

Paper #2: Archival Investigation of the Culture Industry

VMS 202D - "Introduction to Visual Culture"

9% of course grade

Due: By email before discussion sections on **Friday, November 8, 2019**
[No late papers accepted!]

Length: 5 full pages (minimum) -- *All papers must be formatted in 12-point, "Times" or "Times New Roman" font with line spacing set at 1.5. All margins must be 1 inch (1"). No font shenanigans! ☺*

The goal of this paper is to introduce you to "**primary source**" **research** in visual and media studies, research conducted on *original materials* pertaining to one's object of study. On Friday, October 11, you returned to the Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History at the David M. Rubenstein Library and learned procedures for conducting primary source research in their archives. Moreover, you were introduced to specific collections of ad agencies, research firms, and media critics whose archives document market segmentation, efforts to understand consumers (through data collection, reporting and psychographic techniques) as well as material on the evaluation of specific advertising campaigns. Other archives document the changing nature of a specific brand's advertisements over time. Some documents in these archives also chronicle decisions made "on the ground" in meeting minutes and memos. Much of the material focuses on differences: of race, ethnicity, gender, generation, etc.

Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring key issues, concepts, and arguments surrounding what Horkheimer & Adorno called "The Culture Industry." In particular, we will be considering the entanglement of visual culture and contemporary capitalism through the lens of advertising, marketing, and branding. Relatedly, we will explore the effect of "technologies of reproduction" (Benjamin) on culture, and consider their impact on the politics of visibility, ownership, and copyright. Chapter 7 of our textbook will dive deeper into "brand culture" and trace how brands have responded to changes in "spaces of consumerism and consumption" (from the rise of the shopping mall to ecommerce and social media) as well as consider how brands both construct and respond to the changing nature of "knowing," socially-conscious consumers.

Diving deeply into a particular collection at the Hartman Center, what can you ascertain about how the primary materials contained within intersect with and illuminate our discussions about the culture industry? What stories emerge about the history of advertising when researching a collection? How do they relate to the claims made about advertising and branding in our course texts and

discussions? Do we see evidence of a changing understanding of the consumer? Evidence of attempts to construct a new kind of consumer? A shift away from mass marketing? A sensitivity to changing technologies of reproduction through which advertisers and marketers reach their customers? Does a different picture emerge from what our visual and media historians and theorists tell us? Etc.

Be sure to include a bibliography / works cited page with consistent use of APA, MLA, or Chicago citation formats.

Primary source material should be cited with as much specificity as possible. The Rubenstein librarians can assist you with citation strategies.

When introducing key terms and arguments from secondary sources (from the textbook and our course readings), be sure to appropriately cite whether quoting or paraphrasing.