

### Paper #3: Normative Assessment

#### From the Syllabus

"Paper/Presentation 3: The third paper will be a normative assessment of a current or recent fan culture phenomenon based on theoretical & critical perspectives taught in class.

Again, the length should be about 5 pages, made up of both a description of the phenomenon and a critical assessment (positive, negative, or both) offered from an ethical, ideological, or psychological perspective."

#### Make an Argument

Example thesis statements include:  
 "Starship Troopers promotes a racist ideology," "Brooklyn 99 uses comedy to subvert hegemonic masculinity,"  
 "Viewing Power Rangers increases the risk of imitative violence by young children," etc.

#### Different Genre, Different Norms

The first two papers were based on *personal narrative* and then some analysis.

This paper is all about making a clear & evidence-based argument.

#### CMS.621: Grading Rubric for Presentation

- \_\_\_ Does the presentation state a clear thesis statement?
- \_\_\_ Is there a clear forecast of the organizational structure?
- \_\_\_ Are the main points numbered and clearly identified throughout the presentation?
- \_\_\_ Is the quantity and quality of evidence appropriate for the claims?
- \_\_\_ Does the paper draw upon relevant theory to support its argument?
- \_\_\_ Does the speaker make a reasonable effort to make eye contact?
- \_\_\_ Is there appropriate vocal variety in the oral presentation?
- \_\_\_ Does the paper define any terms that need defining?
- \_\_\_ If slides are used, are they informed by a design strategy?
- \_\_\_ Is the wardrobe appropriate for a presentation?
- \_\_\_ Does the speaker employ non-distracting nonverbals (gestures, etc.)?
- \_\_\_ Is the conclusion an appropriate summary or wrap-up to the presentation?

#### What kind of Normative Assessment?

- Can be value-based, such as an ethical or ideological assessment.
- Can be an interpretive appreciation (in the book I call this creative-mediational).
- Can be an effects claim, arguing either for a positive or negative effect.

### Frameworks for Assessment

Upcoming classes and your assigned readings will discuss several approaches, including ideological critique and effects-based assessments.

Today I want to focus on two topics: The Myth of an Ideal Representation and when audience research (or theory) is helpful.

### The Myth of Ideal Representation

- Based on Chapter 1 of my book.
- Time allowing, we will look later at how unscientific critiques of comic book content led to the self-censorship of comics in the 1950s.
- The key is that much media criticism relies on a two step process...

### Textual Criticism

- **Step One:** *Here* is how to “read” the text. This is what it “means,” explicitly or implicitly.
- **Step Two:** Audience Conjecture —such a meaning influences audiences.

### Back to the Myth of Ideal Rep.

Let’s talk about the “Triad of Prejudice,” inspired by Sandra Bem’s work.

Type of Prejudice	Identity Beliefs	Normative Beliefs	Difference Beliefs
Sexism	Biological essentialism	Androcentrism	Gender polarization
Racism	Biological essentialism	Whiteness	Racial polarization
Heterosexism	Behavioral essentialism	Heteronormativity	Sexual polarization

### Back to the Myth of Ideal Rep.

The key is that you cannot undercut all three at once.

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### Audience Conjectures

- **Claims of Determinate Meaning:** *THIS* is the true meaning, explicitly or implicitly, of a given text.
- **Claims of Effects:** Experiencing this text *causes, leads to, or associated with* a given positive or negative effect.

### My position: Audience Conjectures

- My point in the book is that audience conjectures in scholarly writing *would be stronger* if backed with appropriate audience research.
- Example: Goodnight's claim about *Jurassic Park* & *The Firm* promoting postmodern skepticism toward science & the law among Gen Xers.

### Your "argumentative burden": Audience Conjectures

- You do NOT have to do audience research (though you can if you wish).
- But if you want to make causal claims, you will need to warrant those claims with appropriate social psychological theories of media influence, such as Cultivation Analysis or Social Learning Theory.

### Questions?

- Let's talk about Comic Books!

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