Sec. 13180  MWF 11:00-11:50 (King 339)
Instructor: Brian Doan (Brian.Doan@oberlin.edu, office hours: MWF 10-10:50 a.m. and by appt.)
(Meetings can be held at Azariah’s or the Local/Slow Train, depending on preference.)

(Email is a really good way to get ahold of me—I will respond as promptly as I can, M through F and on Sundays. See “Communications” section below.)

Course description
Perhaps life needs to be deciphered like a cryptogram. Secret staircases, frames from which the paintings quickly slip aside and vanish (giving way to an archeangel bearing a sword or to those who must forever advance), buttons which must be indirectly pressed to make an entire room move sideways or vertically, or immediately change all of its furnishings; we may imagine the mind’s greatest adventure as a journey of this sort to the paradise of pitfalls.

--Andre Breton, Nadja

This course is designed for students interested in exploring what it means to write about and through various forms of media. Through a combination of papers, blogs and presentations, students will think about the rhetorics involved in forms like advertising, television, comics, movies, and popular music, while developing the analytical skills to help them better understand these varied modes of media expression. In doing so, they will also be introduced to different modes of college writing, ways to develop fluency and facility with academic forms and rhetorical terms, and skills that can be applied across the college curriculum. The class will serve as a writing community in which students read and discuss the work of classmates. Students will write often, reflect on their individual writing process, and meet regularly with the instructor to discuss progress.

Course Goals
• Improve your writing skills for college-level work;
• Develop critical thinking skills in reading and writing;
• Understand how media texts communicate ideas, stories, and arguments to varied audiences, and develop critical thinking about these kinds of texts;
• Learn to productively revise your work, based on feedback from professor and your fellow students;
• Learn to constructively engage in discussion with your fellow students in a college-level class;
• Learn to communicate to varied audiences with your own multi-modal work (papers, blogs, presentations, etc.).

Required Course Materials
Books:
BOOK AVAILABLE AT OBERLIN BOOKSTORE & ONLINE VIA THE BOOKSTORE WEBSITE (http://oberlin.bncollege.com/). The printed and e-book versions are both fine. The PDF versions are considerably cheaper than the hard copies.

- Graff and Birkenstein. They Say/I Say (3rd ed.)
- PDF scans of various articles, ads, and comics (These will be posted to Blackboard by Prof. Doan; you are expected to have copies—either printed out or on your computer/electronic device—for discussion on assigned class day).

Other:
• Four pocket folders (not file/manila folders) for maintaining working-draft folders (a.k.a. paper portfolios) and your term portfolio.
• At least two methods of document storage, like a memory stick. (Don’t just save to your hard drive or to cloud storage!)
• As the semester progresses you will need to be able to use your Google Docs account (which is part of your campus Gmail account) for exchanging drafts. We’ll cover it in class if you don’t know how to use it yet.

Blackboard: Check Blackboard after every class session; it contains the most updated information. Homework, schedule changes, and readings will be available at 4:30 after each class.

Media Resources/Library Materials
There will be at least two screenings over the course of the semester (see week-by-schedule), as well as clips played in class. Materials will be put on reserve in the Mudd and Music libraries, and I encourage you to also re-watch/listen again to the material on your own. Just as discussing and revising your work can help you to see and understand your ideas in a new way, going back and re-engaging with a media text can help you to better understand an argument or idea that was not readily apparent the first time you went through it. These media texts will be discussed in class and will regularly be part of your written assignments. You are expected to take and keep notes on the texts, and to review your notes for discussions and papers.

Attendance Policy and Absences
You are required to attend all class meetings, and to be prepared to thoughtfully discuss the materials assigned for that day (or, if it is a workshop day, to discuss papers and projects). You are also required to attend the two official screenings.

After two unexcused absences, your final grade will drop one half-step for every further absence (so, for instance, an absence could make a final grade drop from a B+ to a B). More than seven absences will
result in a failing grade for the course.

Generally speaking, excused absences require documentation from health services, a physician, or a dean. Extracurricular activities—such as a performance or sporting event—can also be excused. Your grade can also be affected by discussion section participation. Useful, articulate participation will be rewarded, especially if your average is at the borderline between grades.

It is up to the student to determine what they have missed in class due to an absence.

**Late Work**
Papers and projects are due on the dates listed on the week-to-week breakdown; workshop drafts should be brought to class on the dates listed. Failure to turn in completed assignments on the due date will result in a half-grade drop for each late day; failure to provide your workshop group with a draft on an assigned day will also result in a half-grade drop for that paper. Meeting deadlines shows a respect for your fellow students that is an important part of the college learning experience. If there are unavoidable circumstances that will not allow you to meet these final assignment/draft due dates, please see me well ahead of time, so I am aware that you might have a conflict (a performance, a sporting event, etc.).

**The Honor Code and Plagiarism**
In this course, I expect you to live by the Honor Code. Please write and sign the honor pledge (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment”) on all your work. I will return assignments that are submitted without the signed honor pledge.

**Please do not plagiarize your work.**

Even if your plagiarism is unintentional, we are required to encourage students to self-report their infractions or report it to the Honor Court ourselves. The Writing Center (located in Mudd 101A and Mudd 052 and is open Sunday through Thursday), the Department of Rhetoric and Composition, and this course offer you multiple resources for learning about academic honesty and best practices.

- You must place directly quoted material in quotation marks and cite it in the body of your paper and your Works Cited.
- If you are paraphrasing or otherwise drawing on ideas from other materials (books, magazines, journals, newspapers, websites, videos, class discussions, emails, etc.), you must still cite it with parenthetical citations within the text and in your Works Cited.
- If you have ANY questions about whether or not you are doing this correctly, PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH ME. It’s far better to feel a little sheepish and ask then to not do so, and get yourself in trouble. **There’s nothing wrong with saying “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure”—really great work begins when we admit we don’t know something. This doesn’t make your question “stupid”—it makes you smart for asking it.**
- Independent of the Honor Court’s findings, plagiarism most often results in an automatic 0 for the plagiarized assignment and a possible F or NP in the course.

**Discrimination and Harassment**
Oberlin College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family relationship to an employee of Oberlin College, disability, veteran status, or gender expression or identity.

Harassment is unwelcome speech or conduct (e.g., physical, oral, graphic, or written) related to one or more of the categories as previously noted that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive so as to (a) interfere substantially with a person’s work or education or (b) create an environment that a reasonable
person would find hostile, offensive, or intimidating. Discrimination is any decision, act, or failure to act that substantially interferes with a person’s work or education when such decision, act, or failure to act is based on the categories listed above. Discrimination includes retaliation.

Discriminatory and/or harassing behavior will not be tolerated. Should either arise, please speak to me as soon as possible so we can deal with the matter immediately.

Disabilities
If you have a documented disability, please speak with me about any accommodations you may need for an assignment. Please bring notification from the Office of Students with Disabilities, either to class or to a scheduled meeting with me. If you haven’t done so already, you will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28; ODS will help you secure the paperwork you need for your accommodations to be put in place. For more information: http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/index.dot

Class Participation

This is the kind of course that requires engagement. The conversations we have in here, and that you have amongst yourselves in your workshops, will not only be stimulating in and of themselves, but will hopefully translate into better written work and better presentations. Engagement, enthusiasm, and a willingness to talk at least once or twice in each class period help the classroom to function as a place of learning, and I will expect you to come ready, prepared and willing for productive exchanges with the rest of the class; quality outweighs quantity, and is demonstrated by an ability to listen to what others are saying, to ask good questions, and to think through one’s own ideas. In doing so, you will be contributing to an environment that helps all of us experiment with, and reflect upon, new ways of thinking about media and our own writing.
One more point!: The nature of this kind of media-driven course is that there are always more films, books, shows, etc., that I’d like to share together than we have time for, so I encourage you to offer suggestions for supplementary reading/viewing/listening throughout the semester.

Semester Breakdown
The first nine weeks of the semester will move on two parallel tracks: We will think about the mechanics of our writing while also thinking about the “language” and rhetoric of five basic media forms: advertising, comics, cinema, television, and popular music. By exploring these forms through a variety of short writing assignments, you will have the opportunity to develop your own writing voice, workshop papers with your classmates, and get feedback that will allow you to revise and strengthen your work. You will also be engaging with the ideas of other writers via the course books and Blackboard articles, thinking about how to evaluate claims and materials as preparation for the larger research paper of the second half of the semester.

Questions of grammar and structure will be addressed, but these papers should also provide you a safe “practice” space for getting comfortable with writing about media in a new way—this might seem obvious, but I’d argue that media texts ask us to stretch and rethink many older notions about the relationship between author, subject and form, in part because we are translating forms that combine image, sound, and text into words. What does that mean, and how can we approach this question? What would it mean to not only write about media, but to write with media? In thinking through these ideas, a process of trial and error, revision, and feedback will guide you toward a greater confidence in applying your own voice to the material you choose to look at in the second half of the fall.
In the second half of the semester, we will continue our exploration of media forms, going back to think about movies, TV, comics, and music in greater depth, paired with different readings. I will also ask you to work on a larger research project as your final assignment. You will choose a text from whichever of the five forms—movies, comics, music, advertising, or television—you are the most interested in, and do a larger research paper on that text. This can be a film, a TV episode, an ad (or series of ads), a comic book/graphic novel, or a piece of music. You will develop this project via scheduled library visits, in-class workshops, meetings with the professor, and end-of-semester oral presentations. Your approach to the text you choose should be guided by the analytical skills you developed in the first half of the semester, and you should use the guidance and feedback as tools to develop your ideas and perspectives.

**Communication with Professor**

**Online Communication**
I respond to email as quickly as possible before 9 p.m. E-mail is also a rhetorical form; therefore, I reserve the right not to respond to rude or disrespectful emails. We can work out issues most effectively if we handle them constructively. It is never a good idea to email a professor and say something like, “Did we do anything important in class?” Everything we do in class is important and has a purpose, even if it doesn’t necessarily seem so.

**Time and Privacy Issues**
I encourage you to talk to me throughout the semester without waiting for a required conference. For a variety of reasons, however, it’s best that we discuss certain issues, especially class performance and disability accommodation, privately, outside of the classroom. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects your academic privacy, which means that I can’t legally discuss your academic progress in front of other students. Additionally, the time between classes is when the next class using the room will set up and take care of learning needs, which is difficult to do if the departing class takes excessive time to clear out. You’re always welcome to check in, and I encourage you to do so; let’s just take care of our meeting logistics in a way that best suits everyone’s needs and upholds each student’s privacy.

**Assignments and Grade Percentages**
1) Diagnostic Essay: Describe a Media Experience (no grade)
2) Short Assignment #1: Advertising/Comics (15%)
3) Short Assignment #2: Film (15%)
4) Short Assignment #3: Pop Music/TV (15%)
5) Research Project/Oral Presentation: 10-12 page essay and presentation (30%)
6) Blog Posts: (15%)
7) Attendance and Participation: (10%)
ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Diagnostic Essay
Length: 3 pages
Due September 9
For this assignment, I would like you to choose a media experience, and describe the way that a specific SITUATION OF RECEPTION shaped your understanding of what you were watching, reading, or listening to.

You should pick ONE interesting situation of media of which you have direct, personal experience.

Examples might include, but are in no way limited to, the following:

For Movies:
- going to a gigantic multiplex
- going to an art house cinema showing something rare
- going to your small, local hometown theater
- watching a disc or streaming channel with friends or family
- watching a film (or part of one) on YouTube
For Music:
- Listening to a song or album on your I-pod (or similar device) while doing something else (homework, exercise, chores, etc.).
- Going to a live concert
- Watching a music video
- Listening to mix/playlist someone made for you
- Streaming music on Spotify (or a similar service)

For Comics:
- Reading a single issue of a series
- Reading a trade collection or stand-alone graphic novel
- Reading a comic digitally
- Reading a comic for a class (as opposed to just on your own)

For TV:
- Binging a television series
- Watching a show weekly with the same group of people
- Streaming a program over computer, phone, etc.
- Coming into a room where a show is playing, but missing the first part of it
- Watching an older series (one that might not be on anymore) via disc

Here are some to cover with your essay:

1) Tell me a story: Anecdotes are sometimes our best vehicles for a more interesting understanding of media. Be specific about details—Where you were, how you got there, whom (if anyone) you’re with, the dimensions and type of screen, the size of the speakers at the concert or the headphones in your listening device, the medium on which it’s stored, the duration of the experience/time of day, the way the book or the digital device felt in your hands as you read, etc. Context is important, too—When did you consume this media? What else was happening in your life?

2) Tell me about the text itself: In the space allotted, you can’t obviously go into a lot of detail, but give me some highlights. What was the best scene in the movie? What were the actors like in the TV show? How did the music sound? What did the art in the comic look like? (These are just examples—you should feel free to zero in on the part of the text you find the most interesting).

3) Step back and analyze your experience: Once you’ve told me your story, step back and analyze your experience. What did you think of the movie, the concert, the album, the book, or the show? How did your specific experience shape your understanding/enjoyment of this media text? What kinds of personal habits, beliefs, and expectations might have shaped your experience?

While there is no strict breakdown of step-to-length, one easy rule of thumb might be to think about each of the steps above taking up about a page (you can adjust as needed from there, if one section needs to be longer or shorter). The purpose of this essay, aside from giving you some early practice at media writing (and giving me a sense of your writing), is to think about two things: 1) The personal element in how we understand and enjoy media; and 2) The context within which we receive media. Both of these elements—the subjective and the environmental—can shape our understanding of what we’re reading/seeing/hearing in interesting ways.
Short Assignment 1
Advertising/Comics Analysis
Length: 4 pages
Due: September 26

This assignment asks you to analyze the relationship between word and image in a printed text, thinking about the story, theme, and meaning that this relationship creates for the reader.

Choose one print ad or 1-2 pages of a comic/graphic novel. Please attach a scan/print-out (or link, if it’s online) with your paper, so I can refer back to what you are analyzing. You may choose any ad or set of comics pages that you like—there is no limit on style, subject matter, time period, place of origin, etc. It should be an ad or a comic that grabs you—you’re going to spending time going over it and revising your work, so it should be something you find fascinating (which doesn’t mean you have to like it—we are often fascinated by things that annoy us, especially when it comes to media).

Using the terminology from class discussions and references to readings, please tell me what is happening in the ad or comic. What does it look like? What does it say? (I’m not asking for a word-for-word transcription of text, but a general summary, with a few key words, sentences, or phrases for emphasis). How are the images placed on the page? How does your eye move across the page? How do words and images seem to interact?

Once you’ve described the ad or comic page(s), tell me what you think the larger “meaning” is that they are generating.

If it’s an ad—what is the ad trying to sell you or convince you of? What is the worldview of the ad? How does its use of image and text reflect its time period, its marketplace (like, for example, automobiles, or alcohol, or politics), and issues of culture (for example, race/gender/class)?

If it’s a comic book—what is the larger story or text these pages fit into? Why are these pages important? And just as with the ad—what is it “selling” you through its story? How does this tale reflect time period, genre (superheroes, or horror, or romance, or true-life history, or…), and the same kinds of broader issues of culture noted above?

Short Assignment 2
Film and the Re-mix
Length: About 4 pages (6-10 songs or musical pieces (classical movements, arias, or other non-pop/jazz forms)
Due: October 7

We have been talking for a couple of weeks about how narrative ordering and editing patterns can affect our understanding of both individual elements in a scene or shot (lighting, performance, sound, etc.), as well as our understanding of the film as a whole (what is its plot, themes, viewpoint, etc.). This can sometimes seem like an abstract exercise, particularly if we are not writers or filmmakers ourselves. But there’s an analogue to this process that we might be more familiar with: the mix or playlist.

Think about the process of making mixes on tape, CD, or other digital forms (i-tunes, Spotify, Tidal, etc.), and the thought that goes into it. Where do you start? Do you have a theme in mind (like “romance mix” or “workout list”)? Do you begin with a collection of songs, or one song that you know has to go on there, and proceed out to find a larger structure? How do you move from song to song—do you like a smooth flow or a strong contrast between tunes? Does that flow or juxtaposition come through melody, instrumentation, voice, lyrical content? And how does audience affect your work—does your process
differ depending on who’s going to hear it?

With all these elements in mind, I would like you to make me an imaginary “RHET 106” mix.

1) I’m not actually asking you to record or burn your mix, but to list the songs on paper, in order, at the top of the first page (Please note— I’m using the term “song” generically here to suggest the list’s separate pieces, but you should feel free to have a movement from a symphony, an aria from a favorite opera, a piece of ambient music, a Gregorian chant, or anything else as a “song” amidst your mix). There are no limits on songs in terms of musical or lyrical content, except those you impose yourself.

2) On the next page-and-a-half or so, take a moment to tell me why you put the songs in this order (what does it achieve moving from piece to piece in this manner?), and also describe the process you used to come up with this order (which might be different—we sometimes don’t know what our larger themes—as writers, filmmakers or DJs—are until we’ve finished). Think about the Blackboard excerpts from Cassette From My Ex and Hang the DJ as models—how do those writers talk about sequencing, and the meaning that shapes both its creation and reception?

3) Finally, on the last page-and-a-half or so, think about how this relates to what we’ve been discussing with film narrative and style in class. How does this process of mixing and matching help you think about the ideas of narrative and in relation to movies? Please reference class readings while doing so.

Short Assignment 3
TV/Pop Music Comparison & Contrast
Length: 4-5 pages
Due: October 31

RHET 106 is a course about writing and media, and one of its goals is to begin a dialogue in your head about how different forms of media relates to, influence, and speak to one another. With that in mind, I would like you to do a comparison/contrast paper about movies and television, our two most-recently discussed art forms, utilizing class readings on TV and music as you do so. However, I’d like this to be a bit more fun and offbeat than the kinds of comparison/contrast paper you might have done in the past. Here’s an experiment, one designed to get you thinking about media interaction on the level of both form and content:

HERE’S THE PITCH
This assignment involves utilizing a website called “Oblique Strategies,” based on a set of cards designed by musician, producer and visual artist/theorist Brian Eno. The cards were designed as a way to overcome artistic block in the recording studio. Each card had an instruction on it; Eno and the musicians would shuffle the deck, pull a card, and force themselves to follow its guidelines. It was rare that the instructions would literally tell them what to play (they never said, “Play a minor chord” or “Return to the original chorus”); instead, the more metaphorical phrasing of the cards (“Revaluation (a warm feeling)” or “Towards the insignificant”) forced an interpretation on the part of the singer or drummer or bassist that would subtly seep into whatever they were playing. In that sense, by giving themselves up to form and chance, they could get out of their ruts, repetitions and blocks, and at least begin to generate songs or jams that might lead to something useful and (best of all) new.

The idea is that what initially seems like a restriction (“I must follow this instruction”) actually frees you up from the anxiety of “I don’t know what to write or play” by offering a subtle prompt (“now I don’t have to worry about how to start”); the form of the writing will hopefully generate ideas and creative
impulses within these “strict” guidelines.

How might this work for academic writing about media, which can also sometimes feel like a five-paragraph essay assembly line of the familiar? Especially in writing about TV and popular music, spaces that depend on the alchemy an ensemble (musical, televisual), of balancing the planned and the accidental, which take fragments (songs, movements, scenes, episodes) and put them into a whole, how might Eno’s Oblique Strategies help us to write about mixed media? What I would like you to do is to use an online version of Eno’s cards to craft your comparison and contrast between an album and a TV show (each of your choice), by following the instructions below.

**FOLLOW THESE STEPS**

- Go the *Oblique Strategies* website (http://tools.blackhat-seo.com/strategies/#) and follow the directions to click to the “cards” (actually web pages whose aphorisms—drawn from Eno’s cards and randomly shuffled by the site’s engine—mimic the shuffling of a deck).

- Write down the instructions offered on the first THREE cards that flash up; don’t worry for now about what they say, just jot down the first three that come up. Note: There have been several editions of the cards, and the site has it broken down into those editions. It does not matter to me from which of the various editions you draw your three instructions: you can draw all from one, two from one and one from another, or whatever. Once you’ve done that, begin to ponder their meaning.

- Choose a TV show, then choose one episode from that show. This can be any show, from any period, place, or genre, as long as you can get me a link to it on YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, or another streaming service.

- Choose one album, of any style of music. Choose one song or section from that album. As with the TV show, it doesn’t matter when or where it comes from, as long as I have a way of hearing it (via the Oberlin library, an online link, etc.).

- Use the three Oblique Strategies instructions you’ve jotted down as a guide for writing your short paper. Write each prompt that you use in bold type. The instructions will act as your guides to write the paper once you’ve chosen the episode/piece. You must use at least one of the instructions as a prompt when writing. So, how will you use it/them (you may use any or all of the three—I told you to choose three so you’d have options in case one stymied you)? What do the instructions suggest? Remember the musicians in the studio—the instructions may have a literal meaning that’s helpful, but like the shows and music you are writing about, they can also function metaphorically and metonymically; what they *suggest* is as important as what they literally “say.”

- Using the instructions as guides, craft a comparison/contrast of your two texts, thinking about what they look like, how they sound, what kinds of stories they tell or emotions they inspire, etc., based on the language of your Oblique Strategies prompts as your guide/inspiration. For instance—I just clicked on one of the decks at random, and it gave me this: “Into the impossible.” Is there something in the TV show you’ve chosen, or the musical piece, that might fit that description or emotion? If so, how does each text do it similarly or differently? Be imaginative—I want you to use the language we’ve been talking about for these forms in class, but a more “creative writing” style is fine here, too—the cards are rich in imagery, metaphor, and tone, and your language can reflect that within your analysis.

- Finally, take a page or so to think about two things: 1) The broader similarities or differences
between TV and music as media forms, and what writing about them reveals for you; 2) How the cards were or were not helpful as prompts/guides. How did they interact with the works of art, and shape the analysis you wrote about them?

Research Project/Oral Presentation
Length: 10-12 page essay (and presentation)
Presentations: Ideas workshop during Week 12; Final presentations during Weeks 14 and 15
Project Due Date: Wednesday, December 14

As noted in the “Semester Breakdown” section of the syllabus, this is a research project asking you to apply the rhetorical tools and writing practice from the first half of the class to a media text of your choosing. Your approach can draw on any number of approaches: formal, historical, cultural, autobiographical, or some combination of any of these, while also drawing on the research skills and resources we will review in tandem with the staff at the Mudd Library. You will also present twice on your research projects, once as a “practice” session and then again in a more formal and developed way at the end of the semester. A more detailed description of both the project and the presentations will be given out in class after the Fall Break.

For now, I will simply warn you about using Wikipedia, and suggest you not be like this guy.

“Wikipedia is the best thing ever. Anyone in the world can write anything they want about any subject, so you know you are getting the best possible information.”

Blog Posts
The exact shape of this will be announced in the second week of class. But once we are up and going, I would like you to post at least two or three times a week (you are welcome to post more than that) on the media texts, readings, class discussions, assignments and any related subjects (such as current movies or TV or comics or music, discussions from other classes that might relate, etc.). The posts can (and should) take many forms: writing, certainly, but also scanned images, embedded videos, relevant links, etc.

I will provide some initial prompts—short questions or statements that you should respond to with your own posts, with regard to readings, films, discussion, etc.—in the first few weeks of the blogging. But you should also generate your own posts and ideas. The posts should go beyond “I agree!” or “That sucks!” and make relevant and thoughtful queries and arguments about the materials (it's ok to say, “I don’t understand fill-in-the-blank”—in fact, I encourage it, because saying “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure about this” are good beginnings for intellectual exploration—but in saying that, please try to explain why you don’t understand it, how you think
it’s functioning, why it bothers you, etc., so your fellow classmates have something on which to build). You should also comment on one another’s posts in the comments threads, choosing at least two posts by different students per week to comment on (please be polite when doing so, though, even when disagreeing with one another). Blog posts might also be used by me as discussion starters in class.

One of the things a blog teaches (or perhaps reminds) us is that “writing” is a not a transparent, one-to-one translation of thought to page or screen, but a technology, one whose mediation by a given tool (whether pen, computer or tablet) can shape that thought in provocative and unexpected ways (how often have we not been precisely sure how we felt on an issue until we wrote our thoughts down? How different is your verbal discussion of an issue from the way you’d write about it an email to a friend, or write about it in a class paper?).

This seems especially relevant for a “Writing About Media” class, a space where we're already talking about the intersection of all kinds of visual, written, and sonic elements. Blogging about the materials of the course can do many things: offer an extension of discussions we begin in class but don’t always have time to finish; give students who are shy a space to express themselves (thus fostering a stronger sense of community); turn everyone (including me) on to related texts we might not be aware of, but which might be great connections to what we’re exploring in class. But more than anything, as you blog, I would like you to think about how (in linking, embedding, and playing with image and word) you are not just thinking through the ideas of the class but PERFORMING the ideas of the class— not just consuming media, but creating it yourselves.
Week-By-Week Overview

Week One: What Is Media?/Writing?/This Course?
Monday, Aug. 29
Course introduction, syllabus review, getting to know each other, etc.

Wednesday, Aug. 31
What is Media? What is College Writing?
Assign Diagnostic Essay (see “Assignment Descriptions”)

Friday Sept. 2
Reading: Graff & Birkenstein, “Preface: Demystifying The Academic Conversation” (pp. xvi-xxvi) and “Entering the Conversation” (pp.1-15); what is a “media rhetoric”?

Week Two: Here’s The Pitch: Advertising

Monday, Sept. 5
LABOR DAY (No class)

Wednesday, Sept. 7
Begin conversation on advertising: look at examples online (print and video). How is an argument made?

Friday Sept. 9
DIAGNOSTIC ESSAYS DUE
Continue advertising discussion, begin transition to comics
Week Three: Image/Text/Meaning: Comics

Monday, Sept. 12

Start comics discussion: Types of comics, theory, audience, etc. How do we begin to think about reading comics, and how do they challenge our reading position(s)? Return/Discuss Diagnostic Essays, writing fundamentals.

Wednesday, Sept. 14

Thinking about Genre and Audience: Superheroes and Romance Comics: Discuss issues/materials posted to BB. Begin to discuss Advertising/Comics Short Assignment

Friday, Sept. 16

Thinking about Genre and Audience: Horror/Fantasy/Science Fiction Comics: Discuss issues/materials posted to BB.
Week Four: Moving Images: Form, Narrative and Spectacle in Cinema

NOTE: There will be an out-of-class screening this week and next. We will consult as a class as to the best times for everyone, and will announce those times the week before each.

Monday, Sept. 19
Transitioning from Comics to Movies: Discuss differences between the still image of comics and moving image—what are the different rhetorics involved? Watch clips from various films in class, discuss terminology.

Wednesday, Sept. 21
Workshop day: Advertising/Comics Paper

Friday, Sept. 23
Talk about The Force Awakens in class, discuss readings.

Week Five: Fantasias: Animation, Argument and Audience

Monday, Sept. 26
FIRST SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE
Talk about animation, view various clips, discuss readings. How is the rhetoric of an animated film different from live action? Begin to discuss second short assignment.

Wednesday, Sept. 28
Talk about Inside Out in class, discuss readings
**Friday, Sept. 30**
Begin transition from talking about film to talking about TV.

**Week Six: Televisuals: Writing and Talking About TV (Network and Cable)**

**Monday, Oct. 3**
**Workshop Day: Mix-Tape (film) Short Assignment**

**Wednesday, Oct. 5**
Begin discussing TV rhetoric, readings, and favorite shows in-class, view various clips.

**Friday, Oct. 7**
Discuss *Buffy*, *Friday Night Lights* and *Mad Men* in class, discuss readings.

**Week Seven: Compositions and Improvisations: Talk About Pop Music**

**Monday, Oct. 10**
**SECOND SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE**
Watch parts of *Lemonade* in-class
Discuss Third Short Assignment
Wednesday, Oct. 12
YOM KIPPUR (NO CLASS)

Friday, Oct. 14
Class cancelled (Holiday and Fall Break); available by appt.

Week Eight
Monday, Oct. 17—Friday, Oct. 21: FALL BREAK (No class) (Work on Third Short Assignment!) 

Week Nine: The Moviegoers (Film, Research, etc.)

THIS WEEK WILL INVOLVE A SCREENING TRIP (EVENING) TO THE OBERLIN APOLLO. SPECIFIC DATE/TIME TBA.

Monday, Oct. 24
Library Day (Tentative): Talking about Research and Materials

Wednesday, Oct. 26
Music Reprise: Listen to Girl Talk, various jazz pieces, watch clips from *Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* and music videos; talk about fragments, anecdotes, and mash-ups as modes of writing.

Friday, Oct. 28
Workshop Day: Third Short Assignment (Oblique Strategies)

Week Ten: Televisuals (Streaming)

Monday, Oct. 31
THIRD SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE
Discuss movie seen at the Apollo last week; talk about audience, space, experience, etc
Wednesday, Nov. 2
Discuss *Master of None*, *Transparent*, and *Stranger Things*

Friday, Nov. 4
Discuss TV Programs of Class’s choice (clips)

**Week Eleven: Space Is The Place: Comics as Memory/Documentary**

Monday, Nov. 7

Discuss *March* and *Persepolis* excerpts in class.
Wednesday, Nov. 9

**Discuss Research Projects in-class:** Come prepared to talk for at least 2 minutes on your project idea. This is not a formal presentation (those come at the end of the semester), but a chance to bounce around ideas and get feedback on what you want to do. You should do some sort of preparation to help guide what you say—an outline, a set of notes, a visual aid, or whatever else you find helpful for remembering what you want to say and making the session as useful a workshop for you as it can be.

Friday, Nov. 11

Discuss *Fun Home* and *Toopydoops* excerpts in class.

**Week Twelve: Notes on Notes: Music, Part II**

*Monday, Nov. 14*

Class choice on Music for discussion

*Wednesday, Nov. 16*

Class choice on Music for discussion

*Friday, Nov. 18*

**Workshop Day: Final Research Project**

**Week Thirteen**

*Monday, Nov. 21—Friday, Nov. 25: THANKSGIVING WEEK*

*Class cancelled: Available for conferences by appt. (Work on Research Projects/Presentations)*
**Week Fourteen**  
*Monday, Nov. 28*  
Discuss Final Research Projects, prepare for presentations

*Wednesday, Nov. 30*  
**Project Presentations**

*Friday, Dec. 2*  
**Project Presentations**

**Week Fifteen**  
*Monday, Dec. 5*  
**Project Presentations**

*Wednesday, Dec. 7*  
**Project Presentations**

*Friday, Dec. 9*  
**Project Presentations (if there is spill-over); Class wrap-up**

**Reading Period: Saturday, December 10—Tuesday, December 13**  
**Final Projects Due Wednesday, December 14**