From Cradle to Grave Assignment

1) The goal is for students to make connections between how being consumers relates to the socio-political, environmental and economic realities around the globe. Students will research a product from beginning to end and then write a well-researched and well-reasoned paper that shows some understanding of the life of a product and its impacts socio-politically or environmentally.

2) The mechanics of the assignment (page length, point value and other expectations) appear below.

3) The assignment is broken into 4 parts. Parts 1-4 are worth 50 points each.

4) **Students may work in pairs if they wish. IF** you choose this option, both participants must abide by the following: A) Once you have chosen to complete the paper together, you may NOT change after submission of Part 1; B) You fully agree to and accept the shared grade, which will be assigned with no possibility of dispute. Remember to put both names on each part of the assignment.

Writing:

1) **Thesis:** We require that you write each part in essay form with a thesis. A thesis creates an argument that explains why the information you are discussing is relevant. Each student will develop her/his own thesis that will be used through every section. Thus, a real introduction paragraph followed by paragraphs that have connection and flow. Do NOT treat this as a Q & A session. **Bold the thesis statement** for each of the four parts so that we know what argument you are making for the section.

2) **Sources:** You must have at least 4 outside resources for each part that are considered non-biased (as discussed in class and on BlackBoard). One resource MUST be scholarly (must **BOLD** in your bibliography) and no blogs allowed. In-text citations are required throughout your paper as well as a full, professional bibliography at the end (APA style). Resources for your maps are additional.

3) **Structure:** With a minimum of 700 words and a maximum of 900 words for your text, summarize in your own words, what your research has shown about the questions below. Must be double-spaced. Don’t plagiarize; don’t quote…only use YOUR OWN WORDS (to see the difference between citing, quoting and plagiarizing, see BlackBoard, Cradle to Grave).

4) **Submission:** For each part, only the paper will be posted to Turnitin. Attach bibliography and the map at the end of each part. If you are unable to do so, email to the appropriate instructor.

5) **Turnitin:** Submit Part X to ‘PART X FINAL’ in TURNITIN. There is an additional Turnitin available to you called ‘Part X Draft’ and we urge you to submit your assignment there first to check whether you have plagiarized. We never look at the Draft. We only look at the FINAL Turnitin for grading. So make sure to submit to the correct place so it is not counted off as late. **Parts 1-4 will receive 10 points off each calendar day late.**

6) **Cover-Page:** Make sure that each submission has a cover page so we may provide comments.

**Topic:**

Due February 2nd, 12:30pm

1) Prior to beginning your project, you will choose a perspective. The life cycle of many products affects and is affected by the environmental and socio-political realities of the countries in which the goods are resourced, produced, consumed and disposed. Self-enroll on BlackBoard for the perspective of your choice:
   a. Socio-political impacts
   b. Environmental impacts

2) Half the class will investigate **each perspective** so submit your choice as soon as possible to ensure you get to research the topic that interests you.

3) At this time, we can also email information about partners who will be completing the paper together.

**Final Partner Pick:**

Due February 9th, 12:30

1) Email us the name of partners by this date.
Part 1: Researching Raw Materials (50 points)

1) Product/MNC -- Choose either:
   a. Smart Phones, you must research either Apple or Samsung
   OR
   b. Sneakers, you must research either Nike or Adidas.

2) Regardless of perspective (socio-political/environmental), research the following:
   a. What are the MAIN (5-7) RAW materials required to produce the good? An example of a raw material is: wool, rubber, tin, sand, etc; not glass or a circuit board.
   b. Provide a single global map of where the main raw materials are located. This means you must not only identify the countries, but also label the raw materials associated with those countries (Ex. arrow pointing to Vietnam and “rubber” next to it). Make the map easy to understand. Previous student examples are available on BlackBoard.

3) Now, pick the single raw material that interests you most and focus on the main country from where it is obtained. You may NOT choose China for this section of the writing assignment.
   a. For SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. What is the political system of the country?
      ii. What economic system does the country use? What labor laws exist in the country?
      iii. How much power do economic leaders have over politicians?
      iv. What kind of economic inequality exists in the country?
      v. How does racism and sexism affect economic inequality?
      vi. What is the gender, age, and if relevant, ethnicity of the typical worker producing the material?
      vii. What are typical working conditions like for the worker producing the material?
   b. For ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. What types of environmental laws exist within the country? When were they established?
      ii. What regulation/enforcement of these laws exists and to what degree?
      iii. Are there industry standards regarding environmental concerns?
      iv. Is the specific corporation you are researching proactive or reactive regarding environmental impacts in the country?
      v. How is the raw material acquired? There may be a number of steps to the process.
      vi. What are environmental impacts on: animals (includes humans); vegetation; air; & water.

Part 2: Skipping to Final Production (50 points)

1) Regardless of perspective, we want you to research the following about the product:
   a. Add to the map created in Part 1 where the main raw materials are sent for final production (5-7 locations). Again label clearly and make the map easy to understand. Previous student examples are available on BlackBoard.
   b. NOTE: If the country from Part 1 is the same as the country as Part 2 then provide more detailed information about the labor production process (vi and vii under socio-political).

2) Answer the following about the country where most of the final production occurs.
   a. For SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. What is the political system of the country?
      ii. What economic system does the country use? What labor laws exist in the country?
      iii. How much power do economic leaders have over politicians?
      iv. What kind of economic inequality exists in the country?
      v. How does racism and sexism affect economic inequality?
      vi. What is the gender, age, and if relevant, ethnicity of the typical worker producing the material?
      vii. What are typical working conditions like for the worker producing the material?
   b. For ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. How are the materials transported to the country where the final good is produced/assembled? If you can’t find much information, why might that be?
      ii. What are the environmental impacts from the main type of transportation?
iii. What types of environmental laws exist within the country? When where they established?
iv. What regulation/enforcement of these laws exists and to what degree?
v. Are there industry standards regarding environmental concerns?
vi. Is the specific corporation you are researching proactive or reactive regarding environmental impacts in the country?
vii. During the assembly and production of the final product, what are the environmental impacts on: animals (includes humans); vegetation; air; and water.

Part 3: Consuming in the USA and Disposing (50 points)
Due April 5th, 12:30pm
1) Regardless of perspective, we want you to research the following about the product:
   a. Adding to your Part 2 map, which also shows raw material locations, draw lines from final production locations to most common countries for consumption (5-7 locations). Again label clearly and make the map easy to understand. Previous student examples are available on BlackBoard.
   b. What is the typical price of the product being sold in the US?
   c. How does the company encourage overconsumption (remember to explain what overconsumption is) and how is planned obsolescence related?
2) Answer the following:
   a. For SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. What was the profit made last year for the product by the company?
      ii. What tax or other economic breaks/advantages was this company given by the US government (try opensecrets.org for some of this)?
      iii. How much did the company spend on making the good?
      iv. How much money did the company spend on lobbying government officials to get policies written in its favor (again, try opensecrets.org)?
      v. How does the company encourage planned obsolescence and overconsumption of goods (make sure to look up the definition of these terms)?
   b. For ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, research the following:
      i. How many of these products are sold per year?
      ii. Does the company have a strategy of planned obsolescence?
      iii. How do consumers tend to dispose of the good?
      iv. How does the method of disposal impact the environment?

Part 4: Solution and Conclusion (50 points)
Due April 21st, 12:30pm
1) Solution:
   Identify ONE impact you discussed previously from Part 1, 2, or 3. Research a tried solution to this problem AND propose how it could be implemented.
   a. Present and clarify the cause/s of the specific impact you are proposing to solve.
   b. This must be a SINGLE, viable solution THAT HAS BEEN TRIED somewhere.
   c. Explain this solution and assess how it has worked in the past.
   d. How can the solution be implemented to directly address your identified problem?
   e. The solution must logically connect to the cause/s you present.
2) Conclusion – Wrap up the significance of the production process and reflect on how researching the product has been significant or insignificant for you.

Reflection - You MUST provide a simple ½ - 1-page reflection answering all of the following questions and email. If you did very well on the previous sections and therefore have few writing comments to reflect upon, then state that and focus on c and d below.
   a. How did you respond to the feedback you received on Parts 1-3?
   b. What did you change as a result of the feedback?
   c. What was challenging about this paper?
   d. What is the greatest strength of your final paper?
HELPFUL HINTS:

a. Begin with a thesis statement (or an argument that you will make and discuss throughout the assignment). For example, “Apple computers has sold 1 billion iphones since 2003, however, not everyone has benefitted from its phenomenal sales.” Every single paragraph of the assignment will now be related, in some way, to how not everyone has benefited from iphones. Remember to bold the thesis statement.

b. Each subsequent paragraph should somehow relate to the thesis statement. Further, each paragraph should have only one point. Paragraphs with more than one point will confuse your reader.

c. Rather, articles should be used to support the point you are trying to make. Example: “Human trafficking has increased over the last 20 years. In the United States alone, figures show that human trafficking increased from 10,000 to 20,000 (Hobbes 2010).”

d. Never provide the title of the article in your paper. Simply provide information from the article to support a point you are trying to make and cite the author’s last name and the year as seen above.

e. Do not quote from the articles. Put your thoughts in your own words.

f. Do not use pronouns (he, it, they, that, this).

g. If you email a copy of your assignment at least 2 business days. Email DRAFTS TO: either lmarkow@siue.edu or mlorenz@siue.edu.

h. To make sure there is no plagiarism in your assignment, submit a draft to TURNITIN in the DRAFT option. Any amount of plagiarism could cause you to fail the assignment.