

**Unit Essay #1: Consumer Culture**  
**ENWR 105: College Writing I**  
**Instructor: John Woods**

Your first essay will be a critical study of consumer culture in America. Remember to present a clear *central claim*, and to continually support this idea throughout your essay. Make sure your ideas are well explained, and supported with convincing evidence.

Your style and language should be straightforward and engaging. Don't lose your reader with unnecessarily complicated or overly academic prose. Simplicity and humor are the two great tools of the essay writer.

Keep in mind what is expected of each draft. Your first draft should be a complete essay with a clear argument and structure (based on your outline). The second draft should be almost complete, including fully fleshed out explanations and evidence that are presented in the most effective order possible. Your final draft will be a fully polished and finished essay.

**Choose ONE of the following topics for your essay:**

How does consumerism act as a sign for other characteristics of a person or group? Look at a specific aspect of American culture and explain how and why certain material objects have come to represent that segment of society.

OR

Start with the object (as our text studies the cell phone). How has the semiotic significance of a certain material item changed over time? Why has that change occurred?

What aspect of a material item has more cultural importance, its **fashion** or its **function**? Why? Support your answer with examples.

Why has the rise of media coincided with the rise of consumerism? And what is the relationship between media and the decline of material production in America?

What is one major driving force behind American consumerism? Why has this cause so effectively driven consumption? Give examples.

**Remember: to pick a SPECIFIC topic and to offer a REASON in your central claim. (Give the reader a 'WHAT' and a 'WHY').**