New Roman, for instance), and font size should be 12 points. Margins should be 1 inch. Be sure to work within these guidelines—I know all the tricks in the book!
- Number your pages.