

Compare/Contrast Visual Arguments

Planned for 03/09/18

Goals:

- Practice visual argument
- Introduce compare/contrast
- Develop student visual arguments

Readings:

- “He > i” ad
 - <https://hegreaterthani.com/>
- Greater than AIDS
 - <http://www.newnownext.com/straight-talking-speak-out-campaign-brings-hiv-out-of-the-closet-watch/12/2013/>
 - <https://www.greaterthan.org/>
- “He said. She said.” NY Times.
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=30&v=yqikYLkF4jU
- Durex
 - <http://vagendamagazine.com/2012/06/when-durex-stopped-making-sex-sexy/>

Supplies:

- Colored pencils
- Paper
- Sticky notes

Content:

- Show “HE > i”
 - How many of them have seen these products? What do they think?
 - Invite them to look it up if they want
 - What do students see? What background knowledge do they have?
 - Notes:
 - A company, not a church or non-profit
 - Hawai‘i based
- Greater than AIDS
 - What do students see?
 - They both use a similar structure (notably the > sign), but how are they used differently? Compare/contrast
- Show “He said. She said” and Durex
 - They are on a similar topic. How are they different, including the obvious?
 - What difference, if any, do the two media make?

Activity:

- Break them into groups
- Choose two ads (can be the ones we looked at) and create a visual argument comparing the two ads
- They can draw or use sticky notes or make a mind map or whatever they want

- Just as an advertiser would have to, demonstrate a thesis statement and evidence in an image

~12 minutes for each ad combination

~25 minutes for group activity

Reflection:

Since Wednesday (see “Visual Argument Lesson Plan”) was very information heavy, I wanted today to be more relaxed so I didn’t have quite as much planned. We started where we left off on Wednesday with “The Essential Guide to Taro.” They didn’t get as much out of it as I had hoped, but they did make some really good observations about how the article was being used. On Wednesday, they were very critical—wondering about the Atlantic focus of the image and the general lack of context or information. Today, instead, they started asking questions about the article’s context (What type of article is it? Is it meant to be argumentative or just informative? Does the magazine give context for the article?) and talking about audience. Since they already have a critical eye, I liked that they started looking at it more generously, though still analytically.

We only spent a few minutes there and quickly moved on to the HE>i ad. They had a lot of fun with that one, just making observations about the content and design elements and their effectiveness. They had not realized that HE>i is just a brand (it has no actual religious affiliation), so it was a great lesson in ethos. When we moved on to the SF>AIDS campaign, they immediately looked at ways in which the > symbol is used differently between them and how effective it might be in both cases. One student pointed out that, in the SpeakOut logo, the > symbol is also an open mouth, while others looked at design elements. In particular, we talked about the simplicity of the one in comparison with the busyness of the other. My only real role in the conversation was to keep bringing them back to how their complaints were more than just complaints; they were comments on the effectiveness of the ad. That said, I also reminded them that the ad would possibly be effective for different people.

The conversation was really productive and ran longer than I had intended, so I brought up the remaining ads for them to use for the group activity. The idea was for them to create a visual argument themselves, but that didn’t really work out. Instead, they had a lot of really good group discussions, each group picking out a different way in which the two ads could be compared (e.g. different uses of the female voice, different audiences, different media). I wasn’t that worried about the activity; I just wanted them to have an incentive to talk about the ads.

As I noticed in the “Audience and Identity” lesson from the previous semester, students seem to respond more to difficult material, asking questions and talking through what they see/read/hear.