
Unit 4: Media Power Project

Unit Overview:

The Media Power Project provides opportunity for students to assess and apply their understanding of the potential for electronic media to effect audience perception and decisions. Students will explore and identify various TV and print media conventions and then use these conventions and frameworks to produce their own TV or print ad. These ads may be done with the intent to promote an infinite range of ideas or artifacts. Students use ad conventions to promote an issue of personal significance or make use of the content or structure from existing ads to deliver a new message or to make the ad more *truthful*.

The course resource CD has numerous examples of such projects.

Lesson 4-1: Media Awareness Activity

Objective(s) & skills attained:

Students will analyze TV and print ads to better understand the relationship between a design's function, form and content.

Students will critically analyze and interpret ads to unfold specific strategies used in TV and print media advertisements.

Students will analyze ads to learn some formal design processes and strategies used by designers and to value the range and depth of impact these designs have on an audience.

Students will seek to identify bias, branding strategies and evidence of cultural *hegemony* (e.g. how genders, races, and sexual preference are portrayed via the media) in the media.

Vocabulary:

Hegemony: when one group subordinates another. Racism and racial segregation, homophobia and cultural exclusion due to one's sexual orientation; sexism; ageism; are all examples of cultural hegemony.

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Motivation:

To adequately equip students with a conceptual and aesthetic framework to form their own effective communication designs, students will need to critically analyze and assess some professional communication designs.

Using TV and print ads from reputable sources, students will apply an assessment criteria to analyze a print and TV ad. Students will focus their assessment on the relationship between the design's function, form and content. They will aim to identify themes and attempts by designers to use branding to sell their ad. Students will also use the Laws of Media to hypothesize on the ad's potential impact on such things as economy, society, and the environment (various ecologies).

Materials list:

The teacher or student will need to gather examples of professional or popular print and media ads. Students could be required to find their own examples. However, if this is to be a class activity, the teacher may want to gather (on tape or DV) a few choice examples of TV ads for students to review.

AUTHOR'S SOLUTION: For my classroom, I gathered several TV ads on tape, converted them to DV and exported the collection to a 220x340 QuickTime movie. I copied this collection to each computer in the lab for students to access and review. I also scanned or photographed several print ads and posted them on a web page for student access. Unfortunately, due to copyright restrictions, I was unable to include these collections with this text.

Suggested Strategies for Learning and Teaching:

Once the teacher has either archived a collection of TV and print ads for students or has resolved a method for students to find good ad exemplars, the class may review to questions in Activity 4-1a (4-1b is a duplicate of 4-1a).

Providing class time or as homework, working alone or in pairs, students would analyze both a TV and print ad using the criteria established in Activity 4-1a&b. Students may analyze a print ad through Activity 4-1a and a TV ad through 4-1b, or vice-versa.

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USING SPOOF ADS / AD PARODIES: Another exceptional source of ads for this activity is www.Adbusters.org. Adbusters offers professional ad designs (parodies) that challenge mainstream advertisers and questionable corporate practices. Adbusters ads offer the added bonus of a model critique of an existing ad or concept. Students would then need to assess and argue whether the ad parody is justified in its attack. By offering a contradictory position to an existing ad, Adbusters content the contrary position to an ad – the other side of the story. Equipped with both sides of the story students can contrast and compare ideas to determine and justify their own position.

If this course is offered in your school as a grade 12 course offering, teachers may consider having students use this same criteria to assess either a print OR TV ad and report on their findings through a full essay format. This would add an additional learning objective: students will author an essay that reports on their critical analysis of an advertisement.

The teacher may want to remind students to include with their report(s) a copy of the ad(s) being analyzed.

Notes and Resources:

Media Literacy web resources are available, see Tab 4 Notes 4:1 Media Literacy and Criticism Links and 1:1 Design Foundations Internet Resources. These are also included with the Course Resource CD.

Homework:

Reminder of the two weekly sketches.

Students may also want to continue working on their ad assessments

Assessment:

See Rubric 4-1