

English 102: Reflections on Mass Media and American Culture  
Carrie Sheffield

“Inquiry into Popular Culture and American Identity”

Course Description:

Thanks to the overwhelming presence of technology in our lives, we receive a near constant barrage of information telling us who we are supposed to be, how we are supposed to live, and what we are supposed to believe. Americans, and American culture, is constantly shaped and re-shaped by the media machine which is, ironically, a part of the very culture it shapes. This cyclical relationship between media and culture constructs a system that works at a level often below the general public’s awareness.

This course will work to develop students’ analytical skills through the analysis of the media technologies they engage with on a daily basis. In doing so, they will not only analyze images in magazines, on television, and even video games, they will also “read” texts such as film, literature, and music in order to ferret out how these pervasive technologies work within American culture as a whole. This process will not only include library research into how the media can influence its audience, but primary research on their peers through interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations of their peers.