

Essay One: Selling and Buying into (or out of) Gender Roles

Readings:

- Aaron H. Devor, "Becoming Members of Society," 527-535.
- Jean Kilbourne, "Two Ways a Woman Can Get Hurt," 576-599.
- Michael Kimmel, "Bros Before Hos," 608-617.

Overview:

Each of us is bombarded daily with messages regarding gender roles and expectations coming from a wide variety of sources, like family, friends, school, work, religion, and the media. While it's relatively easy to reject some of these messages, others are more difficult to ignore. Advertisements, for example, communicate a great deal about gender roles and relations.

While there are obvious physical distinctions between women and men, there is a growing body of opinion that argues that these identities are to some extent socially and culturally constructed and that we are, in effect, the products of our respective social and cultural environment. Many argue that the media is one of the major forces shaping our gender roles and identities through the images and ideas with which it surrounds us on a daily basis.

Prompt:

First, choose a **print advertisement** from an **English-language magazine** published in the **last year** that **depicts men and/or women**. Analyze all features of the ad – the text, images, overall layout, color, the models' body postures and clothing styles, etc. Then, write a thesis-driven essay responding to the following question:

How does your advertisement support or subvert traditional gender stereotypes?

Tips and suggestions:

- Once again, make sure it's a **PRINT** (not TV or web!) **ADVERTISEMENT** (not a photo that's not selling anything) from a **MAGAZINE** (not newspapers or random print outs) in **ENGLISH** published **IN THE LAST YEAR** (not in the 70s) that **SHOWS HUMANS** (not just animals, plants, or objects). Your ad must be turned in with your final paper.
- Make sure your argument is focused around a clear, argumentative thesis statement.
- Support all assertions with detailed evidence from the ad. For example, don't just write that the model in the ad is wearing stereotypically masculine clothes. Instead, point out what specific features imply and enhance notions of "masculinity."
- Employ at least **THREE** quotes from the readings to underscore your argument.
- Include where and when the ad appeared, and what the ad is for, in your introduction.

Due date: You will write this essay in class, using the ancillary work you'll have completed by that time to guide you. If you do not complete ancillary assignments or turn them in late, your grade will be lowered. Check your syllabus for all due dates.