Short Assignment 1: Media Literacy Handout – Analyzing the Media
English 182 / David Kumler

Prompt: For this assignment, you are required to produce a handout for a high school classroom intended to teach students about media literacy and critical media consumption. This handout should demonstrate media literacy skills by analyzing a specific piece of media. This object of analysis should either be something we would consider news or something that masquerades as news (for example, satire or native advertising). While your analysis will be an important component, in that it demonstrates how to be media literate, your primary emphasis should be *teaching media literacy skills* which are applicable in a variety of situations.

Your handout should include the following components:
- **Contextualizing information** that gives your reader a sense of what this handout is all about. (i.e., "The media we consume is not always reliable, so how do we evaluate it? This handout will walk you through some of the things to look for when you encounter a news story or something that looks like news…")
- **Sample analysis** that demonstrates media literacy in action. (i.e. "Let's look at an example. On November 12, 2016, the website *Breitbart* published an article called…")
- **Both images and text** in order to help your reader clearly follow your analysis. (i.e., screenshots or scanned images from the "news" article itself accompanied by arrows and textboxes)
- **Points of summation** which reduce your argument to its primary takeaways. (i.e., "So if you don't want to be misled by the news you encounter, always remember ____, ____, and ____.")

Formal Requirements: Your handout should include both visual and linguistic components. The strategies by which you incorporate these components are yours to determine. Feel free to use photography, sketching, diagrams, or any other visual media you find useful. While there is no formal length requirement, your handout probably shouldn't be longer than 1-2 pages. You should include with your project a statement of goals and purposes. Turn in as a PDF via Canvas.

Final Note: Remember that your audience for this piece is high school students (let's say freshmen) and that your ultimate goal is *to teach them how to be media literate*. That means you'll probably need to simplify your ideas in order to express them as clearly and concisely as possible. You won't want to be too wordy. You'll also want to choose memorable and effective examples to demonstrate your points. Consider: What would have made this lesson memorable and effective to *you* when *you* were a freshman in high school?

Short Assignment 2: Visual Essay
English 182 / David Kumler

Prompt: In the mid-1500s Michel de Montaigne used the word "essai" to describe a new form of writing: an *attempt* to meditate on an idea or an object and, hopefully (should the attempt be successful), to discover something about the self or the world through the process. Montaigne's personal essays focused on everything from sadness to government to smells to cannibals. Since his time, many writers have taken up his writing process and utilized it in various ways to produce new forms of writing and, ultimately, of knowledge. You've encountered some examples in this class. In the 1950s, Roland Barthes wrote essays on mundane objects in order to turn them inside out, as it were, and to reveal their "mythic" status. Today, essays are everywhere. They take the form of web comics (like *The Oatmeal*) or thought pieces (like those on *Buzzfeed* or *Thought Catalog*). We also find them in comic books and even (one might argue) YouTube video blogs. Perhaps the most ubiquitous modern form of the essay is simply the blog.

This assignment requires you to produce an essay in the tradition initiated by Michel de Montaigne. Because this is a multimodal composition class, you are asked to produce an essay that gives attention to both *visual* and the *linguistic* modes (as well as others, if you'd like). While the genre of this piece should be, broadly speaking, an *essay*, there are a few different subgenres in which you might operate. For instance, you might—like Roxane Gay or Matthew Inman—focus on your *personal* relationship to an idea or object. On the other hand, you might—like Roland Barthes—focus on the *cultural* significance of your subject matter. Regardless of your focus, you should use this essay as an opportunity to meditate on a specific object, idea, or phenomenon *with the ultimate aim of discovering something about yourself or culture more broadly*.

Your essay should include:
- **A well-developed focus** on a specific object, idea, or cultural phenomenon: i.e., toys (like Barthes), sadness (like Inman), or feminism (like Gay).
- **A clear organizational structure**: i.e., a beginning, middle, and end (although an aimless stream-of-consciousness may be very a useful technique to *begin* your writing process).
- **Purposeful use of both the linguistic and visual modes** (although you may utilize these modes in any way you choose and you are not limited *only* to these modes).

Formal Requirements: You are welcome to produce your essay by hand or digitally, but you will ultimately need to upload your project electronically through Canvas (if you work by hand, you can scan to PDF at the library). Make sure to scan the image at a high enough resolution for the text to be legible. Include a statement of goals and choices with your submission.

Final Note: You should imagine that you are writing this essay for a real and specific audience and context, but it is up to you to determine this. Your goal, then, is to produce a meditation or critical analysis which suggests *to your imagined audience* new ways of thinking or of seeing the world. (Possible audiences might be, for instance, students at the University of Washington, or readers of *The Atlantic*, or readers of *The Nib*, or people who like indie comics, or Kendrick Lamar fans, or Oakland Raiders fans, or people who love raw denim, or people who read cooking blogs—there are really no limits here, as long as you have a *clear* sense of who you're writing for.) You should also have a clear sense of how your essay would be disseminated to that audience, whether as a comic posted on *The Nib*, as a physical booklet printed and given away as a zine, or in some other form.

Major Project 1: Defamiliarization Project
English 182 / David Kumler

Prompt: Defamiliarization describes the act of rendering the familiar or the mundane in such a way that we perceive it anew—as odd, strange, or unfamiliar, as if we were encountering it for the first time. For this project you will—individually or with a group—work to create a multimodal project which defamiliarizes the familiar.

Your goal is to produce a multimodal composition that highlights, reveals, uncovers, inverts, or casts in a new light an idea, object, or phenomenon. Your range of options for this project is virtually unlimited, but we'll discuss some techniques for determining and narrowing your focus. An excellent example of this would be Paul Rucker's "Proliferation," which could be said to defamiliarize a number of things—the US map, US history, the prison system, or even the United States as a whole. Like Rucker, your goal should be less about *convincing* your audience view something from a new perspective (by, for instance, *arguing* that such-and-such perspective is important) and more about *showing* them this new perspective through the strategic use of multimodality.

Requirements:
- Your project should have **a specific and focused *goal* and clear *stakes***—keeping these central to your decision-making process will help you to determine and to narrow your focus.
- You should develop a sense of **your intended audience and your context**. Your rhetorical choices should be made accordingly.
- Your project will also need to include some **engagement with texts**—but remember that in this class just about anything can count as a text. The important thing here is that your defamiliarization is rooted in the examination of *actual* objects (rather than free-floating ideas).
- You will also need to **determine the *mode(s)* you will utilize and the *genre(s)* in which you will operate**. You might, for instance, incorporate photographs, technical schematics, sound recordings, videos, gifs, or any other media.
- With your project, you should turn in a **statement of goals and choices** in which you (1) identify your audience and context, (2) describe your goals and your stakes, and (3) describe the choices you've made in order to fulfil these goals (including your choice of genre).

Formal Requirements: You are welcome to use physical or digital media (or a combination thereof), but you will need to submit your project electronically, so please scan any physical projects. If digitization will not be possible, talk to me and we'll figure out another way for you to turn it in.

Final Note: Your ultimate goal here is to produce an artifact that forces your audience to see the familiar in a new way. The best projects will make it so that your audience never encounters your subject in quite the same way again. (If you're feeling stuck, see the examples on Canvas.)