

**Syllabus** Media Literacy COM155L111 and 112  
Course Meets: M 9:30-10:45a, and T 9:30-10:45a – LT 209  
Instructor: Brett Phares  
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**Course overview:** Media Literacy is an introduction to the study of the visual modalities of communication, with an emphasis on image-based media (film, television, photography, new technology, and the graphic arts). Topics include visual and aural “literacy,” visual manipulation, the social functions of images, and the role of visual media in the cultural process.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- > Develop a language for visual technology and visual signification;
- > Understand the relationships between technical and meaning-creating practices;
- > Understand design tactics used in website production;
- > Distinguish between advertising between mediums;
- > Understand how visual imagery influences identity.

Achievement of these outcomes will be evaluated through blog entries, weekly exercises and two 3-5 page essays.

Required Text:

**Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture (Paperback)** by Marita Sturken, Lisa Cartwright; Oxford University Press, USA; (2001); **ISBN:** 0198742711

**Schedule**

Week One: Introduction to Visual Literacy.

Theory: What is Visual Literacy? Read “Your Divided Attention” on <http://mrphares.com/YDA>

Practice: Start a Blog, write a paragraph a day, resulting in five paragraphs, on something not seen, now seen (any object you had not seen before, including media, from a credit card news-letter to a billboard, but you now see and why you think you had missed it before).

Starting Week Two, maintain blog with weekly entries on what you are picking up in class, on seeing/reading media, acting on media, etc. so that by the end of the semester you have at least 20 individual blog entries of 3-5 sentences each, with examples (image, video, etc.) attached/inserted as needed.

Week Two: Power of Images

Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Introduction and Chapter One

Practice: Finding resources, how does Google work, client server protocols such as http and ftp, see also <http://www.webmonkey.com/>

Week Three: Making Meaning

Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Two

Practice: Photoshop, RGB color, bit-depth, pixels, resolution

Week Four: Looking, Perspective and the Gaze  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Three  
Practice: Photoshop protocol

Week Five: Reproduction and Visual Technologies  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Four  
Practice: Photoshop continued, making selections, resizing, simple color correction.

Week Six: Reproduction and Visual Technologies, continued  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Four  
Practice: Page Design, incorporating images and text.

Week Seven: Mass Media  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Five  
Practice: Site Structure, wire frames, flow charts.

Week Eight: Midterm Presentations + 3-5 page paper

Week Nine: Television Culture and Technology  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Five  
Practice: Introduction to Flash, animation. Vector versus bitmap graphics

Week Ten: Consumer Culture and the Manufacturing of Desire  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Six  
Practice: More about Flash.

Week Eleven: Consumer Culture and the Manufacturing of Desire, continued  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Six  
Practice: Sound, sampling, bit depth, editing

Week Twelve: Postmodernism and Popular Culture  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Seven  
Practice: Designing for interactivity- buttons in Flash

Week Thirteen: Postmodernism and Popular Culture, continued  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Seven  
Practice: Review organizing content, project management

Week Fourteen: The Global Flow of Visual Culture  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Nine  
Practice: Final Project workshop

Week: Fifteen The Global Flow of Visual Culture, continued  
Theory: **Practices of Looking**, Chapter Nine  
Practice: Final Project workshop

Final Presentations + 3-5 page paper

## **Assessment**

### **1. Student Blog (10%)**

A. Outcome: The student will elaborate on their exploration of multimedia using a blog format as a kind of journal/sketchbook of multimedia.

B. Assessment: By end of semester, student will have amassed a min. 20 entries in their blog on ideas relating to multimedia of their choice. The blog will include observations on the nature of the multimedia project being worked on, its intended message, use and audiences; b) the blog will allow the student to reflect on the aesthetic, functional and/or intellectual value of their work.

C. Connections with goals: This assignment is designed to encourage students to develop critical evaluation skills and to have the experience of articulating their views not just for themselves but for the Web audience. The exercise is particularly useful towards industry, and relates to the college goals of cultivation of a free and enlightened mind through the discipline of scholarly study and dialogue, and exploring ways in which academic excellence may be enhanced by state-of-the-art information and communications technology. This assignment also addresses the communication program goals requiring students to be able to speak and write effectively.

D. Connection with expected learning outcomes: This work relates to the stated learning outcomes of competency in the Critique and evaluation of new media content.

### **2. Individual weekly projects (30%)**

A. Outcome: Students will use digital tools to amass a portfolio of digitally-based work, comprised of weekly assignments.

B. Assessment: Students will be graded on the following criteria: a) Technical quality of the projects; b) Content Is the overall treatment relevant, is the content timely, grounded to a specific audience, and does it motivate the user in the right direction.

C. Relationship to Goals: This item emphasizes individual mastery of basic skills introduced in the classroom. The student will be evaluated on his or her ability to use the knowledge and skills gained in class to create actual projects. This relates to the College-wide goal of application of theory to hands-on practice. It also relates to the program mission specifying that investigation centers on the ways in which human beings purposefully utilize symbols in interaction to create or modify a socially meaningful world.

D. Connection with expected learning outcomes: This assignment relates to the stated learning outcomes of competency in:

- Critique and evaluation of new media content
- Creation of raw media content
- Creation of shaped media content
- Digital Photorealistic Manipulation and Editing
- Digital Video Manipulation and Editing
- Digital Audio creation, capture, manipulation and Editing

### **3. Pop Quiz (10%)**

A. Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of various aspects of the computer game, its history and industry.

B. Assessment: **Pop Quiz**

C. Connection with Goals: This item relates to the college's goal of cultivation of a free and enlightened mind through the discipline of scholarly study and dialogue.

D. Connection with Learning Objectives: This item will evaluate the extent to which the student has fulfilled learning objectives 1 through 4.

#### **4. Mid-term Oral presentation and 3-5 page paper (20%)**

A. Outcome: The student will elaborate on aspects of multimedia, emphasizing salient points and critiquing content and design on the portfolio amassed up to mid-term.

B. Assessment: Oral presentation in class on a multimedia projects of the student's choice. The presentation should last ~5-7 minutes, during which time student will cover: a) The nature of the multimedia projects, its intended message, use and audiences; b) A critique of the content of the project in terms of its aesthetic value, intellectual value, and relevance to its intended audience; c) A critique of the design of the projects in terms of usefulness, ease of use, and structural or conceptual design metaphors. Student will also be graded on the overall effectiveness in exploring the points above.

C. Connections with goals: This assignment is designed to encourage students to develop critical evaluation skills and to have the experience of articulating their views to an audience. The exercise is particularly useful towards industry, and relates to the college goals of cultivation of a free and enlightened mind through the discipline of scholarly study and dialogue, and exploring ways in which academic excellence may be enhanced by state-of-the-art information and communications technology. This assignment also addresses the communication program goals requiring students to be able to speak and write effectively.

D. Connection with expected learning outcomes: This work relates to the stated learning outcomes of competency in the Critique and evaluation of new media content.

#### **5. Final oral presentation and 3-5 page paper (30%)**

A. Outcome: Student will present their final project, administered in the final exam time slot, covering all aspects of the final project. The presentation should last ~5-7 minutes, during which time student will cover: a) The nature of the multimedia project, its intended message, use and audiences; b) A critique of the content of the project in terms of its aesthetic value, intellectual value, and relevance to its intended audience; c) A critique of the design of the project in terms of usefulness, ease of use, and structural or conceptual design metaphors. Student will also be graded on the overall effectiveness in exploring the points above.

B. Assessment: Oral presentation on final multimedia project. The presentation will cover: a) The nature of the multimedia project, its intended message, use and audiences; b) A critique of the content in the project in terms of its aesthetic/functional/intellectual value, and relevance to its intended audience; c) A critique of the design of the projects in terms of usefulness, ease of use, and structural or conceptual design metaphors. Student will also be graded on the overall effectiveness in exploring the points above.

C. Connection with Goals: This item will test students recall of course material. It relates to the College-wide goal of cultivation of a free and enlightened mind through the discipline of scholarly study and dialogue. This assignment is designed to encourage students to develop critical evaluation skills and to have the experience of articulating their views to an audience. The exercise is particularly useful towards industry, and relates to the college goals of cultivation of a free and enlightened mind through the discipline of scholarly study and dialogue, and exploring ways in which academic excellence may be enhanced by state-of-the-art information and communications technology. This assignment also addresses the communication program goals requiring students to be able to speak and write effectively.

D. Connection with expected learning outcomes: This work relates to the stated learning outcomes of competency in the Critique and evaluation of new media content.

#### **Attendance**

There will be no re-sits of the mid-term or final presentations except for medical or college-validated absences with documentation. Both the mid-term and final presentations require your

physical presence. Students will be expected to attend all sessions and hand in all assignments on time. Absence or failure to hand in assignments will be excused only with acceptable documentation from a medical practitioner, Marist College official, or other legitimate authority.

### **Content and Copyright**

Wherever possible, students are urged to develop original content. This includes artwork, photography, video and music. Under no circumstances will the instructor condone republishing of copyright material on the web or elsewhere, unless intention is clearly articulated through other theory and purpose. Students choosing to appropriate multimedia content from any other source must obtain written permission from the relevant copyright owner.

### **Grading**

In accordance with college guidelines, the fulfillment of all basic requirements in a course or project results in the grade of C, above average performance results in the grade of B and exceptional work results in the grade of A.