



Comparative Analysis

Basic Assignment. Choose two texts from this semester's schedule and write a five-page paper that compares the ideas of the two critics or theorists.

Choose Carefully. The two texts must be a part of our assigned reading, though they can be from any section of the schedule that you choose. I would like you to select at least one text scheduled after the midterm, Freud to Denning; so, looking ahead may be useful for generating ideas. I would prefer that you *not* choose the text on which your first paper. If you select the author of a book (Chandler, Freud, Halberstam, or Denning), you have the option of discussing the whole book or focusing in on a selected chapter. Finally, everyone is invited to drop by to discuss possible choices with me. You could talk about your interests (or what you'd like to learn from working on this paper), and I'd be happy to steer you in directions suited to your interests and aims.

Examples and Advice. You might compare two theorists who have different approaches to the same idea, theme, issue, or phenomenon (such as globalization, subcultural styles, ideology, gender, postmodernity, pop culture, film, and so on). Or you might compare the methods or aims of critics who seem to have similar approaches (audience studies, psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, structuralism, etc.) or similar topics and themes but nonetheless have important differences that distinguish their theories. You could compare two different theorists by detailing an important relationship between them, a relationship such as influence or antagonism. Or you could compare forms of argument or types of political and social aims.

There are many different ways to approach a comparative analysis, though I think it is key to figure out what your grounds for comparison are (*why* did you pick these two texts rather than some other texts?) and your reasons for comparing (*why* bother? or what is interesting, significant, or productive about comparing these two texts? what do we learn about these texts—that we might not realize by just reading them separately—when we compare them to each other?).

For more specific advice, I have included on the back of this sheet Kerry Walk's handout on "How to Write a Comparative Analysis." For most of you, this may be review. On the other hand, if you've never written a paper like this, you will find her advice indispensable.

Reminders. The paper should have a good title. It should be typed, double-spaced. Please use MLA style to cite texts and provide information on sources.

Due Date. Wednesday, October 25th.

Length. Approximately 5 pages or so.

Photographs: Stuart Hall (top); Judith Halberstam (bottom).

