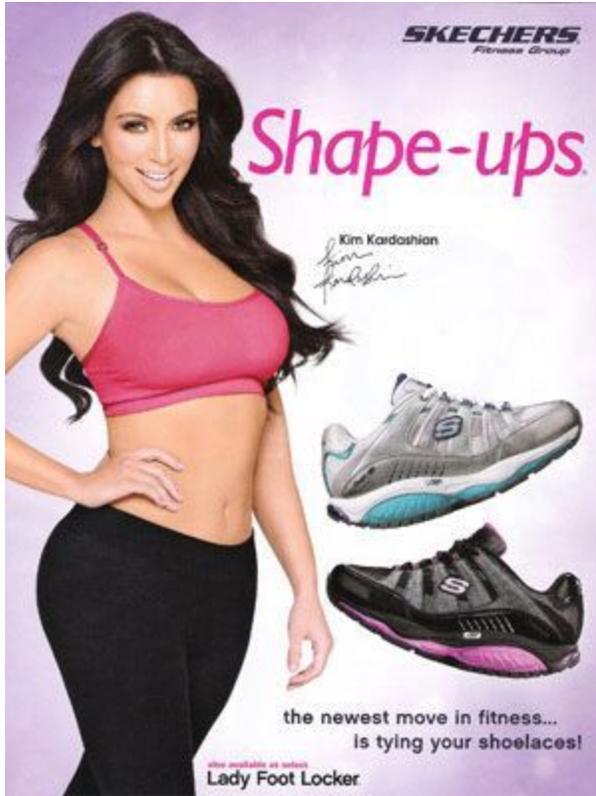


Week #14 Activity: Three Semester Review - reflection essay with photos in ePortfolio

My first experience with the Media, Self, and Society Scholars program was during summer orientation my upcoming freshman year. We went through a typical overview of the program and what to expect from it. But I specifically remember the one assignment we were tasked with that day, coming up with a class motto. And as corny as I thought the assignment was, I was able to read a variety of quotes and perspectives from the class. From simple lines like “Don’t die, get good grades” to “I want to find my passion here and what I want to do for the rest of my life, and also want to meet lots of new people”, it was a nice and interesting introduction to my peers I would soon be learning with. Looking back, my thoughts of the media were really minimal as I only used it as a means of entertainment or educating myself on only topics I was interested in. Media is a much more powerful tool and its impact affects the majority of people’s daily lives, including me. My daily routine used to be to wake up and check Twitter’s trending list for any breaking news I might have missed during the night. This was during peak “BEWARE OF FAKE NEWS” period and I was still willfully ignorant of that. It took exactly one assignment for me to be determined to change that ignorance. Our scholar’s group took a trip down to the Food & Friends organization located in Washington, D.C and we did simple tasks like help prepare food bags for their many clients. Afterwards, I read a few articles assigned to the class related to the food security problem in the United States and learned about issues of attempts to cut Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs by \$193 billion. My understanding of media quickly advanced to realizing that we often base our media viewership on only the details around our lives. I consume sports media on a regular but controversial and

urgent topics like the articles I read are often ignored by members of the society who are better off.

There's so many types of media production ranging from radio, internet, newspaper, movies, games, broadcasting, television, and I could go on. But more likely than not, a common goal of all types of media is to attract the biggest audience possible. Thinking on this made me further ponder, are what their advertising themselves to be accurate or for their sole purpose of bringing me to their product. So when we had the assignment, "Adbuster analysis", I really took an interest in it. Learning about the two concepts, connotative and denotative meaning, soon had me applying these terms and analysis to every commercial I came across. For example, here is an advertisement where Kim Kardashian is supporting the shoe brand, Skechers. Coming across this my first thought was, "okay another shoe advertisement, I wonder why these are any different than the others." Then I realized the only reason the shoe caught my eye was because Kim Kardashian is covering the majority of the ad page and almost has nothing to do with the shoe. I automatically think back to my media's class and assign the denotative meaning of the ad as these shoes must be easy to tie and a comfy fit since quote "the newest move in fitness...is tying your shoelaces." The connotative meaning behind this would be that society idolizes it's celebrities and buying this shoe will bring you closer to being like one the most famous celebrities in the world, Kim Kardashian. But as I said, what did Kim Kardashian have to do with the quality of the shoe! The image of her doesn't even have her feet on the ad. It's only her upper body that's shown and of course it shows the eye-catchers, her flat stomach, big chest, flowing hair, clear skin, slim waist, and other qualities that society puts emphasis on to have the perfect body. So whenever I come across any ad like this, I try to go through a quick analysis to decipher all the meanings of it.



As thought-provoking as media can be, a major part of media production that oftentimes proves to be a hindrance to many college students are their data-collecting algorithms that specifically target each person's interest in order to increase their screen time. The big media companies I'm referring to are like Netflix, Tik Tok, Instagram, and every time we watch a show or like a video, they collect that data with our knowledge or not. There's two key problems with this reality. Firstly, all people have a right to privacy and the idea that these companies can collect the information you've inserted once into a search bar and then have free will with that information is incredibly concerning. But the bigger issue for college students is, these companies will strategically design their app for you which sounds like a good thing until you realize it's only so the intended person stays on the app as long as possible. Netflix has been known to have completely different home screens or even small details like the character they

use to advertise a movie. Instagram or Tik Tok will take each like and organize a “For You” timeline and that sounds nice but once again, the sole purpose is to keep you on the app. So for college students who’s age group tends to correlate with a big population of these major apps, they are often unknowingly suffering from these algorithms. Time becomes more and more of a scarcity as you grow up which is why time management is so heavily focused on. But if big monopolies are having highly advanced algorithms designed to keep you hooked onto their apps, college students are bound to cross the line where social media goes from a positive to a negative thing.

I’ve always been an active consumer of media because I truly do enjoy being engaged with people and events around me. I commend passive consumers because it takes a lot of energy to NOT engage with every little comment or thing you see. But being in the role of an active consumer enables me to reach out to people with similar and different perspectives than me and actually helps me grow. Being in the scholars class showed me that differences in opinions with topics as laid back as sports can be enlightening because you never really understand where another fanbase is coming from. With topics more serious like the presidential election and nationwide reaction to it where people are playing the devil’s advocate is even more enlightening. I recall a moment early in the semester where we were in breakout rooms and we were discussing the impact of BLM protests around the world. Another student commented that there was a protest for pro-life and they were condemned because of the Covid-19 situation. He argued that masked BLM protesters had the same right as the the masked pro-life rally to protest a cause they support. Initially, I wanted to instantly rebuttal and counter his point but I soon realized that he wasn’t taking any side but making a general claim that both sides need to be judged under the same criteria and I honestly agreed with that idea. The challenging of your

beliefs and exposures to others' is a main reason why I choose to be an active consumer of media.

I feel like I can speak for the majority when I say the Media Scholars program is all-encompassing and welcoming to its members. Reading Media Scholar's instagram post like "Sophomore Spotlight" and "Freshman Friday" really shows that this program wants the students to know each other in depth past the classroom setting. More importantly, the program puts such a heavy emphasis on students' interactiveness on discussion, and even big graded activities. Being able to work as a group and create our Black Panther presentation for the class showed that the Media program values collaboration. Overall, unlike the majority of the classes I've taken, my Scholars experience has given me knowledge that I can apply outside a school setting. Being knowledgeable of the Media and the various effects of it will be a great help in my career aspirations to the medical field because of the importance of networking through media. Also, I've learned many intricate details that will ensure that my experience using media will be able to avoid becoming negative and always remain a positive benefit for me.