POSTMODERN WRITING PROJECT

For the first project in this course, you will choose a text and compose a 3-5 page persuasive essay discussing its postmodern elements (or lack thereof). You may choose any text that you would like, although I am providing you with a list of possible texts below. Keep in mind that “text” is a broad term, and it can really apply to pretty much anything; so keep an open mind when choosing your topic.

Especially since you are writing about postmodernity, I want these essays to be interesting and engaging to your reader. Do not feel bound by Times New Roman 12 point font, or really any of the traditional boundaries of an essay. While your end product still has the same goal as a traditional persuasive essay (to, you know, persuade me about your position), I encourage you to go about achieving it in some way other than a typical five-paragraph essay. Feel free to include graphics, to experiment with structure...

Questions I will ask myself when I grade your classroom discussion:

- Does this essay engage with the concept of postmodernity in a complex way?
- Does it discuss the text intelligently, and is the text appropriate for this sort of discussion?
- Does the author do something original, either in terms of topic, approach, style, or layout?
- Is it persuasive? Does it make a clear, coherent argument?
- Is the essay both grammatically correct and stylistically interesting?

ORAL PROJECT: Discussion Leading (100 pts.)

Early in the course, you will sign up for a day to co-lead the discussion. You and a partner will be responsible for presenting the material and guiding the discussion for your day, and I encourage you to do so in whatever way that you see fit. With that said, since I will be grading your efforts, I am guessing that you would like me to give you some guidelines…

You will essentially be responsible for a 20-25 minute presentation and discussion on your assigned day that covers whatever elements of the assigned reading that you choose. Do not feel pressure to cover every aspect of the reading; instead, choose whatever highlights you wish to cover in the time that you have available. Furthermore, be sure that you engage the audience. Do not feel that you have to speak the entire time; instead, find ways to get everyone involved.

Consider doing research, preparing focal questions to provoke discussions (as well as backup questions for when those don’t work), planning an activity of some sort to engage your audience, and thinking about ways of keeping everyone involved and interested. I will help you as much as I possibly can to avoid awkward silences and keep the momentum of the discussion on track and moving forward. With that said, remember that you are being graded on doing those things, so definitely be prepared.

Questions I will ask myself when I grade your classroom discussion:

- Did you present the material clearly and coherently?
- Did your presentation include an effective, productive discussion of the reading material?
- Did you facilitate the discussion in an engaging way that kept everyone interested?
- Did you know the material?
- Did you provoke enough discussion and plan enough activities to fill your time?
- Did you demonstrate effective qualities of oral communication throughout?

Note: My intention is to give you and your co-leader the same score – i.e. scoring the entire presentation rather than your individual performance during it. With that said, I reserve the right to break that rule and assign different grades to each member, if I see fit.
Postmodern Visual Project: Judging a Book by Its Cover

Due: Tuesday, November 3, in class.

For this assignment, you will make a visual argument about one of the books that we are reading for this course. This argument will take the form of a 24" x 36" poster that will serve as the cover for your book. You will need to consider the following elements in your cover design:

- Your image should make an argument about your book; for instance, my cover of *Watchmen* might include a large image of a Rorschach ink blot. This image obviously has a number of implications, including the character Rorschach, as well as the focus on reflection and mirror images in multiple chapters.
- How much will your cover reveal about the book? Will you depict a specific moment, place, character, conflict, or will you choose a seemingly unrelated image as a symbol for the theme or message of the play? While your cover can seem unrelated at first glance, it must bear some meaningful significance to the play.
- Which medium(s) will you use? Photography, text, drawing, computer images, abstract art, etc?
- Color: will you use color or black and white? How does your choice of colors contribute to your message? For example, using black and white can make an image seem older, more mysterious, or more serious. Using bold colors like red or yellow suggests action and excitement, etc.
- Text--will your poster include text? If so, how much, and how prominent will it be? You'll need to consider readability as well as style. Big, bold, block letters suggest something very different than a flowery font. Remember that contrasting images and font can be used to create irony.
- Remember that people will judge a book by its cover, and that a cover is another marketing technique used to sell books, so your cover should garner interest from potential readers.

Along with your poster, you'll submit a 1-2 page justification in which you will discuss your design choices, including the following:

- What argument does your cover make about the book?
- How will your image attract or interest potential readers?
- Discuss the choices you made in image composition and the layout of the cover.
- Discuss your color selection--why did you choose the colors you chose?
- What is the relationship between the text and the image?
- Discuss your choice of font--how does it relate to both the text and the image?

Below is a link that gives some basic instructions on how to design a poster using MS PowerPoint, but you're welcome to use other programs.
http://www.pop.psu.edu/info-core/library/handout-ppt.pdf
The term revision is a broad one, in the sense that it can accommodate many different types of responses to a text. Someone engaging in revision could create a wholly new text that is only tangentially related to or dependent upon the previous text to make sense; on the other hand, an act of revision could be a translation of a text from one language to another or one medium to another.

On Tuesday, November 3 you will divide into groups of five. Each group will have members with different specialties and interests – a leader, a head writer, a visual designer, a researcher, and a web designer. In class, we will use these classifications to help determine groups, although ultimately this will fall on all of you. So speak up and get your ideas out there.

Your group will be responsible for revising one of the texts that we have read, watched, studied, discussed, or even just mentioned in class. Honestly, you can choose any text that you wish, with my approval. Your act of revision must involve some form of technology, although the medium in which you present it is up to you. I have mentioned some of my ideas in class – annotating a text electronically, turning a novel into a graphic novel, creating a series of blogs from the perspectives of different characters. But, honestly, I am most interested in seeing how you take up the challenge of this project. Please do not all create Facebook pages for various characters… I am over that. But think of how you can revise a postmodern text using a form of modern technology. One really common reason for translating a text onto the web is promotion, and you can definitely consider acts of advertisement to be revisions. So, creating viral videos about a particular novel or film would be an acceptable topic.

In addition to your project (which will likely exist on the web, or on a CD, or in some other unwieldy form), you will submit a 3-5 page explication of your project. In this explication – which should itself display qualities of effective visual design and written communication – you need to contextualize your project. What is the target audience – what would you do with this in the real world – why is it interesting or important – how have you revised your text? You may also, if you see fit, discuss how it was created and present the narrative of its creation (this is optional).

Also, please be sure to save some form of early draft of the project (or of your individual part of the project) to use for the final Portfolio Project.

The questions I will ask myself about your project:

- Does this project revise a postmodern text in a compelling and sophisticated way?
- Does this project incorporate technology effectively and productively in the revision?
- Is the project professional enough to function in the real-world?
- Has sufficient work been done by all members of this group?
- Is the companion written piece compelling in both style and content?

Your final project is due on December 1, the Tuesday of Dead Week. By classtime, it should be fully functional – whether you are posting it to the web (in which case you should submit your written document in class, with your link indicated on it) or submitting it in some other format. We will spend the next month working in class on this project; I strongly advise you to bring things to do during this time. Use this time to your advantage, or it will simply be wasted. Lastly, good luck!