

WP1: “The Criteria for Beauty”

Purpose

This paper will introduce you to our core topic (“aesthetics”) and ask you to begin to think critically about it, and about your own ideas about beauty. We will introduce techniques for developing interesting ideas, organizing arguments, and revision.

Texts

Joy, Alexander B. “What Is Aesthetics? An Introduction to “The Art of Thinking.” *Critical Read*, 10 Nov. 2020, <https://criticalread.org/what-is-aesthetics-an-introduction-to-the-art-of-thinking/>.

Seymour, Richard. “How Beauty Feels.” TEDSalon, London Spring 2011.

https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_seymour_how_beauty_feels. London, England.

Premise

In “What is Aesthetics?” Alexander B. Joy offers a brief account of one of the principal points made by Immanuel Kant on a paradox of aesthetics:

Much of the *Critique of Judgment* addresses a paradox that Kant calls the “antinomy of taste,” which concerns the contradictory elements at work when we make an aesthetic judgment (i.e., when we claim something is beautiful, comment on its merit or lack thereof, or offer similar kinds of remarks). What Kant finds interesting about these types of judgments is that they straddle the line between a purely subjective observation and an appeal to an objective standard, appearing to contradict themselves by invoking two mutually exclusive justifications. For example, if someone says, “*Siamese Dream* is a beautiful album,” the speaker advances two assertions via that remark. The first is a subjective statement: the speaker personally finds *Siamese Dream* beautiful. The second assertion points toward something more objective: *Siamese Dream* meets aesthetic criteria of some kind that should lead others to reach the same conclusion as the speaker regarding the album’s beauty.

For this paper, I would like you to write a paper that considers this “antinomy of taste” in relationship to one instance of what you think of as beauty. To do this, you’ll need to choose something that you find beautiful and make an argument about *why* you find it beautiful. You’ll want to describe the thing in some detail, identify the *criteria* that shape your perception of that object’s beauty, and do some analysis of those criteria: where do these criteria come from? What do those criteria mean? Which criteria are more personal/subjective? Which are more objective and/or derive from an external standard? How do personal/subjective criteria interact with external/objective criteria?

Finally, you’ll want to consider the *significance* of your findings: what do we learn from trying to distinguish between the subjective and the objective when it comes to beauty? What are the uses and limits, the benefits and drawbacks, of thinking about aesthetics this way?

Big Question to Answer

What criteria shape your judgment of what is beautiful, and how should we understand the nature of those criteria?

Technical Requirements

1. Papers should generally be 1500-1800 words (about 5-6 pages), but length is not as important as the quality of your thinking. I will not penalize simply for being too short or too long.
2. Paper should be formatted according to [MLA guidelines](#). Make sure you especially include the proper headings for the paper. See page 9 of the syllabus.

3. Cite any sources that you use. This means referencing them in the text with a signal phrase and/or parenthetical citation and including a bibliographic entry. If you aren't sure how to do this, see https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html
4. In addition to turning in your paper on Blackboard, you also need to upload it to the “Critical Post Office” by filling out the form here: <https://usc.dornsife.usc.edu/secure/CTP/submission-form.cfm>

Tips For Doing Well

1. **Choose your topic wisely.** You have a lot of flexibility in what you choose to focus your essay on: a song, a building, a landscape, a poem, an image, an article of clothing, a film, a food, an athletic performance, even a person. But you'll want to choose carefully—it needs to be something you are comfortable picking apart **and** something that you think has enough complexity to make it worth writing a paper on. Choose an *interesting* topic, one that makes you want to ask questions about it for yourself.
2. **Write to learn.** This is not the kind of paper where I expect you to know what you think or to have a clear understanding of your criteria for beauty before you begin writing—it is the kind of paper where you are more likely to figure things out *as you go*. I hope you will learn something from the act of writing that you might not have figured out otherwise. However: by the final draft, I want you to have attempted to put that learning into visual form by making sure your introduction is thesis driven.
3. **Personalize and narrow your question.** The “big question to answer” as it is currently written asks you to consider any and all criteria about what is “beautiful.” That's really not possible in a five-page paper! You will want to make your question specific to a single object or experience of beauty, and you may not even want to discuss all your criteria related to that object—you may need to narrow down to examining how just a few criteria function, interact with each other, and so on. We will work on this process of narrowing down in your AWAs.
 - a. **The question itself will generally not appear in your paper at all. Eventually you should replace it with a thesis that answers the question.** However, as part of the writing process, you will need to continually return to it and revise it as you narrow down what you want to say.
4. **Provide detail.** You will need to provide plenty of detail about your object, and about whatever shapes your criteria for beauty. Be descriptive; the more detailed and specific you can be, the stronger your argument and evidence is likely to be. In many cases, you want your reader to feel as if they were in the room with you, or in your head with you, as you experienced the beauty, or as you reflect on it.
5. **Don't write a list.** A five-paragraph essay might list three criteria that you use to determine beauty, and write a paragraph for each one. However, this paper asks you to do something more complex: identify the *relationships* between the criteria and how they work together (or against one another).
6. **Answer the “so what” question.** While this assignment asks you to focus on your own understanding of beauty, think about why someone else might want to read such an essay. What will your audience gain from reading your perspective? Why should your perspective matter to other people? In other words—so what?

WP1 Ancillary Writing Assignments

AWA 1: Free Response

This assignment can be done by hand on paper if you choose—submit photos instead of a Word document if you take that option—or even orally (record a video of yourself talking).

Identify an object or experience that you find beautiful. Describe it as well as you can, and explain how you first encountered and understood that beauty. Don't worry about making this formal in any way, just get as

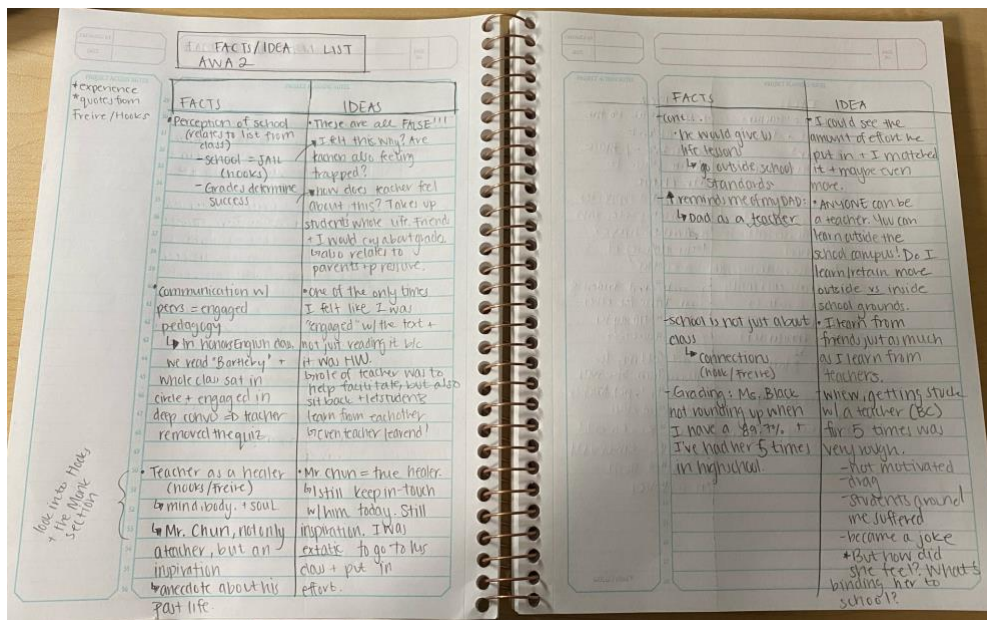
much down as you can, spending about 10 minutes working continuously (or more, if you like). Also feel free to make your submission multimodal—you can include pictures, drawings, sounds, etc.

AWA 2: Fact/Idea or Evidence/Analysis List

This assignment can be done by hand on paper if you choose—submit photos instead of a Word document if you take that option.

A fact/idea list, also sometimes called an evidence/analysis list, is what is known as an *invention heuristic*. Invention is the process of developing potential material for a writing project; a heuristic is kind of mental shortcut created by normalizing a process or strategy. In this case, the goal is to brainstorm as many different pieces of information related to the topic you are writing about as you can, and begin your analysis of those pieces of information so that you can develop the most interesting question about your topic (or, if you are returning this stage later in your writing process, to develop more interesting points and evidence that help answer your question). Think of yourself as starting a conversation between yourself and your readings about the facts at hand.

Create a chart with two columns. On the left, record as many “facts” or pieces of “evidence” relevant to your topic as you can. Try and keep these as factual as possible—that is, think about the who/what/when/where, in as much detail as possible, possibly with multiple entries. For this assignment, you’ll want to think especially about the elements that make up aesthetics of the object or experience you are writing about.



Then, record your *thoughts* about those facts on the right. Your ideas/analysis might be about why the facts are important, how they reveal things that aren’t obvious about the topic, how they are connected to other facts, and what questions the facts raise for you. Why are does the fact seem important? What opinions do you have about these facts? How are your opinions supported by or complicated by those facts? Are any apparent facts in conflict with one another? Do some support one another? Are there connections between facts, or between ideas, that might not be visible at first glance?

AWA 3: Draft Question

In preparation for completing your logical outline, you need to come up with a refined, personalized version of the “big question to answer.” Instructions on creating questions are included in the “Logical Outline” video. Please note: this assignment should take some substantial thought. We will critique some draft

questions in class—there will be a link on Blackboard for you to post your question anonymously to a Google doc.

When we peer review your question(s) in class, these are the criteria we will use:

1. Specific: Is the language specific? Are we given enough background to see what you want to discuss in the paper? Is the topic narrow enough to cover in a 5-page paper?
2. Complex: Does the question help the author avoid yes/no or other simplistic answers? Does it ask how or why something happens, and not just what happens?
3. Debatable: Could reasonable people answer the question differently?
4. Relevant: Does it sufficiently address the official prompt even while giving its own spin?

AWA 4: Logical Outline

Complete your logical outline, following the instructions from the Logical Outline video and the models provided. Your outline should be 2-3 full pages, single spaced. If it's longer, that's fine, we may just want to discuss what or how to cut during your conference. The more you've written, the better off you will probably be for moving to the rough draft! An outline that does not at least hit the second page (single spaced) will be considered not to meet the minimum requirements for the assignment and will be a breach of contract.

Come to your conference prepared to discuss—bring questions and ideas for moving to a rough draft.

AWA 5: Rough Draft

Complete as much of a draft as you can—a full draft will be best, but it is better to have a partial draft than nothing. Because we will be doing peer review I cannot grant extensions. In class, our peer review will pay special attention to your introduction and thesis. Come prepared to ask for help on any sections or ideas you are struggling with.

Final Draft Reminders

Make sure you name your file using the following format: “Lastname, Firstname, WP1.docx” – so, if your name was Moiraine Damodred, you would save your paper as a Word document with the name “Damodred, Moiraine, WP1.”

In addition to turning in your paper on Blackboard, you also need to upload it to the “Critical Post Office” by filling out the form here: <https://usc.dornsife.usc.edu/secure/CTP/submission-form.cfm>. You can find the semester number and the 5-digit section number in the title for our Blackboard Course. This submission will be used to help evaluate USC's success at teaching critical thinking and writing skills. The general education program will compare your first paper from this class with your final papers from your Writing 340 class to determine how much progress you make during your time at USC. It will not affect your grade in either class.

AWA 6: Reflection

Use the questions and directions on page 97-98 of the Writing 150 Coursebook to compose a reflection on your first writing project. You may focus on whichever questions from the coursebook that you choose, but additionally make sure to address these two questions:

1. What difficulties or failures did you experience in the process, or what failures do you think might exist in the final project?
2. How did you handle those difficulties or failures? Or, what did you learn about how you might handle similar ones in the future?

The reflection should generally be around 250-300 words but may be longer if you feel the need. You may write it in short answer bullet point form (with complete sentences) or closer to an essay.

WP 2: “The Medium is the Message”

Purpose

This paper asks you to more extensively engage with the ideas of others as you develop your thinking about a topic. Working in conversation with two sources, you'll *test* their ideas, add to them and qualify them through your own thinking and writing. We'll continue to build skills related to invention, argumentation, organization, and revision.

Texts

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing Part 1*, BBC, 1972. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlyKlpQiSW0&list=PLUBA8Xs8Xi3GTIvcZvdeKFWSoakb1tsFu>

McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Message*. Gingko Press, NJ, 1967. (selections)

McLuhan, Marshall. “The Medium is the Message.” *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press, 1964. <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf> (Optional)

Premise

In his 1964 article “The Medium is the Message,” Marshall McLuhan argued that we often pay so much attention to the formal content of a piece of artwork that we miss how we are shaped by the medium that conveys that content to us. This is especially true because the medium is repeated in ways that individual content is not: while each TikTok video you watch online might say something different, even contradictory to each other, the *form* of the TikTok video is repeated over and over. And, of course, TikTok itself is the content of the internet, which is the content of electronic signals—and our exposure to electronic signals, McLuhan argued, even before the advent of the internet, has the potential for profound reworkings of human interactions. Each of these different levels of media—the video, the internet, the computer or phone—has the potential to “shape and control the scale and form of human association and action” (9).

John Berger made a related argument in his BBC show “Ways of Seeing” just a few years later. He argues that the technologies we use for displaying art—whether a building, a museum, a television, a book—fundamentally allows us to change what the art means, simply by the context in which is placed, and sometimes by the medium itself.

For this project, we will read selections of McLuhan’s book *The Medium is the Message* as well as watch part of Berger’s series. Then, you will need to choose a specific piece of art that appears in multiple media forms and make an argument about *how* and *why* its medium (which you can consider both the materials and technologies used to create the artwork, as well as the materials, technologies, and contexts that offer you access to the artwork) “shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action.” Consider the *uses and limits* of that shape and control: in what ways are they helpful, and in what ways might they be problematic?

Your goal is look in Berger and McLuhan for ways of thinking about art and the various media that art appears in, and use Berger and McLuhan’s ideas and texts to develop your own thinking. You should not confine yourself to agreeing with either writer, but use them as launching points for saying something interesting.

Big Question to Answer

How do the *media* in which artwork appear “[shape and control] the scale and form of human association and action” with the artwork itself, and with what consequences?

Technical Requirements

1. Papers should generally be 1800-2100 words (about 6 pages), but length is not as important as the quality of your thinking. I will not penalize simply for being too short or too long.
2. Paper should be formatted according to [MLA guidelines](#). Make sure you especially include the proper headings for the paper. See page 9 of the syllabus for more details.
3. Cite any sources that you use. This means referencing them in the text with a signal phrase and/or parenthetical citation and including a bibliographic entry. Artwork also needs to be cited and clearly referenced.
4. At the end of your paper, after the bibliography, include a short reflection that imitates AWA 6.

Tips for doing well

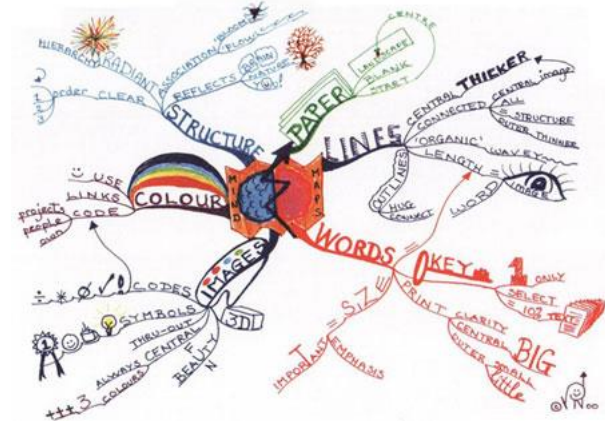
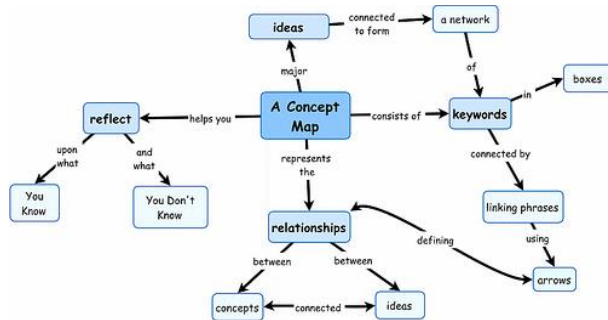
1. **Choose your topic wisely and narrowly.** You should use one specific artwork you have experience with, ideally one you have had *multiple* experiences with that could be compared. For example: how is a song performed live in concert shaped by its medium in ways that are different from a recording on Spotify, or a music video on YouTube? How does viewing a work of art in a museum differ from viewing it on a website, or in a book? How does seeing a painting presented *as artwork* differ from seeing it presented as (say) part of an advertisement, or as part of a history textbook? How is seeing a movie in theaters different than watching it on your phone, or on a tv at home?
2. **Describe in detail.** Like your first paper, you will need to be able to carefully describe your artwork and your experience of it in the multiple media in detail. You want to aim for *thick* description—not just a list of details or events, but analysis of what those descriptive details mean in context, interpreting and contextualizing as you go. (Berger is a good model of this!)
3. **Quote and engage with Berger or McLuhan.** You'll want to identify reference points from the readings that allow you to build on, extend, or even challenge their ideas. Use a mix of summary, paraphrase, and quotation, but don't get bogged down in it—stay focused on being in conversation with, not merely repeating, their ideas.
4. **Evaluate and establish significance.** Go beyond describing the effects of the different media to *evaluating* them and their relationship to the artwork. Does the content of the artwork replicate and reinforce larger messages created by the medium, or does the content attempt to work against the very messages of the medium? What long term effects are created by the media in relationship to the artwork?
5. **Consider your medium.** This paper need not look exactly like a traditional essay, but can be multimodal. For example, *The Medium is the Message* offers a creative, sometimes shocking way of mixing visual and textual argumentation. What mix of media, if any, might be useful for your argument?
6. **Answer the “so what” question.** Why does your analysis matter? How might it complicate or challenge our understanding of what Berger or McLuhan say, or how might it help us be better consumers of art and media?

AWA 7: Brainstorming and Fact/Idea List or Mind Map

For this AWA, I'd like you to brainstorm possible examples you could analyze for WP2. Once you have done that, either create a fact/idea list as you did with WP1, or create a mind map or concept map that helps you analyze and explore the artwork and its media. This is where you should start developing the detail necessary for writing this paper—a superficial mind map or fact/idea list will hurt your work later on. You may want to do multiple drafts of your lists or mind map.

Not sure how to create a mind map or concept map? See the examples below, or [this article](#) from Lifehacker.

The fact/idea list and the mind map can be done electronically *or* by hand. Submit a photo if you do it by hand.



AWA 8: Draft Question

In preparation for completing your logical outline, you need to come up with a refined, personalized version of the “big question to answer.” As with WP1, drafting a good question is likely to be difficult. Remember the criteria we established for a good question (and, once the question is answered, a good thesis):

1. Specific: Is the language specific? Are we given enough background to see what you want to discuss in the paper? Is the topic narrow enough to cover thoroughly in a 6-page paper?
2. Complex: Does the question help the author avoid yes/no or other simplistic answers? Does it ask how or why something happens, and not just what happens?
3. Debatable: Could reasonable people answer the question differently?
4. Relevant: Does it sufficiently address the official prompt even while giving its own spin?

As with WP1, we will critique as many of the draft questions in class as we can—there will be a link on Blackboard for you to post your question anonymously to a Google doc.

AWA 9: Logical Outline

Complete your logical outline; assume it should 2-3 full pages, single spaced—and remember that anything less than a full page will not meet minimum requirements and will be a breach of contract. Come to your conference prepared to discuss the outline—bring any questions you might have!

AWA 10: Partial Rough Draft

Bring at least 2 pages of your rough draft. In class, our peer review will pay special attention to your introduction and thesis. Come prepared to ask for help on any sections or ideas you are struggling with.

AWA 11: Complete Rough Draft

Finish your rough draft. In class, you will e-mail or share a copy of your draft with two peer review partners.

AWA 12: Peer Review Letters

When you receive the rough drafts from your peers, you will read their essays and write each person a one-page, single-spaced letter in response, though length is not as important as quality. Your peer review letters must be submitted on Blackboard AND e-mailed to your peer review partners. In the letter, make sure to cover all the elements of the rubric:

1. **Rhetorical Judgement:** How well does the paper address the prompt? What aspects of the prompt might need more development? How well does the paper address the concerns of the audience?
2. **Argument:** How nuanced or precise is the argument? Are there points from within the paper that could be used to make a more nuanced or precise thesis? Is the argument overly obvious, or does the author take a creative approach? Are the uses and limits of the argument clear, or are there ones that the author has not explained sufficiently?
3. **Reasoning:** How precisely does the evidence support the claims of the paper? What claims need more support? Is there sufficient analysis of all the evidence? Where might they be wrong in their analysis? Have they missed anything obvious, or do they have assumptions that need to be questioned?
4. **Sources:** Are the sources used appropriate to the project? Does it use an appropriate mix of summary, paraphrase, and quotation, signaling appropriately? Are there points of view that haven't been sufficiently considered? Are there any places where the paper seems to misread the sources—either being too generous or too critical, or just misunderstanding what someone has said?
5. **Organization:** How effectively is the paper organized? Could the points go in a different order to be more effective, and if so, how? Does the structure of piece have a clear intentionality? Does the paper go beyond categorical organization (listing points like a five paragraph essay) into a logical organization that develops progressively?
6. **Conventions:** Are there any passages that stand out as particularly well-written and powerful? Any that are difficult to understand? Can you identify what makes them strong or weak, and make suggestions for how they might be made even more effective? Do the author's stylistic choices fit the audience and argument? How could they make choices that even more effectively serve the purpose of the paper?

Note: It's rarely useful to just say "this is a good paper" or even "this is a good thesis." Instead, identify specific elements that work well: "Your opening is strong because you set up a vivid image of what your topic is about." This is even more important with places of difficulty that need work. For example: "I really didn't understand how the quotation in the second paragraph about slavery had anything to do with your topic sentence about how Michelle Alexander was hostile to audiences besides her main three. Could you find a more appropriate quotation, or explain what you were thinking a bit more?"

Final Draft Reminders

Make sure you name your file using the following format: "Lastname, Firstname, WP1.docx" – so, if your name was Moiraine Damodred, you would save your paper as a Word document with the name "Damodred, Moiraine, WP1."

Don't forget to include a short reflection at the end of your paper after the bibliography. Use the questions and directions on page 97-98 of the Writing 150 Coursebook to compose a reflection on your first writing project. You may focus on whichever questions from the coursebook that you choose, but additionally make sure to address these two questions:

1. What difficulties or failures did you experience in the process, or what failures do you think might exist in the final project?
2. How did you handle those difficulties or failures? Or, what did you learn about how you might handle similar ones in the future?

The reflection should generally be around 250-300 words but may be longer if you feel the need. You may write it in short answer bullet point form (with complete sentences) or closer to an essay.

WP 3: Fandom and Ownership

Purpose

This project asks you to continue to develop your skills in critical thinking by considering developing issues, and analyzing how arguments may need to develop in response to new circumstances. We will also introduce research and information management skills.

Texts

Gallagher, Owen. "The Assault on Creative Culture." *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, edited by Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 86–96. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=1024648>.

Jenkins. "Digital Land Grab." *MIT Technology Review*, 1 Mar. 2000, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2000/03/01/236418/digital-land-grab/>. (optional)

McCulloch, Richard, et al. "Of Proprietors and Poachers: Fandom as Negotiated Brand Ownership." *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2013, <https://www.participations.org/Volume%2010/Issue%201/15%20McCulloch10.1.pdf>.

Premise

"Contemporary web culture is the traditional folk process working at lightning speed on a global scale. The difference is that our core myths now belong to corporations, rather than the folk."
- Henry Jenkins, "Digital Land Grab."

In the readings for our last unit, John Berger pointed out that reproductions of artwork offer a multitude of new possibilities for how artwork can be interpreted. Every time it is reproduced, an artwork enters a new context, and new, different people can take control or even ownership of that work. This became even more visible in the decades since the advent of the internet, as more and more people have the opportunity to manipulate media originally produced by others, from memes to fanfic to fan art.

In his ground-breaking work *Textual Poachers*, USC Professor Henry Jenkins used the ideas of Michel de Certeau to argue for the value of fans who "poach" from the media narratives they consume. Poaching is a kind of illegal activity, hunting something that belongs to someone else. Textual poaching, then, is when fans reclaim "texts" from corporate ownership by making art or otherwise engaging creatively with the thing they are a fan of, sometimes in ways that the owners might not approve. Corporate interests often fight back for control, especially on the internet: enforcement of copyright law, trademarks, and branding all resist the fan "poaching" of their property. In a 2000 article, Jenkins called early corporate attempts to control fan artistic culture a "digital land grab."

However, this work (and some of the other work we will be reading) is a bit older, leading us to questions to about how things might have changed in the intervening years. This paper asks you to take up these concerns about *artistic control*, ideally through the lens of fandom as you and others today experience it. Who "owns" an artwork? Who should be entitled to control it and where it appears, especially if it is a piece of "mass" media? What value do fans add when they creatively engage with it? How do these things play out in your experience today, and what might that mean for the future?

Big Question to Answer

How and why do fans today creatively interact with and take ownership—or fail to interact with and take ownership—of media or art they love that are "owned" by other people?

Tips for doing well

1. **Narrow your topic.** Trying to cover how all fans of all things everywhere do things would be impossible. Identify a specific fandom to research, or even limit yourself to a specific activity within a fandom or constellation of fandoms.

- a. For the purposes of brainstorming, you might want to consider how *you* engage in “fandom” – that is, how you intentionally interact with something you are a “fan” of, whether that is a piece of media (art, music, books, television, film, video game, etc.), a person (an actor, musician, athlete), an organization (a band, a school, a team, a company). Put your experiences in conversation with our readings on fandom and ownership of creative properties.
 - b. However, it is crucial that you move beyond the *what* of the fandom to the *how* and *why* of the fandom, doing deep analysis of things you do, or that your friends do, that you may never have looked at critically. You’ll also need to consider that your experiences might not be typical: don’t assume that your corner of fandom is the main one!
 - c. If you’re not a fan of anything enough to make that the focus of a paper, you are still surrounded by *other* people who are fans of things: maybe your parents, or siblings, or friends are all fans of something. How can you use your outsider status to examine this question?
2. You’ll need to do academic research on fandom *around* the topic you’ve chosen. Even if you *are* a fan of something and feel you know the fandom from the inside out, there will be scholarship about the broader context of the thing, who controls it (or has historically controlled it), and the different forms of interaction people have with it. You may need to look at adjacent fandoms for research: if you want to write about fans of the Green Bay Packers, so you might need to research American Football fandom and sports fandom more generally. If you’re interested in *The Bachelor* podcasts, you’ll need to research reality tv fandom more generally *and* fan podcasts. If you want to look at BTS fanfic, you might need to look at fanfic as well as broader K-pop fandom.
 3. There’s no set number of sources that you must use, but I expect creative, complex, and analytic use of sources. I want to see both *forwarding* and *countering* of different perspectives.

Technical Requirements

1. Papers should generally be 1800-2100 words (about 6 pages), but length is not as important as the quality of your thinking. I will not penalize simply for being too short or too long.
2. Paper should be formatted according to [MLA guidelines](#). Make sure you especially include the proper headings for the paper. See page 9 of the syllabus for more details.
3. Cite any sources that you use. This means referencing them in the text with a signal phrase and/or parenthetical citation and including a bibliographic entry. Artwork also needs to be cited and clearly referenced.
4. At the end of your paper, after the bibliography, include a short reflection that imitates AWA 6.

AWA 13: Brainstorming and Fact/Idea List or Mind Map

For this AWA, I’d like you to brainstorm possible examples you could use as the focus for WP3. Once you have done that, either create a fact/idea list as you did with WP1, or create a mind map or concept map that helps you analyze and explore the facets of the fandom and its interaction with corporate ownership. This is where you should start developing the detail necessary for writing this paper—a superficial mind map or fact/idea list will hurt your work later on. You may want to do multiple drafts of your lists or mindmap.

As with previous assignments, the fact/idea list and the mind map can be done electronically *or* by hand. Submit a photo if you do it by hand.

AWA 14: Draft Question

In preparation for completing your logical outline, you need to come up with a refined, personalized version of the “big question to answer.” As with WP1, drafting a good question is likely to be difficult. Remember the criteria we established for a good question (and, once the question is answered, a good thesis):

1. Specific: Is the language specific? Are we given enough background to see what you want to discuss in the paper? Is the topic narrow enough to cover thoroughly in a 6-page paper?
2. Complex: Does the question help the author avoid yes/no or other simplistic answers? Does it ask how or why something happens, and not just what happens?

3. Debatable: Could reasonable people answer the question differently?
4. Relevant: Does it sufficiently address the official prompt even while giving its own spin?

AWA 15: Synthesis Matrix

The purpose of a synthesis matrix is to help you see and develop the relationships between ideas across different sources. It is useful if you have to write a literature review (which you might do in upper level classes), or even if you're just trying to compare more than two sources at a time.

A synthesis matrix is a chart that has “key ideas” in the left-hand column, and “sources” across the top, or vice versa. You can create this chart in Word or in Excel so long as all the text is readable.

	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
Key Idea 1				
Key Idea 2				
Key Idea 3				
Etc.				

In the left-hand column, instead of writing “Key Idea 1” you would replace it with a key idea that appears in one or more of your sources and that is important to your research (either for this specific project or a future project). Across the top, you would replace “Source #” with partial bibliographic information—the author, title, and year. (The date is important for seeing how a conversation may have developed over time.) Then, in each empty box, you put summary/paraphrase/quotations (with page numbers!) that describes what each author says about that key idea. If one of your authors doesn't mention the key idea, leave it blank, put N/A (not applicable), or explain why you think that author doesn't deal with that idea.

For example, if I was creating a synthesis matrix on grading practices, the first two sources with two ideas might look like this:

Topic	Kohn, "The Myth of Grade Inflation"	Blum, "Why Ungrade? Why Grade?" (ungrading views)
<p>Motivation (the need to incentivize behaviors in students)</p> <p>Possible issue: disagreement on what behaviors we want to incentivize may reveal deeper underlying values. <i>Motivation may be a superficial/visible issue that is distracting us from something more important in the conversation.</i></p>	<p>Implied: students need to be motivated by external forces, and grades are sufficient and good for that.</p> <p>Academy of Arts and Sciences paper cited, focuses only on the issue/problem of stress. AAS paper dismisses concerns about anxiety as a bad motivator--is it implied that anxiety is good for students? <i>Need to check the original source to see if Kohn's description is accurate.</i></p> <p><i>What are students being motivated for in this view? Obedience? Or is motivation secondary to some larger value, such as an educated workforce?</i></p>	<p>Humans are <i>naturally motivated to learn</i> (1--see opening quotation). Focus on curiosity as a motivator (3).</p> <p>Grades are external motivators, and actually reduce internal motivation: "A focus on grades creates, or at least perpetuates, an extrinsic orientation that undermines the love of learning we are presumably seeking to promote." (3).</p> <p>"the authors aim to create positive atmospheres devoid of fear and threat and focused on learning" (10).</p> <p><i>Implies that "ungraders" see the traditional view as one that uses fear and threat to motivate, rather than learning itself. Is this how traditional graders see themselves? Is there truth in this even if traditional graders don't recognize it?</i></p>
<p>Fairness (grades are supposed to be impartial and reflect some amount of equality or fairness)</p>	<p>"In effect, this means that the game should be rigged so that no matter how well students do, only a few can get A's" (4)</p> <p><i>Brings up the question about how "learning" is quantified. Also correlates to the value of competition and how competitiveness within the classroom may hinder other students from learning creating unfair spaces. If only a few students can get A's, will this decrease motivation because the system is seen as unfair? Will this create more competitiveness?</i></p>	<p>"The use of learning outcomes and assessment for accreditation agencies appears fair, accountable. But it's often merely an appearance of fairness." (14)</p> <p><i>Appearing fair because tests and assignments are the same for everyone. However, it is often assumed that everyone starts with the same level of knowledge, which is often not the case. A person taking classes in their native language amongst people that do not have any background in a language is not fair (often done to boost GPA and guarantee a good grade). This appearance of fairness actually diminishes the meaning of learning.</i></p>

You may also want to put other important information about each source in your chart, like the thesis, audience, purpose, rhetorical strategies, and so on. Additionally, you may want to put your analysis of the quotations or evidence from each author in each box, perhaps in a different color or in italics. This could become a variation on a fact/idea list as a result.

AWA 16: Logical Outline or Partial Draft

Complete either a logical outline or a partial rough draft. If turning in a partial draft, make sure to include a clear thesis statement and at least 3 full pages.

AWA 17: Rough Draft

Write or finish your rough draft. In class, you will e-mail or share a copy of your draft with two peer review partners.

AWA 18: Peer Review Letters

When you receive the rough drafts from your peers, you will read their essays and write each person a one-page, single-spaced letter in response, though length is not as important as quality. Your peer review letters must be submitted on Blackboard AND e-mailed to your peer review partners. In the letter, make sure to cover all the elements of the rubric:

7. **Rhetorical Judgement:** How well does the paper address the prompt? What aspects of the prompt might need more development? How well does the paper address the concerns of the audience?
8. **Argument:** How nuanced or precise is the argument? Are there points from within the paper that could be used to make a more nuanced or precise thesis? Is the argument overly obvious, or does the author take a creative approach? Are the uses and limits of the argument clear, or are there ones that the author has not explained sufficiently?
9. **Reasoning:** How precisely does the evidence support the claims of the paper? What claims need more support? Is there sufficient analysis of all the evidence? Where might they be wrong in their analysis? Have they missed anything obvious, or do they have assumptions that need to be questioned?
10. **Sources:** Are the sources used appropriate to the project? Does it use an appropriate mix of summary, paraphrase, and quotation, signaling appropriately? Are there points of view that haven't been sufficiently considered? Are there any places where the paper seems to misread the sources—either being too generous or too critical, or just misunderstanding what someone has said?
11. **Organization:** How effectively is the paper organized? Could the points go in a different order to be more effective, and if so, how? Does the structure of piece have a clear intentionality? Does the paper go beyond categorical organization (listing points like a five paragraph essay) into a logical organization that develops progressively?
12. **Conventions:** Are there any passages that stand out as particularly well-written and powerful? Any that are difficult to understand? Can you identify what makes them strong or weak, and make suggestions for how they might be made even more effective? Do the author's stylistic choices fit the audience and argument? How could they make choices that even more effectively serve the purpose of the paper?

Note: It's rarely useful to just say "this is a good paper" or even "this is a good thesis." Instead, identify specific elements that work well: "Your opening is strong because you set up a vivid image of what your topic is about." This is even more important with places of difficulty that need work. For example: "I really didn't understand how the quotation in the second paragraph about slavery had anything to do with your topic sentence about how Michelle Alexander was hostile to audiences besides her main three. Could you find a more appropriate quotation, or explain what you were thinking a bit more?"

WP 4: “Taste and Tackiness”

Purpose

WP4 asks you to pull together the writing skills we have been working on all semester into a single, cohesive project: developing cogent arguments with strong so-what factors, supporting your arguments with carefully researched evidence and thoughtful analysis, thinking about how rhetorical choices respond to the needs of audiences, and revising and editing your work.

Texts

- Burnett, Katharine A., and Monica Carol Miller. “Introduction: What Would Dolly Do?” *The Tacky South*, edited by Monica Carol Miller and Katharine A. Burnett, Louisiana State University Press, 2022, <https://web-s-ebshost-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxLYmtfXzMwNjYwNjZfX0FO0?sid=d62e76ef-de26-45df-b299-81079d8f7a4d@redis&vid=1&format=EK&rid=1>.
- Dubner, Stephen. “Don’t Worry, Be Tacky.” *Freakonomics* 499, <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/dont-worry-be-tacky/>. Accessed 16 July 2022.
- Sugar, Rachel. “‘Good Taste’ Is All About Class Anxiety.” *Vox*, 26 Sept. 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/9/26/20873938/good-taste-class-anxiety-s-margot-finn>.

Premise

As our texts for this unit explore, taste and tackiness are ways of demarcating *class* through the art we consume, appreciate, and value. We enforce boundaries between groups by declaring that some things are tasteful and others are tacky. But the boundaries of what is tacky or tasteless can shift under us at any time: what was fashionable in the 1980s becomes tacky in the 2000s, and then becomes fashionable again in the 2020s. Dolly Parton, an epitome of tackiness and once derided for it, becomes valued for her tackiness. Tackiness and taste, therefore, can be useful ways of exploring underlying values in society, of understanding how different parts of society police the boundaries between classes, races, genders, geographies, or other groupings of people.

For this paper, I would like you to choose a genre, a work of art, or an aesthetic you love or value that other people devalue, sneer at, raise an eyebrow at, or deride as tacky or tasteless. The thing you love or value can be a work of art, a form of media, a food, a practice, clothing, even an entire style aesthetic (cottagecore, dark academia, Lisa Frank). Once you’ve chosen your topic, research the origins, development, and cultural role of that thing, and why it’s thought of as tacky, and by whom.

Then, write a paper in which you explain, explore, and interpret the thing you love and its role in culture. You should make an argument about that thing and *how and why* it should be *valued* instead of *devalued*—but simultaneously, try to put yourself in conversation with the people who find it tacky or tasteless. In other words, don’t approach your audience in a “I’m going to beat you and prove you wrong” mode, but in a way that tries to develop mutual understanding while still holding to your point of view that your topic is something that should be valued or even loved.

Big Question to Answer

What should we value about the thing you have chosen that others find tacky or tasteless, and why?

Technical Requirements

1. Papers should generally be 2100-2400 words (about 7-8 pages), but length is not as important as the quality of your thinking. I will not penalize simply for being too short or too long. However, since this paper will be graded by other faculty as well as Dr. Taylor, and they have to read quickly, please try very hard not to go over 10 pages including bibliography.
2. Paper should be formatted according to [MLA guidelines](#). Make sure you especially include the proper headings for the paper. See page 9 of the syllabus for more details.

3. Cite any sources that you use. This means referencing them in the text with a signal phrase and/or parenthetical citation and including a bibliographic entry. Artwork also needs to be cited and clearly referenced.
4. Do NOT include the usual reflection on your paper—you'll be writing a fuller reflection as the other part of your final portfolio part B.

Tips for Doing Well

1. **Build on past work.** This paper has some intentional connections to all of your previous papers, perhaps not in content but in terms of the skills and ideas that might help you develop an argument. Feel free to use any of the readings from this semester to think through your project: think about subjective and objective criteria for beauty (or tackiness), think about how a medium affects the message, or about how corporations try and control what is considered tacky or tasteful and how fans might challenge or embrace those boundaries.
2. **Consider audience.** Be specific, to yourself as a minimum, about your audience: who needs to hear the argument you are making? Why do they need to hear it? Be explicit in conveying the significance of your topic to your audience. (I, Dr. Taylor, am probably not your primary audience. As we have probably sufficiently established this semester, I probably will not negatively judge you for your aesthetic, taste, and so on.)
3. **Nuance your argument.** You should probably not make an absolutist argument (arguing that everyone everywhere should value everything about your chosen topic) but write something *nuanced*—in what context or ways should it be valued, or what individuals or groups should value it even if it is not a majority opinion? Go beyond the obvious to try to say something interesting.
4. **Concrete detail.** As with your previous papers, your argument will benefit if you can use concrete detail and description to help your reader understand what you are discussing. Don't be afraid to be multimodal, bringing in images, or links to sounds or video, to help illustrate and contextualize your topic.
5. **Forward and counter your research.** As with paper 3, don't use research in a superficial way by just mining it for facts. Engage with the arguments and values of at least a few sources, forwarding and countering so that *you* are contributing to an ongoing conversation about taste and tackiness.

AWA 19: Draft Question

As with all the other papers drafting a good question is likely to be difficult. Begin by doing some research—preliminary research into who thinks your topic is tasteless, tacky, or not worth valuing, will be crucial for setting up the background of your question. Then develop your question.

Remember the criteria we established for a good question (and, once the question is answered, a good thesis):

1. **Specific:** Is the language specific? Are we given enough background to see what you want to discuss in the paper? Is the topic narrow enough to cover thoroughly in a 6-page paper?
2. **Complex:** Does the question help the author avoid yes/no or other simplistic answers? Does it ask how or why something happens, and not just what happens?
3. **Debatable:** Could reasonable people answer the question differently?
4. **Relevant:** Does it sufficiently address the official prompt even while giving its own spin?

AWA 20: Pre-Writing of Choice

Over the course of the semester, we've used several different pre-writing methods: free writing, fact/idea lists, mind-maps, synthesis matrices, and so on. Complete one or more of these that you think will be most helpful for your project.

AWA 21: Logical Outline or Partial Rough Draft

Outlines should follow the same guidelines from previous projects. If turning in a partial draft, make sure to include a clear thesis statement and at least 3 full pages.

AWA 22: Rough Draft

Complete a full rough draft to the best of your ability. Turn it in on Blackboard for credit, but also upload a copy to the Google Drive for your peer reviewers.

AWA 23: Peer Review Letters

When you receive the rough drafts from your peers, you will read their essays and write each person a one-page, single-spaced letter in response, though length is not as important as quality. Your peer review letters must be submitted on Blackboard AND e-mailed to your peer review partners. In the letter, make sure to cover all the elements of the rubric:

1. **Rhetorical Judgement:** How well does the paper address the prompt? What aspects of the prompt might need more development? How well does the paper address the concerns of the audience? What concerns of the audience are underdeveloped? Has the author missed some important concerns?
2. **Argument:** How nuanced or precise is the argument? Are there points from within the paper that could be used to make a more nuanced or precise thesis? Is the argument overly obvious, or does the author take a creative approach? Does the paper explain the significance of the argument to the larger conversation? Are the uses and limits of the argument clear, or are there ones that the author has not explained sufficiently?
3. **Reasoning:** How precisely does the evidence support the claims of the paper? What claims need more support? Is there sufficient analysis of all the evidence? Where might they be wrong in their analysis? Have they missed anything obvious, or do they have assumptions that need to be questioned?
4. **Sources:** Are the sources used appropriate to the project? Does it use an appropriate mix of summary, paraphrase, and quotation, signaling appropriately? Are there points of view that haven't been sufficiently considered? Are there any places where the paper seems to misread the sources—either being too generous or too critical, or just misunderstanding what someone has said?
5. **Organization:** How effectively is the paper organized? Could the points go in a different order to be more effective, and if so, how? Does the structure of piece have a clear intentionality? Does the paper go beyond categorical organization (listing points) into a logical organization that develops progressively?
6. **Conventions:** Are there any passages that stand out as particularly well-written and powerful? Any that are difficult to understand? Can you identify what makes them strong or weak, and make suggestions for how they might be made even more effective? Do the author's stylistic and genre choices fit the audience and argument? How could they make choices that even more effectively serve the purpose of the paper?

Reflection Essay (Portfolio Part B)

Purpose

This assignment asks you to reflect on what you have learned this semester. Reflection will help you thoughtfully consider what you need to do to continue to improve in your communication skills—a central feature that employers look for—as you leave this class and continue in your course work.

Premise

At the beginning of the semester, I explained my teaching philosophy: high quality failure is essential to learning—and this is especially true when it comes to writing. The writing process is a perpetual process of planning, drafting, recognizing the weaknesses and failures of what we have written, rewriting, and then repeating the process. Sometimes, at the end, we have still “failed” according to some external criteria, even we have improved during the process. This assignment is your chance to reflect on your failures and successes, and to show me that you have learned even if you have “failed” at one point or another.



For your essay, however, do not imagine me as your primary audience. Instead, imagine that a professor who taught a different section of this class will be reading and evaluating your work (especially WP4) to decide whether you have learned the things you this semester that you were supposed to learn. Write a cover letter to that professor, explaining what you learned, how you learned it, what your failures were, and how the papers you produced this semester represent (or don't represent) that learning.

Big Question(s) to Answer (Prompt)

What have I learned in WRIT 150, what did the process of learning it look like, and why does what I learned matter?

Tips for doing well

1. Review your work, including AWAs, notes, outlines, rough drafts, peer review, final drafts, reflections, and comments.
2. Below, you will find a series of questions to help you brainstorm possible avenues for reflection. You should NOT try to answer all of these questions in your letter. Choose just one set of questions, or piece together bits from several of these. Also, don't exaggerate your abilities or spend time trying to impress me. If you haven't perfected some aspect of writing, that's fine. I'm much more interested in an honest reflection.
 - a. What is the purpose of academic writing? How did this class and the papers you wrote fit or challenge your expectations?
 - b. Look at the chart of course outcomes on page 5 of the syllabus. Which of those outcomes or sets of outcomes was most important to you in terms of what you learned? How well do you think you mastered the outcomes? What assignments most helped you master the outcomes?
 - c. What did you learn or figure out about writing that you didn't know before? What did you learn or figure out about the topics we wrote on that you wouldn't have if you hadn't written the papers?
 - d. Have you challenged yourself and taken risks that might result in failure? Why or why not? How did those decisions (in either direction) affect your work? Did anything valuable come from your failures, and why or why not? Did you find ways to use your failure to create something new and interesting? Did you grow from your failures? If so, how and why?

3. To make sure your letter proves you have learned to do what you say you have done, make sure you do all the things you have been asked to do in your other papers.
 - a. Be point first! Have an argument in your first paragraph that guides what you choose to include in your paper, use a clear structure with topic sentences, have transitions, etc.
 - b. Use evidence! Quote from your textbooks, quote from your papers, quote from the comments you received in peer review or on your papers.
 - c. Have a so-what factor! Draw some conclusions about what you've learned over the course of the semester and where you still need to go.
4. **Optional:** do something you maybe haven't done in a past essay: be creative or visual! Past students have included memes (much like this assignment sheet), artwork, diagrams, screenshots, even poetry.

Technical Requirements

1. Papers should be 1500-1800 words (about 4-5 full pages), but length is not as important as the quality of your thinking. I will not penalize simply for being too short or too long.
2. You only need to use signal phrases to cite your own work, but you will need full citations for any readings or outside sources.

Portfolio AWA

AWA 24: Process Work of Your Choice

Choose at least one form of pre-writing (free writing, fact/idea list, mind-map, synthesis matrix, logical outline, draft, *or anything else you like*) to use to prepare you to write your reflective essay/letter. Make sure your personal revision of the question to answer is at the top. If you want feedback on this assignment for writing your reflection, sign up for an optional conference.