THE EASTON PROJECT (Phase I)

EAST OF EASTON:
"AN ECONOMY OF DESIRE"
Introduction

WHAT IS IT?
The Easton project will be a class project for exploring rhetorical texts. The text in this case is the Easton commercial development in Columbus, Ohio.

WHAT IS IT?
The Easton project will be a group rhetorical criticism. The text for analysis in this case is the Easton commercial development in Columbus, Ohio. Our 'rhetorical criticism' will be a large end-of-semester public presentation, a classroom event that will 'perform' our research with creativity and panache. We are actually borrowing this idea from Professor Anderson, who conceived of "The Easton Project" as a topic for popular culture analysis. He is graciously encouraging us to take a stab at this idea from a rhetorical perspective, and is excited to keep tabs with our progress. We'll have him in to class at some point to offer suggestions.

RATIONALE:
The triumph of late capitalism is the perfect wedding of consumerism with our life-instinct. It's a kind of morphing, or perfect registration of the sphere of corporate interest with the sphere of human happiness. What Easton aims for, not just the mall, but the condominiums, and by extension, New Albany's schools and government buildings, is the permeation of our lives, our values, our thought processes by an acquisitive ethos, by a desire for what is new, fashionable, and immediately pleasurable. If you succeed in this marvelous seduction, what you get is profit as the inevitable by-product of people's lives, happiness, motivations, value-system. You don't have to work for profit, because you have created profit machines. If you, Les Wexner, can succeed in doing this, you are like the space pods in "They Came to Earth" that come down and colonize human bodies, and when you succeed in colonizing all the bodies, you have won. You have taken over the world. What we want to observe and report is how this transformation takes place; how Easton is being successful in promoting this triumph of colonization.

GOAL:
A public presentation of the rhetorical criticism. This will be an oral presentation, with visual aids. We may print flyers and invite outside guests to attend.

METHODOLOGY:
Just as in any rhetorical criticism, the first step is to determine your perspective or methodology. Because ideology critique involves solid background knowledge of the perspective, this will be a substantial part of the project portioned out to as much as half of the class.

a. Developing a Perspective
Students will be assigned subjects to report to the class on that will contribute to developing a perspective for the criticism. I will provide the topics and guidance, but in many cases you will be responsible for doing primary research. The areas covered in this section will be diverse – See attached sign-up sheet. The dates for completing this work are much earlier than those for Part b.

b. Applying the Perspective
This will constitute the actual classroom presentation at the end of the course. You will use the perspective materials that were generated by other students and apply them to the actual artifact (Easton.) Included are questionnaires, on-site documentation, data collection, interviews with people and institutions associated with Easton, etc.
c. Material critique
We don't want to be lured by the surface. The underlying mechanisms that promote this system include the relationship of Easton to the city and the suburbs, the public institutions to corporate interests (is there an insidious and incestuous relationship?), This is the economic and political part of the critique.

d. Ideology critique
Nevertheless, we also have to understand the surface, which is where the seduction takes place. This is the cultural part of the critique.

TIME-TABLE:
The final public presentation will occur in the last week of classes. The perspectives presentations will occur mid-semester.

RESOURCES:
A web site will be set up to facilitate planning, promotions, and presentation.

ASSESSMENT
My criteria for judging the quality of your work is going to rigorous.
- how effectively you boil down the material.
- how effectively you convey that material to the class. Hand-outs are not a replacement for an effective oral presentation.
- the materials that are made available on-line*

Material that is presented in a lack-luster way, that is confusing or unprofessional or apologetic will get the grade that it deserves. I expect you to give a dynamic, interesting, thoughtful, and useful presentation.

Perspective
I am calling ideology critique the strain of theory and criticism that emanates originally from Karl Marx, and extends in a number of important later directions to address specifically such phenomena as Easton.
consumer fetishism
false consciousness

Imagine that the following categories were nodes on a circular grid with lines extending out from every category to every other category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political forces</th>
<th>Public space</th>
<th>Consumerism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic forces</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Meaning/Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural forces</td>
<td>Urban design</td>
<td>Public/Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological forces</td>
<td>Urban/Suburban</td>
<td>Class/Privilege</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now imagine that you looked at these relationships through the lens of a critical theorist. Ideology critique sort of specializes in seeing the relationships between these seemingly unrelated categories. It would tend to discover relationships that supported the theories that have been developed in ideology critique, critical school theory, and the like. It feels its important work is in revealing how these relationships are at work and are not innocent.

Bibliography
Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project.* (on reserve at Doane)

**Political-economic critique.**
Heilbronner, Robert. *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*  
Hawkes, David, *Ideology*  
Rifkin, Jeremy.
**Cultural-ideology critique.**
Beaudrillard. America.
----- Simulacra.
Debord, Guy. Society of the Spectacle.
Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks.
Lukacs, Georg. History and Class-Consciousness.
Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man.
Eagleton, Terry. Ideology.

**Architecture & City Culture.**
The Cult of Building. Howard Davis. Oxford UP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ashish</td>
<td>site interviews</td>
<td>meeting:</td>
<td>contestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curtis</td>
<td>site interviews</td>
<td>meeting:</td>
<td>plainchant?</td>
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<td>govt. research</td>
<td>meeting:</td>
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<td>weisner research</td>
<td>meeting:</td>
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<td>realtor research</td>
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<tr>
<td>elizabeth</td>
<td>city/suburbs</td>
<td>toy zylophone</td>
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<tr>
<td>meghan c.</td>
<td>(writer)</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>jason</td>
<td>video:</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
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<tr>
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<td>video:</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>travis</td>
<td>audio: noise makers</td>
<td>mics</td>
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<td>audio: noise makers</td>
<td>Easton site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dana</td>
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<td>set</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jenny</td>
<td>art:</td>
<td>poster/flyer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>art</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>jt</td>
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<tr>
<td>steve beeler</td>
<td>writer: polemic</td>
<td>props: game board</td>
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<tr>
<td>julie l</td>
<td>production mgr</td>
<td>props: cardinals hat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ashley</td>
<td>producer’s asst</td>
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ashish/pick two crewmembers: man-on-the street interviews
Ashley/Meagan seema: man-on-the street interviews

jason/ryan/brant: commerical
Belkis/Jill/travis: documentary: See

Elizabeth/meaganC/julie L: Architecture guide

dana/jenny: stills

Dan/Dana: A&F

Dan: Hardware store

Movie house:

Security Conor F./Travis

JT/TJ: Boundaries: audio
Props needed:
Noise-makers: hitting the contestant button, wrong answer, right answer, double jeopardy,
Music: jeopardy theme song,

Sounds
Physical props
incense burner, smoking incense
baptismal water sprayer
paper Monopoly money
Three Stands for contestants with space for scripts, contraption for buzzers, and hooks for scores.
Cardboard cue cards
white cardboard signs
Jerry Springer’s glasses
Nuclear physicist’s glasses
glitter, confetti

Production equipment for show
hand-held mic
reverb unit
one monitor for audience reaction
one monitor for video billboards
3 cameras, one attached to monitor
throne
Burger King crown
mechanisms for jeopardy answer cards.
color paper for flyers
Jerry Springer wig