Analyzing a Text, Advertisement or Other Source in W131

This handout is a guide to analyzing a text, advertisement or other source of information. Try the following:

1. Determine what the text or source means before deciding how you feel about it.

2. Define the significant parts or elements of the source and identify how they are related.

3. When you identify these elements, ask yourself the following questions:
   - Which elements are most important?
   - Why are these elements so important?
   - If the elements are repeated, why has the author repeated them?
   - If the elements contrast, why do they contrast and how do these contrasts help me to understand what the source is about?
   - Look for elements that seem unusual or do not fit. Is there something significant about these unusual elements and what new way of thinking about the sources do these elements suggest?

4. Having done this analysis, ask yourself: In what ways might the source be interpreted differently? How might different audiences perceive this source?

5. Next, ask yourself: Which of the interpretations of the source do I find the most interesting, the most persuasive or the best to work with?

6. Then ask yourself: In what ways can the interpretation from #5 be supported with evidence from the source?

7. Finally, ask yourself: What objections might there be to this interpretation and how might I respond to such objections?