

OKANAGAN COLLEGE
Department of Communications
CMNS 200: Communications in the Everyday

Course Description

This course focuses on the relationship between language and our everyday experience of the world. We will look, in particular, at language as a symbolic system of meaning and its influence on our thinking, our beliefs, our desires, our emotions, and our relationships with others. We will examine the function of language in relation to power, to discourse communities, and to the formation of gender and identity.

Students will analyze the language of supremely ordinary texts— advertisements, websites, cereal boxes, bank statements, etc—, the sorts of texts which typically escape our scrutiny. We will ask how these texts are persuasive, and how they influence us, everyday, to think, feel, and act in certain ways.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of CMNS 100 or 2nd year standing.

Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop an introductory understanding of theories fundamental to critical textual analysis (e.g. rhetorical analysis, semiotics, genre theory, sociolinguistics, linguistic pragmatics, etc.)
2. Critically identify and assess the role of language in their own lives (as students, citizens, consumers, etc)
3. Identify how language functions in a range of communicative situations (e.g. educational, workplace, political, commercial, etc.)
4. Understand how language functions in a variety of texts (e.g. advertisements, editorials, political speeches, websites, etc.)
5. Develop basic textual analysis skills

Topics

1. Discourse analysis (content analysis, linguistic pragmatics, genre theory, semiotics)
2. Rhetorical analysis (rhetorical forms, narrative, metaphor, terministic screens)
3. Social theory
4. Language, community, culture, race
5. Language, identity, gender
6. Language, ideology, social control

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

Stillar, Glenn. *Analyzing Everyday Texts: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Perspectives*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.

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

Course Requirements

Short analyses of "everyday" texts (3 @10% each)	30%
Article summary	10%
Long analysis of corpus of "everyday" texts	20%
Critical journal	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 work 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. The criteria 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.

CMNS 200: Communications in the Everyday

Sample Assignment: Short Analysis

Worth: 10% each

With the aim of developing basic textual analysis skills, students will complete three short analyses throughout the course of the term.

For each, students will first identify an “everyday text” worthy of analysis. Such texts might include a product label, an examination booklet, a short newspaper article, an email, a credit application, a course assignment, and so on.

Students will conduct a critical analysis of their chosen text, using appropriate methodology (i.e. some students may employ a single method for analysis; others may find two or more approaches useful to the particular text). Analyses should include discussion of the function of the text in relation to issues such as gender, identity, community, culture, consumption, and power.

Students will submit the following:

- 1) A copy of the text under analysis
- 2) A detailed record of the data resulting from their analysis
- 3) A discussion essay of approx. 3 pages

Evaluation and Assessment

As a learner-centred course, students will work with the instructor to determine detailed criteria for this assignment. Categories for evaluation could include: appropriateness of method, quality of data, and complexity of critical analysis.