

COM 270 EXAM II

Developing a print ad
for an analog Fujifilm Instax camera

> "Appreciate my uniqueness, but treat me the same." — Keith Woods, Poynter Institute
>
> "The medium is the message." — Marshall McLuhan

Your mission: Design an 8.5x11-inch print magazine ad for Fujifilm's Instax instant cameras that speaks to Gen Z's turn toward analog (film cameras, printed photos, flip phones, vinyl, paper journals), but without mocking their screen habits. The curveball here is designing an ad also lands with Gen Z's grandparents.

You choose the product from the Instax lineup: a Mini, a Wide, a Square, or a hybrid like the Mini Evo. You can include the film, but this isn't required. You decide everything else, including whether the ad is seasonal or tied to an event (graduation, the holidays, a first apartment, a wedding), the dominant visual (CVI), the typography, the copy. Everything.

Constraints: You are designing an 8.5x11-inch print magazine ad for a university alumni magazine, the kind that gets mailed to graduates, current students' families and grandparents. Picture it on a coffee table where a 20-year-old and a 75-year-old will both pick it up over Thanksgiving weekend. You will submit a narrative that applies the Six Perspectives to justify the key design decisions you make.

You can work alone or in groups. Know that this kind of work, professionally, is always done in teams that bring together account management, creative, copywriters and researchers. But, each ad earns one grade, whether an individual or a group developed it.

The visual exquisiteness of your design is **not the point.** Use whatever media you are comfortable with, even if that means colored pencils. I am grading the ideas, the conceptual work and the effort behind the message, not your skill with Canva or Photoshop.

One rule on tools: ZERO AI-generated imagery. Sketch it, photograph it (with an actual Instax, if you can borrow one), collage it or build it by hand. Your ethical perspective should explain why that choice matters for this brand and this message.

Before the deadline, you will submit:

- one finished mock-up.

- a narrative rationale addressing the six perspectives (below). Writing counts, so proofread, revise and edit. Use complete, error-free sentences. Labeling each perspective really helps your instructor.
- any elaboration I need to understand what is signified in the mock-up (colors, if penciled, or what the dominant visual is supposed to be). I'll be alone with your work when I grade it, so underestimate my ability to decode your meaning. Imagine yourself looking over my shoulder, pointing at each element and explaining why it's there.
- a few paragraphs on the research you did on Instax, Fujifilm, the analog revival, instant photography, Gen Z and anything else you needed to put an idea behind every pitch. Did you talk with a real, living Gen Zer who shoots film? With grandparents about the shoebox of prints in their closet?

Type up and print out all written work. **Due date: Wednesday, Nov. 18**

The six perspectives (grading criteria)

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE: Does the ad work? What gut reaction do you want a reader to have when they turn the page? Bottom line: Will it sell cameras (and/or film)? What does the ad denote? Connote? What story does it tell, and is it the same story for the 20-year-old and the 75-year-old holding the magazine?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: Instant photography has a long and storied past. Consider Kodak's 1888 promise, "You press the button, we do the rest"; Edwin Land and the Polaroid SX-70 (1972); the "Kodak moment"; Fujifilm launching Instax in 1998; and Kodak's bankruptcy filing in 2012, when it looked like digital had won for good. Consider the present: the digital-detox and dumbphone movements, phone-free school policies, and a flood of AI-generated images that makes many people wonder whether any picture is real. How does history inform your design choices? More specifically, does your ad adopt or leverage a specific style or era in print advertising and graphic design (1970s Polaroid ads, Swiss International Style, the hand-cut zine or scrapbook)? Why that one?

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: How salient is the ad to Gen Z? How does it speak uniquely to them without alienating everyone else, especially the grandparents? Show some nuance, because Gen Z is not one person. A rural 19-year-old and an urban 26-year-old live VERY different lives. And be careful; I have a Gen Z daughter, who will review your ad. Class matters, as well, because film isn't free. Also consider that many young people feel nostalgic for an era they never lived through. What does that mean, and how do you honor it without condescending? What does a printed photograph mean to someone who grew up with only the smartphone and selfies, compared with someone who has kept the same shoebox of prints since 1968? One last consideration: Fujifilm is a Japanese company. Bringing shame on one's family or employer is to be avoided at all costs. No SAUDI crosses, in other words.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: What signifiers and symbols are used, and to what effect? Which are very intentionally avoided or absent? This and the cultural perspective are

the heart and soul of COM 270, so spend real time with the power tools (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. The phone or people that aren't in the picture.)

TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE: This is a print ad, and the medium is an intrinsic part of the message. You are selling a physical object that makes physical objects, in a physical medium. How does your ad use that, as opposed to a TV spot or a scrolling feed? What is the CVI? How do you handle the Instax print's white border, a frame within a frame, and where does it sit on the rule of thirds? How is the ad composed in terms of the Big Four: balance, unity, rhythm and contrast? Does it use or facilitate a Z pattern of readership? Photography is, literally, writing with light. How are you using light? Color? Grain? What typeface(s) did you choose, and why?

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE: Did you avoid stereotype, both Gen Z as phone-addicted zombies and older adults as Luddites? Did you resist shaming anyone for how they use (or not use) their phone? Did you treat everyone the same but acknowledge their uniqueness? Does the ad take a Golden Mean approach (between nostalgia and novelty, between the analog and the digital) and/or a Golden Rule approach? Does it pass the "veil of ignorance" test? Elaborate and demonstrate this. Finally, explain your choice not to use AI-generated imagery, and what an ad about authenticity owes its audience. Be sure to identify by name the particular philosophical approach you took.

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 are all on guard, all skeptical. And generational sniping is a national pastime: "OK, boomer" travels in one direction, "kids these days" in the other. Your ad has to stand in the middle of that crossfire and make peace.

Consider your intended meanings AND potential interpretations. A phone in the frame, a phone crossed out, a phone face-down on the table. Each of these says something different, and one of them scolds. A grandparent shown fumbling with technology is a joke at someone's expense. A young person shown "rescued" from their phone is a sermon.

Warning: Do not adopt a vernacular or an attitude, whatever that might be, which is similar to putting on a costume. It will fall flat. Don't pose. You can become more sensitive to and knowledgeable of generational difference, however. This will require effort. It will require stepping outside of your comfort zone. This is good for you, and if you embrace the opportunity, it can be fun. So, do not attempt this project using only Google or the web. How could you learn about a people group using only a telescope? You have to be curious, compassionate and alive. And you have to listen. 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.

Resources to help you (the links worked when I made this exam)

- The Instax lineup (Mini, Square, Wide and hybrids such as the Mini Evo), from Fujifilm USA: Instax cameras
- Rotem Rozental, "Gen Z's analog obsession is reviving a film camera market that digital killed," *Fortune / The Conversation*, July 14, 2026. Argues the revival is less about nostalgia than a reaction against algorithm-driven life.
- "The analog photography trend is about photography without 'tracking likes and comments'," *Digital Camera World*, Aug. 12, 2026. Fujifilm's own marketing lead says Instax buyers now span a wider range of ages than young teens. Read this one closely: it's your riddle, straight from the client.
- "Gen Z leads drive away from social media," Axios. Notes that Gen Z'ers and baby boomers are quitting social media. There's your common ground.
- Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida (1980). Short, strange and essential for your critical perspective.
- For room and lifestyle images to sketch from: Unsplash
- Fujifilm's typeface: https://fontsinuse.com/tags/7134/fujifilm

The grading rubric I will use

Applying the six perspectives	Subarashii! (excellent) A	Totemo ii (very good) B	Mā mā (meets all reqs) C	Dame! (D)	Hidoi! (terrible) F
Personal					
Historical					
Cultural					
Critical					
Technical					
Ethical					
Research narrative					
Writing (mechanics)					