

# Visualizing the Feminine Mystique: A Mini-Exhibit

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## BRIEF OVERVIEW

This assignment is designed as the penultimate or final project in an upper-level undergraduate course. It's designed for a women's history course, but can be adapted to other topics quite easily. The assignment asks students to find primary sources and correlate their themes to the present day. In creating their presentation they have to analyze advertisements, connect them to context, and synthesize them with contemporary texts. Students will then carry their story up to the present day by locating a current advertisement that fits their analytical theme.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Primary Source Literacy:

- **Identify** and communicate information found in primary sources.
- **Critically evaluate** the perspective of creators of primary sources.
- **Situate** a primary source in context by applying knowledge about the time and culture in which it was created.
- **Examine and synthesize** a variety of sources in order to construct, support, or dispute a research argument.

### Students Will:

- **Gain** experience searching online primary source databases.
- **Create** an original mini-exhibit that contextualizes historical materials.
- Meet the following disciplinary and programmatic objectives:
  - Recognize and explain historical processes, continuity and change
  - Develop a body of historical knowledge with breadth of time and place—as well as depth of depth of detail—in order to discern context
  - Collect, question, organize, synthesize, and interpret a variety of historical sources
  - Craft well-supported historical narratives, arguments, and reports of research findings

## Source Digital Collections

- **AdAccess:** Approximately 7,000 print advertisements predominately from U.S. publications covering five categories: radio & television, transportation, beauty & hygiene, and World War II propaganda that date from circa 1911 to 1955.
- **Ford Motor Company Advertisements:** Thousands of advertisements prepared by the J. Walter Thompson Co. advertising agency for Ford Motor Co's line of cars, trucks, vans, SUVs, and more ranging in date from 1945 to 2016.



Ladies' Home Journal, March, 1955, Protestant Children and Families Digital Collection

- **Medicine and Madison Avenue:** A collection of approximately 600 advertisements exploring the relationship between modern medicine and modern advertising.
- **AdViews:** Thousands of television commercials created by the D'Arcy, Masius, Benton & Bowles advertising agency for a diverse list of consumer companies such as General Foods, Post Cereals, Nabisco, and Proctor & Gamble.

Students will also search beyond the collections available digitally at Duke University.

The Rubenstein Library also offers several [introductory videos](#) to our digital collections. They cover useful information on refining search results, navigating digitized items, proper citations and copyright.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### Assignment:

Student exhibit will include four images that relate to the theme of domesticity, with individual analyses and a theme introduction. Students may not use any images from the classroom discussions (whether instructor led or student posts) as your external images for this project.

1. Search the Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History's digital collections to find three images from the time period 1945–1965 which demonstrate Friedan's concept of domesticity.
2. Students will think about what contextual information is necessary to interpret these images. Students should ultimately gather sufficient contextual information to help frame their theme introduction using secondary sources, course readings, and/or other resources. Sources should be appropriate scholarly works. Students should also plan to incorporate Friedan's text as an additional primary, contextual source.
3. Find one contemporary advertisement that shows housewives or similar themes. How has domesticity endured since Friedan's time? How has it changed?
4. Students will then write object labels for each of their chosen advertisements. Each label should be approximately 150–300 words. Labels should identify pertinent details about production, carefully examine the image and its components, and then point to overall meaning. In other words, what do we learn by looking at this image/object? Why is it important? What does it reveal about the time period? Students should carefully walk through the image, pointing out the details and explaining their interpretation. Details should be discussed before addressing overall meaning.
5. With labels completed, students will then compose a themed introduction that ties the objects together, provides needed context and background information, and identifies the significance of these materials. Themed introductions should present an argument that answers the "so what?" question. In other words, what do we learn about the time period, and about gender roles, by viewing these materials? Why are these materials important? Themed introductions should be about 500 words and no more than 750.
6. The final format of this project may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, a traditional research paper, a virtual exhibit, a power point or Prezi presentation, iMovie, or another non-traditional format.
7. Citations: all sources must be cited, including images. Each project will include a works cited page. Parenthetical references for in-text citations that include author last name and page number are acceptable.

### Final Project Format:

The format for the final project may take a variety of forms including (but not limited to) a traditional research style paper, a virtual exhibit, a power point or Prezi presentation, an iMovie, or another non-traditional format. Regardless of chosen format, students will be required to submit copies of written work/scripts for evaluation along with a works-cited page and copies of your chosen images.

*This module was developed as part of a Business History Conference Workshop, 2020.*

QUESTIONS?

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