**Essay question:**

**Analyzing News Magazine Covers**

This assignment will ask you to use what you learned from the News and Image readings and lectures. You will write a critique of any news magazine cover and its related story (that includes reading and analyzing the cover images and the story images and text inside).

You can choose any back issue (no more than 12 months old) from Newsweek, Time, The Economist, Rolling Stone, or any Arabic News Magazine.... Please scan and attach the cover story along with the paper (some magazines offer their covers as dowloadable online images). Put the image in the Appendix of your paper (APA style), do not upload it as a separate file or put it anywhere else.

It is important in this paper to CRITIQUE and not simply describe. You should minimize description and maximize analysis. You should also back your arguments with citations from the readings and other sources. Here are some questions that will help guide your critique, though keep in mind that your paper should be a coherent essay written in narrative form. You do not need to address all these questions:

1. What is the topic? What/Who is portrayed?   
2. Talk about the headline and/or photo caption. Do they change or influence the meaning of the image?  
3. What is the context of the image (if it is evident or implied)? Describe the elements of the picture.  
4. Discuss the person or situation portrayed (gender, age, attire, camera angle, colors, lighting, body position, background...).  
5. Consider the implications of using this image rather than another one. Why was this one chosen? Think about the   
magazine's audience.  
6. Reflect on what the image "means" to you... and consider how others might interpret the photograph differently.  
7. Ask yourself: What are the underlying values, messages and stereotypes embedded in this graphic?  
8. Are there any emotions revealed in this image? Does the image provoke any emotions?  
9. You can also come up with your own questions and observations. Be creative!

**After addressing some of these questions, generate an alternative image idea for the cover along with an alternative headline (on the same story). Explain how the different image/headline would have differently skewed readers' immediate understanding of the story and how they might have appealed to (or alienated) a different reader demographic... Include this "alternative" discussion in the paper (2-3 paragraphs max).**

Analyzing News Magazine Covers: Newsweek Magazine

Maya Chami

American University of Beirut

Abstract

This paper analyses the cover image of *Newsweek* magazine that was released on September 24, 2012, as well as the images inside the magazine in the story. It focuses on the headline of the cover, the caption, the elements of the image and how they relate to the context of what is happening and why they are mostly misleading.

Analyzing News Magazine Covers: Newsweek Magazine

In the September 24 2012 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, their cover (Appendix A) showed the images of men in a crowd screaming. The title was “Muslim Rage” with a caption of “How I Survived It. How We Can End It.”

The topic, as indicated by the title, is about Muslims and their demonstrations of anger through protests and fights. With no indication to what the protests is about, it would be easy for the audience to assume that it was one of the multiple protests happening around the world where Muslims were protesting their anger at the movie “Innocence of Muslims,” which was released on YouTube. The headline, “Muslim Rage,” indicates that the Muslims are in a state of rage and anger. Yet, rather than saying that that is a state, it sounds more like a disease as if rage is a condition that comes with being Muslim. Add to it the caption, “How I Survived It. How We Can End It,” it seems as if the author, Ayaan Hirsi Al,i is giving a testimony of her encounter with this disease and that there is a way to survive it, like a cure. The headline and caption influence the image and change what it could mean, especially to the viewer, in a negative way. If you add everything that has been happening to the Muslims and the people in the Arab world, it seems that any picture being printed about them has the image of men or women screaming, shouting out, and crying out in anger, sadness or despair. It almost seems that Muslims are always in that state. Add to it the tagline of “Muslim Rage,” and it gives people the impression that they are constantly angry.

The context of the image is neither evident nor implied. The image is a close up of two men, one looking into the camera and shouting. The other is grabbing strongly onto a cloth, or what some might assume is a flag, with his head backwards and his facial expression mixed feeling of anger and sadness. In the background, there is a mass of people, all who appear to be men, with no evidence of women. There is a banner hanging sideways with Arabic writing. The main two men are dressed in traditional Arab attire. The image was taken in broad daylight, which allows viewers to inspect the picture clearly. Though it is clear, the close up makes it hard to know whether it is a big group of protesters all in the same state or whether it was just a few people who are angered because in the very back of the image, there is one old man who doesn’t look like he is as angry or emotional as the main two. Another interesting thing at the front of the image is a man who seems to be coming in-between the two main men as if pushing them away from each other, or as if he were pushing to make his way forward.

On the same day, *Time* magazine’s cover had a similar headline, “The Agents of Outrage” with the cover picture being that of a protest of angry men shouting, holding a Qur’an and a flare. The entire cover of Time had a layer of red color, even over the picture. When comparing the two, the cover on Time isn’t aiming at Muslims straightforward, not even through their headlines, unlike Newsweek where the title has the word “Muslim” and the men are dressed like typical Muslims. Yet in both pictures, through the facial expressions, the stereotype that Muslims are constantly angry and always protesting violently becomes reinforced to the international audience.   
 Inside the magazine the image accompanying the title is a group of men standing, some with their hands in the air. One is showing the peace sign and the other is holding up a sign that says “nobody but God’s prophet, peace be upon him.” They don’t look violent whatsoever, but seem emotional and look to be in a state of marching in a protest. These men are standing outside the American embassy in Egypt where they are only protesting. There is no evidence of looting or damages that the men could have caused it. This image is very contradictory to the cover image of the magazine because no evidence of “rage” is there. The same goes for the second image in the story where five veiled women are standing in protest holding a picture of Khomeini, their supreme leader. Only one of the women looks aggravated but there is no evidence in her body language that she will take action except to stand there. The other women look passive.

The last picture, though, is of a truck on fire with a shirtless man holding both hands up and giving the peace sign. This image can easily emit contradiction since the man is showing the peace sign but is standing near a burning truck which one could only assume he was involved in setting on fire. The previous two images mentioned had captions explaining where the incident happened and what was happening. In this last image, the caption says, “As protests spread to more than 20 countries, governments lost control and flailed desperately to stem the violence (Author, year, p.#)”. This image, put in the right context, could apply to anything. It could have been an image taken from any other protest or conflict zone in the world since there is no evidence, facial or dress wear, to insinuate that it was a Muslim. Yet, in the October 8 issue of Newsweek, there is a picture of a truck on fire with the caption, “a police truck in flames near the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Sept. 13, 2012.” The truck in this issue is very similar to the one in the Sept. 24 issue, yet there are no people in front of the truck. This comparison shows how the right caption clearly indicates what is happening and where.

As an alternative picture or headline, one could keep the same picture but change the angle. Instead of the close up, it would have been better to have the image taken farther away to get an idea of what is really happening in that space and time. If a bigger overview of a crowd all fueled with anger was evident, then maybe it would have matched the title of “Muslim Rage”. Also, it would make things clearer if we could see that there were also women involved since Islam isn’t only made up of a few angry men, but rather a group of men and women and children of all ages and races. The headline would be the same but rather than just “Muslim Rage,” it would be “Muslims in a state of rage.” This would make people understand that they are not just an enraged group of people, but rather in a specific state at a specific time.

Further, the story that followed the images was not completely on track. The story is that of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and how she left the Islam religion and became secular. Based on her account, it was her decision. Yet she was attacked by other Islamists based on the statements she said about Islam. Her story was contradictory to the cover page caption – “How I survived it. How we can end it” – because she wasn’t in a battle with Islam to survive it.

References

Appendix A







