

COMM 2302-5  
Media Texts  
Trinity University  
Department of Communication  
Spring 2020

Monday Wednesday Friday 12:30 PM – 1:20 PM  
Room: DSB Room 320  
Instructor: Jacob Sanchez  
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Email: jsanche7@trinity.edu  
Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 1:30 PM – 3:00PM  
Tuesday and Thursday by appointment  
tlearn.trinity.edu  
<https://comm2302spring20.school.blog/>

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

From morning to night, we are bombarded with a steady stream of media messages. Just as fish are oblivious to the water that surrounds them, we often give little attention to the symbolic landscape in which we live. We rarely dig beneath the surface of messages that we receive. Yet, these messages are crafted with a specific purpose in mind. Some are designed to entertain. Others are designed to inform. Many are designed to persuade.

In this course, you will develop media literacy skills by critically interpreting the aesthetic properties and cultural meanings of print, audio, film/video, and interactive media, and by applying this knowledge to create media messages. You will learn to apply a range of theoretical perspectives to a variety of communication media. You will also explore technical aspects of media production such as print design and video editing.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course, you will:

1. Analyze print, audio, film/video, and interactive messages using appropriate aesthetic terminology and principles
2. Apply a range of media theories to the interpretation and criticism of visual messages
3. Use photo manipulation software to create a print advertisement
4. Use video editing software to remix audiovisual footage
5. Conduct a basic quantitative content analysis
6. Perform a qualitative textual analysis of a media work

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This is a required course for communication majors. It is also an example of the “**Humanities Approach to Creation and Analysis.**” Upon successful completion of this course, you will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. discuss the significance of ideas, texts, performances, or cultural artifacts within an appropriate intellectual or historical framework, and
2. apply the interpretive or analytical methods that characterize at least one of the humanistic disciplines.

This course also counts toward the “**Written Communication (WC) Capacity.**” Upon successful completion of this course, you will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. write a sustained academic work with appropriate use of evidence and developed reasoning to support an argument,
2. improve your writing in response to feedback, and
3. craft prose that conforms to the conventions of our discipline.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Most of the readings for this course are posted on TLEARN (<http://tlearn.trinity.edu>). In addition, the following books are required:

1. Golombisky, K. & Hagen, R. (2013). *White space is not your enemy: A beginners guide to communicating visually through graphic, web, and multimedia design. Second Edition.* Burlington, MA: Focal Press.
2. Smith, G.M. (2011). *What media classes really want to discuss.* New York: Routledge.

## **COURSE COMMUNICATION**

Course communication will regularly take place via TLEARN and also via e-mail, so please be sure to check these frequently for course-related messages. You are responsible for the contents of all course-related messages sent via TLEARN and/or your Trinity e-mail.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

### *Attendance*

**Attendance is essential for you to succeed in this course.** I will take attendance promptly at the start of our class. If you are late, you will be counted as absent from that class period. **Two absences are permitted with NO penalty. Three or four absences may result in lowering of your overall course grade. Five or more absences may result in dismissal from the course, at the professor’s discretion.** If you are a member of a Trinity University team or organization, school-sponsored activities may cause you to miss class during the semester. If this is the case, you should present me with the dates of the activities in writing prior to the activity. If notice is not received in advance, the class period will count as an absence. As long as the notification is received in advance it is acceptable to miss class.

If you have missed class, it is your responsibility to visit TLEARN and/or contact your classmates to obtain missing materials. Do not rely on the professor to provide these. Therefore, I

strongly encourage informal networks in class. It is a good idea to exchange phone numbers or email...

<i>Classmate's Name</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone Number</i>

*Workload*

At first glance, it might appear that this course involves quite a bit of reading. It does. This course is worth three credits. According to Trinity University's handbook, "the usual semester's work in any one course gives three semester hours of credit" and "each lecture or recitation hour presupposes an average of two hours of outside preparation on the part of the student." In other words, you should expect to devote approximately six hours a week to COMM 2302 outside of our weekly meetings.

*Engagement*

Course discussion is an important part of the Trinity experience. To make the most of the course materials and our discussion times, I expect you to **critically read** all assigned readings prior to the assigned date, be prepared to **actively discuss** all readings and examples in class, and be able to **write academically** about your analysis of readings, discussions, and visual texts. To receive an excellent grade for participation, you should arrive on time and participate in discussion without prompting. An average participation grade will be given to students who only answer questions when asked.

*Cell phones, laptops, iPods, etc.*

While cell phones, laptops, iPods, and other electronic devices are important to the study of communication, they can be very distracting. **Please turn off** and store all electronic devices and set all ringers to "silent" (not "vibrate") before lecture begins. Laptops may be used for taking notes, provided they are used solely for that purpose. You will be asked to leave (and marked as absent) should your electronic devices disrupt classroom activities.

*Food & Drinks*

No food is allowed in class. Drinks in a bottle with a lid are allowed.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Like most course offered in the Department of Communication, COMM 2302 emphasizes a combination of theory and practice.

You will write two scholarly papers that apply theoretical ideas discussed in class to specific

examples of popular media. In the **first paper**, you will analyze the deeper meanings of a printed or audio message. In the **second paper**, you will analyze the deeper meanings of a film/video or interactive message.

(40% total)

You will complete three practical/applied projects. First, you will analyze existing media messages in the quantitative **content analysis project**. Second, you will develop a persuasive print advertisement (in Adobe Photoshop) and write a strategic document discussing your decisions in the **print project**. Third, you will work with existing video footage to transform the meaning of a video trailer (in Adobe Premiere) and write a strategic document discussing your decisions in the **video project**. More details about these projects will be provided as the semester progresses. (25% total)

For each week you will have a **blog post** due to WordPress on Sunday by Midnight. (15% total).

They will be a reading summary with outside link to media or a personal example.

The WordPress blog is a venue to gather your thoughts and express yourself in an online venue as a supplement to in class discussions. A selection of roughly half the class will present their blog posts each day. The blog allows you to think about discussion questions and form arguments and make connections to the reading at your own time and pace.

For example, as a reading summary the post will include 3 sections for each class day. You must label each section with a subheading that includes, **READING SUMMARY, OUTSIDE EXAMPLE, READING CONNECTION**. You will choose 1 reading per class day and write a short paragraph summary of the reading, a summary of an experience related to that reading, and an application summary of the reading to that experience. Those summaries will be repeated for both class days so 6 paragraphs total per week. No link or image embedding is required for the posts, just text.

It is due Sunday at midnight before that week of class. Blog posts that are submitted after midnight or the next day will not receive a check plus. Make sure each blog post is published, not saved as a draft, and that I have given you a grade as a comment. It is up to the student to make sure all posts are submitted and none are skipped over.

Each Blog post is graded on a check +- system. A check plus successfully and creatively applies the topics covered during the selected reading to your detailed example. A check adequately relates the example to the topic but only superficially, it usually does not cite the specific topic in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph. A check minus can either be late, too short, without citation or headings, and either does not make the connection between topic and example or does so erroneously.

Check plus 100%

Check 75%

Check minus 50%

**Final Grade Scale**

A	100-93
A-	92.99-90
B+	89.99-87
B	86.99-83
B-	82.99-80
C+	79.99-77
C	76.99-73
C-	72.99-70
D+	69.99-67
D	66.99-60
F	59.99-0

**Participation** accounts for ten percent of your overall grade. Participation is more than just being in class, it involves actively contributing to our discussions and activities. (10% total)

	Due Date	Percentage
Project #1: Content analysis	2/10	5%
Project #2: Persuasive print advertisements	2/24	15%
Project #3: Recut video trailers	4/13	15%
Paper #1: Print or audio messages	3/23	20%
Paper #2: Film or interactive messages	5/11	20%
WordPress Blog posts		15%
Participation		10%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Any late assignment** will have its grade reduced 10% for each day that it is late. Thus, if an assignment is received ten or more days after the deadline, a 0% will be recorded.

### **GRADE REVIEWS (“24/7”)**

If you would like to discuss a grade with me, I ask that you:

- Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your assignment back before approaching me. Make sure to contact me within 7 days of receiving your assignment.
- Write it down. If you have a question about the grade, just come and talk with me. If you feel the grade was unfair and would like me to review it again, you need to make a logical written argument as to why you feel I have graded you unfairly.

## **WRITING ASSISTANCE**

This course fulfills the “**Written Communication (WC) Capacity**” and it therefore requires you to develop clearly researched and well written arguments about a variety of media texts. All written work for this course will be held to a high standard for college writing. The University Writing Center is a student-staffed organization that provides assistance with writing. The students offer advice on all levels of composition from overall argument structure to syntax and punctuation. The Writing Center is located in the Coates Library, Room 319, just around the corner from the Help Desk. For times and more information, google “Trinity University Writing Center”.

## **ACADEMIC HONOR CODE**

The Academic Honor Code prohibits dishonesty and plagiarism of academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. Specifics about the Academic Honor Code can be found at: <https://new.trinity.edu/academics/academic-resources/honor-code>.

## **NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this class, I expect that you will deliver your accommodation letter to me during my office hours early in the semester so we can discuss how I might prepare to meet your needs. Please make these arrangements with me as soon as possible once you have met with the SAS Coordinator and have picked up your accommodation letters. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have not already registered with Student Accessibility Services, contact the office at 999-7411 or [SAS@trinity.edu](mailto:SAS@trinity.edu). You must be registered with SAS before I can provide accommodations.

## **REVISIONS**

Some dates, readings, and assignments may be adjusted over the course of the semester. Revisions to this syllabus will be announced in class and posted on-line.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1		1/15 Course Overview	1/17 Media Literacy  Greg Smith (2010) CH 1 “It’s just a movie: Why you should analyze film and television” in What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss. London: Routledge.
2	1/20 No Class  MLK Holiday	1/22 Media Literacy  Greg Smith (2010) CH 2 “What is realism, really?” in What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss. London: Routledge.	1/24  Greg Smith (2010) CH 3 “How do we identify with characters?” in What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss. London: Routledge.
3	1/27 Methods of media analysis  Glenn Sparks (2013) “Analyzing content” in Media Effects Research: A Basic Overview. 2013.	1/29  Wimmer, R. & Dominick, J. (1994). “Content analysis.” Excerpt from Mass Media Research: An Introduction., 25 pages.	1/31  Bonnie Brennen (2012) “Quantitative vs. qualitative research” in Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies. New York: Routledge.
4	2/3 Print messages  Chapters 4-5 of Rebecca Hagen and Kim Golombisky (2016) White Space is Not Your Enemy. Waltham, MA: Focal Press.	2/5  Chapters 6-8 of Rebecca Hagen and Kim Golombisky (2016) White Space is Not Your Enemy. Waltham, MA: Focal Press.	2/7  Marcel Danesi (2004) Messages, signs, and meaning: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
5	2/10 Computer lab	2/12	2/14

	<p>Photoshop</p> <p>Rebecca Hagen and Kim Golombisky (2013) "Using gestalt theory to guide layout" and "Creating visual hierarchy with type" on the auxiliary site supporting White Space Is Not Your Enemy.</p> <p>DUE: Project #1 Content Analysis</p>	<p>Alex Mayyasi (2016) "How Subarus came to be seen as cars for Lesbians," The Atlantic, June 22.</p>	<p>Kaufman, F. (2005). "Debbie does salad. The Food network at the frontiers of pornography." From <i>Harper's Magazine</i>, 6 pages.</p>
6	<p>2/17 Semiotics</p> <p>Maasik, S. &amp; Solomon, J. (2012). "The semiotic method." Excerpt from <i>Signs of life in the USA</i>. TLEARN, 17 pages.</p>	<p>2/19</p> <p>Vance Packard (1957) "The built-in sexual overtone," "Back to the breast and beyond," and "Babes in consumerland" in <i>The Hidden Persuaders</i>. New York: Simon &amp; Schuster, Inc.</p>	<p>2/21</p> <p>Beasley, R. &amp; Danesi, M. (2002). Excerpts from <i>Persuasive sign: The semiotics of advertising</i>. TLEARN, 17 pages.</p>
7	<p>2/24 Print Project</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>DUE: Project #2 Persuasive Print advertisements</p>	<p>2/26</p> <p>Presentations</p>	<p>2/28</p> <p>Presentations</p>
8	<p>3/2 Audio Messages</p>	<p>3/4 Audio</p>	<p>3/6 Audio</p>

	<p>“On Repeat” segment of Radiolab, Season 10, Episode 3. (20 minutes)</p> <p>Paper 1 Thesis in class</p>	<p>Griffin Hansbury (2003) “View from the other half,” This American Life. 22 minutes.</p>	<p>Jessica Abel (2015) “Keep or kill: Story structure” in Out on the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio. New York: Broadway books.</p>
9	<p>3/9 No class Spring Break</p>	<p>3/11 No class Spring Break</p>	<p>3/13 No class Spring Break</p>
10	<p>3/16 Film Video</p> <p>Part One of “Film, space and image” from Bernard Dick (2002) Anatomy of Film. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin’s. [TLEARN]</p>	<p>3/18</p> <p>Smith, G. (2011). Chapter 4 (pages 52-68) from What media classes really want to discuss. BOOK, 16 pages.</p>	<p>3/20</p> <p>Greg Smith (2010) CH 6 “Role models and stereotypes: An introduction to the ‘Other’” in What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss. London: Routledge.</p>
11	<p>3/23 Film Video</p> <p>Chuck Klosterman, “Space, time and DVR mechanics.” Grantland. June 8, 2011.</p> <p>Paper #1 Print or audio messages</p>	<p>3/25</p> <p>Chuck Klosterman (2004) “The awe-inspiring beauty of Tom Cruise’s shattered, troll-like face.” Excerpt from Sex, Drugs and Cocoa Puffs. New York: Scribner.</p>	<p>3/27</p> <p>Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) “Introduction: Behavior in its place,” No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>

12	3/30 Computer lab  Video thesis in class	4/1 Computer lab	4/3 Computer lab
13	4/6 Critical Tools  Greg Smith (2010) Ch 4 “Genre shmenre?” in What Media Classes Really Want to Discuss. London: Routledge. (17 pages)	4/8 Critical Tools  Louis Giannetti (2008) “Ideology” in Understanding Movies: Eleventh Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.	4/10 Critical Tools  Macnamara, J. (2013). “Sorting myths and cyberbole from trends and tipping points.” Excerpt from <i>The 21st century media (r)evolution</i> , 20 pages.
14	4/13  Video Presentations  DUE: Project #3 Recut Video Trailers	4/15  Video Presentations	4/17  Video Presentations
15	4/20 Interactive Media  Smith, G. (2011). Chapter 8 from <i>What media classes really want to discuss</i> . BOOK.	4/22  Juul, J. (2011). “Fiction.” Excerpt from <i>Half-real: Video games between real rules and fictional worlds</i> . TLEARN, 42 pages.	4/24  “From the Green Berets to America’s Army: Video games as a vehicle for political propaganda,” an excerpt from J.P Williams and J. H. Smith (2007) <i>The Player’s Realm: Studies on the Culture of Video Games and Gaming</i> . Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.
16	4/27 Critical Tools  Chuck Klosterman (2010) “This is Emo” in <i>Sex, Drugs and Cocoa Puffs</i> . New York: Scribner.	4/29  Jean Baudrillard (1983) “Precession of simulacrae” in <i>Simulations</i> . New York, NY: Semiotext(e).	5/1 Last class day  Anderson, W.T. (1992). “Welcome to the postmodern world.” Excerpt from <i>Reality isn’t what it used to be</i> . TLEARN, 20

	Paper 2 Thesis in class		pages.
17	5/4 No class this week	5/6 No class this week	5/8 No class this week
18	5/11  Paper #2 due to TLEARN before 12:30 PM  There will be no class meeting during this time		