

Kilbourne Paper: Critical analysis of Gender Advertisements
for SpCm 323 New Due Date Tuesday April 24th

The book, *Can't Buy My Love* by Jean Kilbourne covers this analysis of advertising, which she refers to as contributing to a "toxic cultural environment." For this paper, you need to address one of the issues that Kilbourne addresses such as addictions (not just addiction to alcohol and cigarettes, but also addiction to romance, sex, spending money) women and body image, relationships to products such as cars, sexual violence and gendered relationships. You need to both summarize her theory about how advertising promotes harmful behaviors and stereotypes (focusing specifically on one of chapters in the book) and then choose 3 advertisements from two different popular magazines and analyze these ads in light of Kilbourne's theory and the gendered images portrayed. You can also discuss a television advertisement in lieu of two of the print advertisements, but you have to describe the advertisement in detail. The paper should have the advertisements attached and in the paper you will provide a close analysis of these advertisements using the methods discussed in class and modeled in Kilbourne's book. The papers should be written with attention to grammar, spelling, etc. which means please proofread the papers, or have someone else proofread them before they are handed in to me. The papers should be approximately 5 pages in length.

In the first part of the paper, referring to Kilbourne's book, explain why, according to Kilbourne, advertising is so "toxic," particularly to young women and girls and why we should take advertising seriously. Spend about 1 page summarizing her arguments in your own words. You can incorporate some brief quotes from Kilbourne, but **I want to see it expressed in your own words.**

In the second part of the paper, choose one of the chapters that focuses on a particular theme Kilbourne recognizes in advertising such as relationships, food obsession, distorted body images, violence against women, etc. Indicate which chapter you have chosen and why and within 1-2 pages summarize Kilbourne's argument and explain how the chapter makes you rethink advertising and its effects on you, people you know and the culture at large.

In the final 2-3 pages you will conduct your own analysis of advertising. Look for ads that fit within the theme of the chapter you have chosen. You should find either 3 print advertisements or one television advertisement (that should be videotaped) that seems to either exemplify the arguments that Kilbourne makes. You will need to briefly describe each ad - the visual and written components, and where you found the ad. Then discuss ways the ad exemplifies (or even contradicts) Kilbourne's argument. For example, does it present women as sex objects or empowered subjects? How? Does it suggest that cigarettes or alcohol is a form of rebellion or release? How? Does it visualize violence against women in some way? Does it encourage relationship with a product over a human relationship? Explain. Be specific with evidence and details from the visual and written text of the ad.

Here are some rhetorical concepts to help you think about the advertisements. Take your time, reflect on the images. Remember that the advertisers assume we'll just

absorb most of the image unconsciously. What you are learning and practicing here, therefore, is being conscious about the messages and values presented, particularly as they relate to gender. Read the copy carefully and discuss the images with your friends before you write. As you look closely use the following questions to guide your reflection and attention.

- 1). What is the argument of the advertisement - what is the product being sold and what are the values / ideals / perspectives being sold along with the product?
- 2). Think about the fact that according to John Berger as others, women must always be conscious of themselves as being surveyed by another, i.e. by the male gaze. "Men *act* and women *appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." How is this represented in the advertisements?
- 3). What are the emotional appeals being used? Does the ad encourage fear, curiosity, anger, compassion, the need for closeness, sex, etc.
- 4). How is color and form used to appeal to men or women?
- 5). Do objects get personified (endowed with human attributes) how? Are the attributes more male or female or androgynous?
- 6). Does it present some kind of suspense - a suggestion of something to come? i.e. a romantic encounter. How is that tension or suspense generated and what outcome is suggested? How is tension conveyed by the arrangement of the people and objects in the image, particularly by the location men in relation to women.
- 7). Do the visual images operate as metaphors? Is the humor or irony being used? How and to what end?
- 8). Is there a "fantasy theme" that the advertisement taps into? Some shared cultural belief or myth related to gender stereotypes, relationships between men and women, etc.? Describe what it is.
- 9). How are people of color presented in the advertisement? Are any stereotypes operating?