

## POP CULTURE TIPPING POINT

*A group learning experience to analyze pop culture products and practices and further knowledge and understanding about media's impact on society and the emergent digital culture*

### Guidelines for Applying the Tipping Point to Analyze Popular Culture

Research how an icon, idea, trend, catchphrase or product emerged as popular culture in the mass media environment. Find out who, what, when, where, why and how it tipped by analyzing the stickiness factor and identifying the mavens, connectors, and salespeople. *More detailed instructions are on the course website.*

**Topic selection & proposal.** Each group selects a pop culture topic and completes the one-page *Proposal Form* to submit for approval. Proposals must be typed. Groups consist of 4-5 members who determine how to share the responsibility for the project. Suggested topics are listed below.

**Analysis.** The point at which something tips is a result of many small events that lead up to a big change. Your analysis includes a media packet and presentation that describe, explain, document, and illustrate the tipping point process for the pop culture artifact you chose. This requires library research using current periodicals, scholarly journals, books, newspapers, and other relevant sources.

**Media Activity & Briefing Session.** Each group creates a media activity and presentation that reflects what you learned about the tipping point and popular culture. Groups are allotted a total of 20 minutes to present followed by a Briefing Session in which they answer questions and facilitate a discussion.

**Media Packet:** The Media Packet provides the research background for analyzing your pop culture topic and creating the media activity. The packet includes eight components: briefing report, fact sheet/infographic and timeline, bibliography, talk back letter, reflection, evaluation form and collaboration agreement.

**Suggested Topics:** Instagram, Snapchat, dating apps, fan fiction, music festivals, YouTube celebrities, fantasy baseball, cosplay, hashtags, body piercing, tattoos, hairstyles, dreadlocks, karaoke, twerking, awareness bracelets, designer coffee, crossfit, yoga, thigh-gap, plastic surgery, makeover TV shows, Super Bowl ads, Escape Rooms, eco-friendly products, food trucks, Uber, lingo such as "selfie," "metrosexual," "post-truth," "fake news," "whatever!" "whassup?"

### MEDIA PACKET

**Briefing Report.** Write a 2-3 page report that applies the "tipping point" factors to explain the significance of your pop culture topic, identify key players and the dynamics of their relationships to one another other and to the target audiences, discuss pertinent factors responsible for its popularity, provide a context for understanding its social, economic, political, and cultural implications, and draw conclusions about its past, present and future role in society. *Cite relevant sources.*

**Fact Sheet | Infographic and Timeline.** Document the tipping point in two ways: (1) develop a fact sheet and/or infographic with bullet points and charts that summarize background information, notable statistics, tweets, and factoids, and (2) create a timeline of its evolution that charts key events and major milestones that affected its tipping point. *Include citations with title, author, date, page number(s) and/or corresponding URL.*

**Annotated Bibliography.** Prepare an *annotated bibliography* of references and resources used to research, analyze, and create the presentation. Annotations should describe and evaluate the relevance, accuracy and quality of the sources. Include a minimum of 10 sources, 5 of which are primary sources and not listed in the assigned readings. DO NOT simply copy and paste summaries. Paraphrase and use proper attributions to avoid plagiarism (see [plagiarism guidelines](#)). *Use APA/MLA style. Annotated Bibliography Guidelines: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>*

**\*Talk Back Letter.** Write a complimentary or critical business letter expressing your opinion about the impact your pop culture artifact has had on society. See guidelines in syllabus.

**\*Reflection.** Write a reflective analysis that applies relevant concepts and theories to explain what you learned from the project. See guidelines in syllabus.

**\*Tipping Point Evaluation Form.** This form is used to grade the quality of your research, analysis, and presentation. Use it as a guide to develop your project.

**Collaboration Agreement.** Group members decide how to divide up the work. Stipulate specific project tasks each member is required to complete in a *collaboration agreement signed by each student*. Note special circumstances that prevented a student from fully completing his/her group responsibility. Project grade is based on group and individual performance.

**\*Peer & Self-Assessment.** Submit a confidential assessment of individual group member's contribution, including your own, with the packet or privately to the professor on the day of the presentation. If a situation arose that affected a member's fulfillment of his/her responsibility, explain what happened and how it was resolved. Use the Peer Review and Self-Evaluation form on the website.

# Talk Back Letter & Commentary

Dr. Eisenstock | J465 Mass Communication and Popular Culture | Spring 2018

**TALK BACK** Talk back about the role pop culture plays in society: *the good, the bad, and the ugly*. Tell people who profit from popular culture and establish policies and practices what you think about its potential influence on the culture and society. Write a letter that is either **complimentary or critical** of a pop culture icon, product, trend or social behavior you studied for the *Tipping Point Analysis*.

**BACK** Consider the positive benefits and/or negative consequences:  
Does it promote or deter cultural, gender or ethnic stereotypes?  
Does it encourage or discourage bullying, racial profiling or misogyny?  
Does it normalize violence toward women or victimize a particular social group? Is the violence gratuitous or the language offensive? Does it exploit children's vulnerabilities or target teens' insecurities? Does it reinforce or prevent risky lifestyles such as drinking, smoking, and unsafe sex? Does it cultivate gambling or other addictive behaviors? Does it undermine efforts to curb obesity or foster healthy food choices? Does it standardize the thin ideal or muscular body type? Does it heighten the appeal of extreme workouts and disordered eating? Does it send a message that appearance guarantees popularity and materialism brings happiness? Does it isolate people from one another?

The most effective way to voice your opinion is to use your economic power and social media capital to demonstrate approval or disapproval in the consumer culture. If you like it, compliment the company and let them know you are a loyal consumer of the product or service. If you don't like it, criticize their cultural taste and let them know you refuse to use and purchase the product or support the social practice. That means don't watch a particular TV show, rent or go to a movie, read or subscribe to a magazine or blog, listen to a podcast, radio station, certain DJ or recording artist, play a video game, stream a program, download an app or support a social media campaign. When you send this message to the advertiser, manufacturer, corporation, retailer, media outlet or celebrity endorser, make sure to let them know why you do or do not support them. *Tell them what you like and don't like, why you feel this way, and what you plan to do about it.*

Think about what you want to say based on the concepts you have learned and to whom you should send a copy of your letter —people in power in the media, advocacy groups, business and professional organizations, government agencies and public officials, as well as high-profile celebrities. Consider everyone you think should know about your concern. Use your purchase power and social media clout!

**COMMENTARY:** In addition to your letter, write a one-page commentary explaining the cultural significance, why you chose to write a letter to the person/company/group, and what you hope your letter will accomplish.

## GUIDELINES

Letters are judged on the relevance of the ideas, reliability of information clarity and organization of comments, application of the concepts and issues, list of key players to receive a copy, and professionalism of your letter, including format, typos and grammar.

Letters must conform to STANDARD BUSINESS LETTER format and style. TYPE your letter.

Note: Single space paragraphs and double space in between paragraphs.

ADDRESS your letter to a specific person.

INCLUDE date, sender and recipient(s) addresses, salutation, and closing.

PROOFREAD your letter to avoid typos, misspelling, incorrect grammar, and other errors that detract from the professionalism you are trying to communicate. **Errors will result in a lower grade.**

LENGTH: one page

CC List: Attach a separate page that lists names, titles, addresses, and other contact information of additional persons, groups or companies that you think should be informed about the issue.

**TIPS:** Be clear, concise, and cordial.

*Avoid using academic jargon.*

Translate the concepts and theories into plain language.

**Opening paragraph:** *Get right to the point.*

Briefly tell them why you are writing and what action(s) you plan to take. Keep it short, no more than two or three sentences.

**Second paragraph:** *State your viewpoint with conviction.*

Validate your concern or support by providing more details about why you like or don't like the media message or image. Tell them what specific actions you plan to take and that you will encourage family, friends and "friends of friends," colleagues, and others to do the same. Use your digital contacts to spread the word. Let them know if you are a loyal consumer and what they need to do to win back your business.

**Closing paragraph:** *Wrap it up.*

If your letter is critical, encourage them to make changes.

If your letter is complimentary, encourage them to continue doing what they're doing.

**DUE:** *same day as your Tipping Point Analysis and Media Packet*

Check Course Schedule in the syllabus | **NO LATE LETTERS ACCEPTED**

**RESOURCES:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/>

## Reflection

*Learning is an on-going process. A reflective analysis is a tool to help students assess their own progress as learners in a specific subject area. Your Reflection is an individualized experience that provides an opportunity to think about what you learned and apply media concepts and theories to demonstrate your understanding of the social, economic, political, and cultural factors that shape popular culture and the ways it influences us.*

**GUIDELINES** The focus of your Reflection is the *Tipping Point Analysis*. Define your learning goals for the project, evaluate your progress toward meeting the goals, and reflect on your learning experience. Write your reflection in two parts:

(1) **Learning Goals.** State two learning goals and briefly explain why these are important and the extent to which you accomplished each goal. The goals should be specific and reflect a range of skills and breadth of knowledge about the subject area. (1-2 paragraphs)

(2) **Learning Assessment.** Document your progress toward meeting your learning goals. Write a reflective analysis about what you learned from the tipping point project. Consider pop culture's role in society and apply relevant concepts and theories to your specific insights into the role popular culture plays in our lives. Cite pertinent information from the readings, videos, class lectures and discussions. Be specific. (2 pages)

**LENGTH:** 2-3 pages | **DUE:** with your Tipping Point Project (check syllabus) If you cite statistics or refer to relevant sources, include a bibliography.

### REFLECTION ANALYSIS

Consider the following questions as you reflect on specific critical thinking skills and strategies, processes and concepts, personal media habits, media's influence in society and strategies to affect change, and other significant concerns or insights about the media culture:

- ✓ What am I learning? Be specific about skills, concepts, theories, facts, media policy and practices. to explain pop culture's role and influence in society.
- ✓ How am I learning? Describe the particular learning experiences that enhanced your learning and sparked new understandings – readings, videos, activities, events, class discussions.
- ✓ In what ways have I personally changed during the learning process? Explain how your personal media habits or perspective on popular culture may have been affected.
- ✓ What is my understanding of popular culture's role in society? Explain your understanding of the socio-cultural, economic, and political influence of pop culture in the digital global society.
- ✓ What specific media changes would I like to see happen and how can I affect change? Consider social action strategies in which you can participate to achieve changes you would like to see happen.
- ✓ What other skills and strategies do I want to learn about the subject? Be specific about some specific things you can do to continue to learn about the subject area.

**TIPPING POINT  
EVALUATION  
J465**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluations are based on a 10-point scale: 10 = Outstanding  
9 = Very Good  
8 = Good  
7 = Average  
6 = Below Average  
1-5 = Unsatisfactory  
0 = Not Included

**MEDIA ACTIVITY**

*Knowledge of Topic and Application of Tipping Point*

Demonstrate understanding of topic and critical thinking about key terms and concepts

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Structural Development and Communication*

Ideas are well conceptualized, clearly organized, effectively implemented and communicated

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Quality of Research and Source Material | Technical Competence*

Well researched (comprehensive, current, and balanced with relevant examples)

and presented (audio-visual clarity, spelling/grammar errors, relevant source citations)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**MEDIA PACKET**

*Briefing Report*

Explains significance and impact of pop culture artifact and its tipping point

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Fact Sheet/Infographic & Timeline*

Explains key facts and charts major historical, social, economic, political and cultural milestones

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Annotated Bibliography*

Summarizes the relevance, accuracy and quality of a minimum of 10 primary sources

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Technical Competence*

Well organized and written (typos, spelling, grammar) and uses APA/MLA style citations

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**TALK BACK LETTER & REFLECTION**

*Letter*

Demonstrates insight into pop culture phenomena, original thinking, and critical analysis skills

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Reflection*

Thinks critically about the learning process, applies concepts/theories to analyze pop culture's socio-cultural, economic and political influence, and draws conclusions about its role in society

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Technical Competence*

Well organized and written (structure, format, typos, spelling, grammar, etc.)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

COMMENTS:

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

## Peer Review and Self-Evaluation

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you rate your group experience?** Evaluate each group member's contribution to completing the project. Use the criteria below to rate individual student levels of performance on four different criteria — role, cooperation, time on-task, and task completion — based on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest.

LEVEL of PERFORMANCE	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
CRITERIA	<b>4 points</b>	<b>3 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>1 point</b>
<b>Role</b>	Group member completed role in impressive manner	Group member completed role in a very efficient manner	Group member completed role in a satisfactory manner	Group member had difficulty completing role on the project
<b>Cooperation</b>	Group member was a major asset to the group dynamic	Group member was easy to work with most of the time	Group member was difficult to work with at times	Group member was consistently difficult to work with on project
<b>Time On-Task</b>	Group member emerged as a group leader on many tasks	Group member was on-task throughout project	Group member was on-task most of the time	Group member was off-task most of the time and affected others from staying on-task
<b>Task Completion</b>	Group member contribution was central to project and exceptional quality	Group member contribution was above average	Group member contribution was adequate	Group member contribution was poor and not up to the group standard

**SCORING:** Write the name of each group member – including your own name – in the first column. For each student, assign a score for the four different criteria. Then add the scores across and write the total in the last column. Please be honest in evaluating your peers and yourself.

Group Member Name	Role Score	Cooperation Score	Time On-Task Score	Task Completion Score	<b>TOTAL</b>

**Comments:** Explain any issues that affected the group dynamic or a member from fulfilling his/her responsibility.