

OKANAGAN COLLEGE
Department of Communications
CMNS 100: Introduction to Communications

Course Description

The aim of this course is to provide students with an introduction to communications theory. Surveying historical and contemporary theories, the course will offer a critical examination of the ways people communicate with each other, for example, via print and/or new media, orally, interpersonally, and visually.

Students will analyse meaning-making in a range of mediated contexts, including advertising, television, film, popular culture, and the internet. We will explore how communication is fundamentally related to the development of self and society and we will ask how the messages of the contemporary world influence our perception of such issues as gender, race, class, and community.

Prerequisites: none

Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop an introductory understanding of theories of communication
2. Apply this understanding to the critical analysis of a variety of communicative texts and contexts
3. Assess the influence of the contemporary media in their individual sense of self and worldview
4. Identify the relationship between systems of meaning and societal systems
5. Develop basic media analysis skills
6. Build competency in reading, thinking, and writing critically

Topics

1. Semiotics; sign, signified, and signifier
2. *Langue* and *parole*
3. Rhetorical analysis; ethos, logos, pathos; kairos; rhetorical tropes
4. Orality and literacy
5. Intertextuality
6. Language, identity, and ideology; gender; class; race
7. Mass versus interpersonal communication
8. Written, visual, and electronic communication

Method of Instruction

As a learner-centred course, students share responsibility with the instructor for the success of each class session. Having carefully read and contemplated the texts and topics under consideration in advance of a given class, students should be prepared for vibrant class discussion. Classes will feature a fluid combination of lectures, presentations, individual and collaborative work, workshops, and seminars.

Texts

Danesi, Marcel. *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: a Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2004.

Note: The text will be supplemented with readings directly relevant to students' coursework.

Course Requirements

Short analysis of print advertisement	10%
Long analysis of pop culture artifact	25%
Midterm	10%
Critical Journal (see attached assignment sample)	15%
Presentation	15%
Final	15%
Participation (including attendance, preparation, responses to study questions, informal group presentations, engagement in class activities, and low-stakes writing assignments)	10%

Evaluation and Assessment

Students will collaborate with the instructor to determine detailed criteria for each assignment. The criteria will vary according to each assignment's audience, purpose, content, and communications medium and will be developed in advance of a given assignment's submission date. Students will also engage in reflective self-assessment as a means of better integrating evaluation with learning.

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Sample Assignment: Critical Journal

Worth: 15%

This assignment is an opportunity for students to critically examine the world around them and to document that examination in a creative way.

Throughout the term, students are required to keep a record of the messages received in daily life. These messages may be received from a range of mediated contexts (advertisements, film, television, etc.) and may influence the individual in different ways. The goal of the assignment is for students to become attuned to the number and quality of such messages and to begin to critically analyse their impact.

Students may design their journal as best suits their interests and/or needs. Some students may wish to keep a visual record (e.g. a collage, painting, or video) of their observations and analysis; others may choose a verbal record (e.g. blogs, poetry, or a column for the student paper). Some may choose a combination of a range of media for expression.

Evaluation and Assessment

The journal will be submitted 3 times in the semester and each submission will be worth 5 marks. Be exhaustive. Be critical. Be creative.