

## Media, Culture, and Identity Reflection Paper

Throughout our Media, Culture, and Identity class, this semester, we studied various different types of media and how they relate and form an influence that resonates within our culture. These different types of media, and how we idealize and interpret them create an identity that aids in furthering these different cultures we see in society today. Through various projects such as analyzing an image, analyzing a scene or our field investigation, we worked with identifying certain keywords and applying them to the media and real life events that we see and are a part of today. The use of these keywords allowed us to focus on specific types of media and how it is shown to us in certain ways to further an agenda or idea that people with influence wish to push to the forefront of our cultures. One example of this can be found all throughout one of the pieces of media we studied early in the semester: Zero Dark Thirty. The film is a depiction of the story of the United States raid and eventual killing of Osama Bin Laden. Throughout the film, they show the many various tactics and methods used to locate Bin Laden and eventually plan an attack that would result in either his death or the capture of him. Various keywords that we studied throughout the semester can be found throughout the film, but a few of the most important ones I noticed were: ideology, representation, and power. These are the three keywords that I chose to focus on in creating my final project, which is a video essay arguing that by showing such footage and depictions, the media is exposing the actions of the United States, post 9/11, to the rest of the world as a country without morals that will take away basic human rights and essentially go to any extent in order to extract information from people of interest. For a long time, and even still, the United States has censored this type of media from reaching the public, but citizens have the right to know what is truly going on.

For me, the topic of my essay is a very interesting one, as I find myself very fascinated with war movies. However, I have often wondered how realistic these movies are. In such a film as Zero Dark Thirty, there is an incredible amount of torture that occurs in order to extract information about Bin Laden and his location. The first time I watched the movie, I decided to do a little research on this topic and find out how realistic these depictions are. As I found out, the torture methods used in this film were for the most part accurate representations. From this point, I wondered what else about throughout these representations of United States soldiers and their treatments of their enemies in war movies was accurate as well. Through further research I was able to find out that the United States government actually has significant power over Hollywood film production and what they are allowed and not allowed to show in these movies. Although they may not be able to show the specific tactics that the United States military uses throughout these films, they often use many ideologies to make points about how the United States feels towards certain groups of people, which would justify the brutal treatment of these enemies. This is the process in which I was able to both develop the argument of my video essay and establish which keywords I was going to use in order to produce a convincing and understandable argument throughout my project. Although there were a few other keywords that I considered using in formulating my argument such as censorship and stereotype; however, I found it difficult to be able to keep my arguments limited in time, yet also convincing when applying those keywords to my project, so ultimately I decided to stick to the original three keywords.

In terms of the pieces of media I chose to use, the selection process was not too difficult. Since I was only dealing with a specific genre of movies, the most challenging part of the process was selecting certain clips from these movies that would make my argument clearly. Clarity of my argument was of the utmost importance for me when selecting these clips, as these movies are all full of scenes that portray the type of content I was looking for, but some of the clips seemed to be a bit of a reach in terms of presenting my argument clearly. In addition, I wanted my content to be powerful, and grab the audience's attention as well as keep it throughout the entire video. I believe that the clip I used for power, and the clip I used for ideology were able to support my argument in a very clear and obvious way, which is also why I chose to put them where I did in my video. In terms of audio, I believed that what was being said and the audio that was included in my pieces of media was also very crucial to making my argument which is why I chose to leave it how it was rather than providing a voiceover or music to cover up what was being said or the noises that were included throughout these clips. On the contrary, I chose to also include some news articles in my essay as well, and for those I felt that silence was more drawing and suspenseful than including any kind of audio on top of those images. It is for these reasons I structured my video essay the way I did, and in doing so I believe that I was able to present both a clear and convincing argument.

Through the process of creating this video essay, the challenging of shaping these clips in order to present my argument effectively was one that I struggled a bit to deal with. Ultimately I was able to accomplish my goal in what I believe to be a clear and concise way. The process however gave me some perspective on how the media uses content such as what I used in my video essay to formulate an opinion and drive a specific agenda into the minds of their audience. I am not sure whether it is a good or bad thing, but it is clear to me that the media and the use of specific content does have the ability to create ideologies that foster a sense of culture, as people begin to identify with these ideologies that they believe to be true. They seem to shape their way of thinking, which in some cases can be both constructive and destructive, but either way, I believe that this is where the separations in our culture originate.