

Writing Project 1:

Interpreting Colonial Images: Visual Analysis Article

Overview:

- 1500-2000 words
- Monday, 10/3, **by 5pm**: First Draft Due (*at least 1000 words*) to Drafts Page on our website
 - **Name for draft:** SectionNumber.LastName.WP1.Draft1.doc
 - **Example:** 15.Shah.WP1.Draft1.doc
- Tuesday-Wednesday, 10/4-10/5, by workshop time: Comments for Peers due via hardcopy at workshop and emailed to me (ami.shah@duke.edu). (Directions distributed separately).
- UWT meeting between 9/26-10/12
- **Wednesday, 10/12, 5 pm (please note day and time!)**: Final Project due via email
 - **Name for final:** SectionNumber.LastName.WP1.Final.doc
 - When emailing any assignment to me, I **strongly suggest** that you cc yourself to ensure that the document is attached.

Project:

As noted in our syllabus, we are spending the first half of the semester on the historical imaginings and representations of Africa. We've read about how science and technology fueled colonialism, racial categorization, and socio-economic development. Through Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* we gained a glimpse of the colonialist mindset, as well as anti-imperial arguments. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* begins to explain how Africa came to be understood through a specifically Western lens, tying into Keim's work on the roots of contemporary representations. Our next few readings push this line of thought further, going beyond colonial representations and examining the effects of colonialism, particularly on social organization.

Through these readings, we've gained an insight to a different historical time and place. Luckily for us, there are a plethora of images that accompany this period, and many originals are held here in Duke University's Special Collections Library. We will begin this project with a class visit to the Special Collections. One of our librarians, Will Hansen, will introduce you to the library and the variety of Africa-related sources available, and will work with you in practicing visual analysis. At the end of the session, you will have time to look through pre-selected colonial postcards, choosing one to be the object of your study. Each student will use a different postcard.

You should to undertake a *critical analysis* of the postcard that you choose. Describe the image in a way that goes beyond the superficial contents of the image and situates it within the general context of colonial Africa. More concretely, I'd like you to focus on one aspect of colonial

representations (adventure, wildlife, tribalism, race, etc.) and demonstrate how the image is either a part of, or a critique of, those representations. I will show you some examples in class, and Banks' first chapter is also a good description of how to start. If your postcard includes writing, you are welcome to include that in your analysis.

Your goal is to write to a *general educated audience* who may not know much about Africa. For example, your writing may be appropriate for a literary magazine like the *New Yorker*. As such, you will need to provide a *background* of the colonial representation in order to put the image in context. You should go beyond providing a simple description of the image, and strive to explain why it is significant, helping readers to look critically at the way the image is situated in colonial representations. Think about what the image means, towards whom it is directed, and the purpose it serves. In other words, you will develop an argument about how the image is a multi-layered 'text', with its own set of implied arguments directed toward an audience. Be sure to clearly **articulate** your argument, to **forward** your argument by use of the texts we've read in class, and address any **counters** to your argument, if applicable. You should make use of the readings for class, and our class discussions. In addition, you are welcome to utilize any other chapter from Keim's book. If you feel the need for further resources, please meet with me.

Finally, we will start to practice formal citations methods with this project, making use of the *Chicago Manual of Style for the Social Sciences*. Thus, you need to include both in-text citations and a bibliography; we will practice this citation format in class.

Format:

As this project is geared toward a literary magazine, you are welcome to format it as a magazine piece; however, the focus is on your text, and fancy formatting is not required. *Should you decide to use a program other than Word, please email me a Word version of your text.* Regardless of your format, please follow these guidelines:

- Include your image (a digital copy will be available for you)
- Use 12 point font
- Include page numbers
- Double-space your first draft
- Provide your article with a title, and include your name
- Include citations and a bibliography
- Remember: our bibliography, title, citations, etc., do not count towards your word count.

Goals:

This Writing Project asks you to **address** the complex representations of Africa we have discussed in class, through the **critical analysis** of a colonial postcard. In doing so, you are

gaining practice in working with **primary sources**, learning how almost any object can be the subject of academic inquiry. Further, you will gain skills in **articulating** your own position through entering into a **conversation** with other authors. A general educated audience will be exposed to all the public representations of Africa that you are, but not the academic analysis that we have read. Thus, you are responsible to **translate** the specialist literature we have been reading to them. Consider your position as author, the audience you are addressing, and the tone or rhetoric which you use, placing your writing in the **context** of the public arena. In addition, this project represents our further **engagement** with each other as academic writers as we work on our skills in analyzing and responding to writing, as well as developing our plans for revision.

Grading Criteria:

I am looking for projects which:

- Follow the instructions as detailed on Page 1 and 2.
- Effectively demonstrate an understanding of your authorship role and the audience you are addressing.
- Provide a strong critical analysis of the image you are working with.
- Make good use of class readings.
- Are clearly organized.
- Have minimal errors.