



COM 270 EXAM II

Developing a print ad for Ikea

"Appreciate my uniqueness, but treat me the same."
--Keith Williams, Poynter Institute

Your mission: Design an 8x11-1/2 print magazine ad for Ikea that seeks to engage U.S. Muslims, but one that doesn't exclude or alienate anyone else.

You choose the product or item to advertise: <http://www.ikea.com/us/en/>. In fact, you get to decide really everything, such as whether the ad is seasonal or not, or whether it is tied to an event or holiday. You choose the typography, the dominant visual (CVI), the ad copy - everything.

Your **one-page print ad** will (hypothetically) appear in airline in-flight magazines, such as Delta's *Sky* (<http://deltaskymag.delta.com/>) or United's *Hemisphere* (<http://www.hemispheresmagazine.com/>). The ad can be either vertical or horizontal/landscape. The audience for the ad is largely American, but by virtue of the nature of air travel should be cognizant of other nationalities, as well. The ad should be in English.

You can work alone or in groups, but know that this sort of work professionally is ALWAYS done in teams, in groups. Of course it is. Each ad will earn or receive one grade, whether produced by one or by a group.

The visual exquisiteness of your design, of your ad, is **not the point**. Use whatever media you are comfortable with to communicate your ideas. I will be grading the ideas, the conceptual work, the efforts that went into developing the message, and their explanations, not your proficiency with Adobe Illustrator or InDesign or Photoshop.

You will **submit**:

- a finished mock-up.
- any elaboration I might need to understand what is signified (such as, identifiers of color if the ad is penciled, or just what the dominant visual is supposed to be; remember, I'll be alone with your work when I'm grading it, so underestimate my ability to know why you did what you did.
- a narrative rationale addressing the six criteria below. Remember that writing counts. Make sure your narrative uses complete, error-free sentences.



- **AND:** a few paragraphs describing the research you did on Islam, Ikea, advertising and anything else you needed to “put an idea behind every pitch.” For example, did you speak with a real, living Muslim? You should.

Due date: Wednesday, April 18

The six grading criteria:

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE: Does the ad work? Is it (or would it be) effective? Or is it flawed? Does it break down? Bottom line: Will it sell chairs (or beds, or whatever it is the ad is designed to sell)? What does the ad denote? Connote? What story does it tell?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: Do you consider or take into account contemporary events and sensitivities, like the Paris attacks, for example? The ways in which Muslims have been represented, stereotyped and scapegoated in American society? Do you respect the long and rich history of Islam globally? Does the ad adopt or leverage a specific style or era in print advertising?

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: How salient is the ad to U.S. Muslim populations? How does it speak uniquely to U.S. Muslims without alienating non-Muslims? Demonstrate some nuance in understanding that there are many Muslim cultures, many Muslim communities and sub-communities, and that Muslim does not mean or equate to being Arabic.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: What is present at a semiotic level? What symbols are used, to what effect? Which symbols are avoided or absent? How much thought went into the ad’s symbolism or semiotic meaning? This and the cultural perspective are the heart and soul of COM 270, so spend some time demonstrating with the power tools how your ad is supposed to operate symbolically (Peirce, Berger, Barthes, Hall, Baudrillard, McLuhan). What is the mythic truth of the ad? What’s its ‘big idea’ or metaphor? What’s missing, absent or silent? (The gutters. The zen. The negative space.)

TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE: This is a print ad, and any medium is an intrinsic part of the message. How does the ad acknowledge the message that is part of any **print** ad (as opposed to TV or web)? How effective is the typography? The dominant visual? Color? Light? How is the ad composed in terms of the Big Four: Balance, unity, rhythm and contrast? What is its CVI? Does it use or facilitate a Z pattern of readership? What typeface(s) did you choose, and why?

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE: Did you avoid stereotype? Did you demonstrate sensitivity, cultural knowledge, care and respect for the audience in the representations you made? Did you treat everyone the same but acknowledge their uniqueness? Does the ad take a Golden Mean and/or Golden Rule approach, ethically? Does the ad pass the “veil of ignorance” test? How? Elaborate/demonstrate this.

A few thoughts or helps:

The glossary of insults is huge. If there is an opportunity for someone to feel or be offended, they will be. We live in a culture of indignation. We all are on guard; we all are skeptical. “Who would’ve known that would insult those people, right?”

Consider your intended meanings AND potential interpretations. For example, in many Muslim cultures, showing someone the sole of your shoe is considered a grave insult. **Warning:** Do not adopt a vernacular or an ‘attitude.’ This would be similar to putting on a costume, or Grandpa trying to speak in hashtags.

At the end, ask yourself: Does my ad have **voice, context and complexity**?

- If you have voice, you won’t patronize.
- If there is context, there can be understanding.
- If there is complexity, you can avoid stereotype and misrepresentation. You do this through research, good sourcing and deep learning.

Finally, do not attempt this project using only Google. How could you learn about a distinct people group using only a telescope? Go into the inner sanctum. Care. Be curious, compassionate, vital, and alive. Listen.



Ikea designed this hijab for its female Muslim employees, who are prohibited by their religion from being in public with an uncovered head.

To help you with your midterms:

- >>Selling to Muslims, video from the NYTimes,
<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2007/04/27/business/1194817100782/selling-to-islam.html>
- >>Islam for Journalists, <https://www.rjionline.org/downloads/islam-for-journalists>
- >>American Muslims, from CAIR,
<http://cubanxgiants.com/berry/270/documents/AmericanMuslims.pdf>
- >> Builtimages.com (for graphics for your projects)