

Paper 2 Assignment (Pop Culture Archive)

Due online (under “Assessments,” then “Assignments”) by Th 3/8, 11:59 p.m. (*see underlined note below)

Assignment (from syllabus): This research project is designed to create an archive of very recent popular cultural treatments of climate change. Your first job is to search your favorite comics, TV shows, video games, and other popular cultural texts *other than novels, short stories, or films* for references to climate change. After finding the most provocative and potentially influential treatments of climate change that you can, list your top five (with links) in a post under “Discussions” on Western Online, explaining *in one sentence* what makes them stand out. Note: *you cannot receive credit for items already submitted*, so this part of the task becomes more challenging the longer you wait to do it.

The assignment’s second part is to “reply” to your original posting, selecting ONE of your texts and writing a 700-800 word descriptive and analytical paper that (a) orients those unfamiliar with its storyworld to its main character/s, setting/s, and plot/s (max 200 words); (b) very specifically describes (without yet evaluating) everything you can about how the specific episode/issue/game engages climate change (especially implicit or explicit definitions, the tone it adopts about the problem, etc.) (max 200 words); and (c) stakes out an analytical position concerning the text’s potential impact on audiences (300-400 words), quoting or otherwise sampling evidence from it that stands out and comparing it to at least one required text. Lastly, be ready to describe the text informally to the class.

Grading breakdown: 1/3 for your five texts’ potential impact and uniqueness; 1/3 for the specificity of your description of a single text, the insightfulness of your analysis, and the connections you build to our course materials so far; and 1/3 for your writing clarity, organization, and mechanical polish.

Further Guidelines/Adjustments:

- Finding five decent mentions of climate change in popular culture is not difficult in and of itself. The ones I showed in class today from *The Simpsons*, HBO’s *Newsroom*, and a *Batman* comic literally took me seconds to find, and just before I showed them to you. But finding five really *unique* treatments of climate change that stand out from the pack somehow—that is more challenging. As you gather possibilities and narrow your submissions to five, consider questions like the following:
 - Is each of my examples *saying something* about climate change and interrelated issues (i.e., not just *mentioning* it, but seeking to influence its reader/viewer/audience through its imagery, metaphors, etc.)?
 - Are at least a couple of these examples *surprising* somehow—i.e., do they come from sources or utilize media that one might not expect, at least based on what our syllabus finds in novels and films?
 - Do any of these examples make connections between climate change and other social issues, especially in ways that we haven’t already discussed in this course?
 - Are these instances clearly distinct from *each other* (the more diversity of source types you can offer, the better ... e.g. your five texts will make for a stronger collective submission if they represent different series, genres, media, time periods, ethnicities/nationalities, etc.)?
- Remember: before you post your five examples, read through all the posts before your own. In addition to avoiding direct repetition, see if you can take the examples into a domain no one has touched so far. Fashion, anyone?
- I said to provide links for each of your examples, but attaching screenshots/photos/videos is just fine, too.
- *In selecting the text to engage most extensively in your essay, prioritize whatever stands out the most. Even if you’re among the earliest people to post five examples, review everyone else’s submissions so far (as available) in hopes of focusing on your most unique item. With this in mind, I will strongly urge—without absolutely requiring—that you post your top 5 examples by Sun night 3/4 (allowing you and everyone else to see what stands out).
- As with any essay, it’s critical to give yourself time to draft, step away, and come back several times. Remember the rough “a-b-c” breakdown of the three parts of the essay (described above). And as I said last time, *revision* means “re-seeing,” and that never happens all at once. Ensure that you are introducing your material clearly and efficiently for someone who is unfamiliar with the source, that you are noting everything that is unique about the example, and that your analysis interprets the material in a compelling, specific manner. In short, the more in this assignment that you can surprise me and others, and the more you can demonstrate potential meanings and/or impacts that aren’t obvious, the better.