

## COMM 10 Fall 2014

### Three-Part Communication Analysis project

You will be developing this project throughout the quarter and it will make up 50 percent of your grade. It is divided into three components due at specified dates during the term (for review by your TA). Together, the three parts of the project serves as the equivalent of a midterm and final.

#### Overview:

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to scholarly frameworks and methods for examining dimensions of communication. The project is broken down in to three sections aimed at developing and honing your ability to engage in detailed observation and description; formulate meaningful questions and engage analytic frameworks; and consider potential modes of further investigation. Through your work on the project you will demonstrate your grasp of key concepts and terminology that we will be exploring throughout this course.

You will begin by selecting a specific example of a form or mode of communication and to consider. For the first component you will be developing a detailed analytic description of your example that breaks it down into elements that make up the meanings conveyed. For the second component you will frame analytic questions and pursue consideration of how your example fits into wider concerns, tendencies or contexts. Finally, in the third component you will consider ways that one could study a form of communication in a more extended manner. You can apply this to the form of communication that you took up in parts one and two, or select another. Together the three parts of this project serve as an exercise in considering the key questions of this course:

- What is communication?
- Where does it occur?
- How does it occur?
- Why does it matter?
- How do we study it?

You will be graded on the effort, creativity, thoughtfulness and the overall the quality of your writing—not whether your arguments are "correct." It is important that you carefully proofread your work for errors before submitting it. It is strongly suggested that you have someone else read it to give you feedback on the clarity of your writing and ideas.

Note on formatting: Use 12 point "Times" or similar font and set your margins to 1" on left and right.

#### **Part 1: Denotative and Conative meaning** (due in section week 4)

Select a concrete example of communication that will serve as your object of investigation. It can be an example of any form of communication, such as a painting, a photograph, a letter, a speech, a piece of music, an advertisement, a phone conversation, a scene from a film or television program, a website, etc. Since you will be doing a very detailed analysis it's important you select

an example that is manageable. For example, if you are considering a film you should select a particular scene or sequence of shots to consider.

A) In essay form (1 to 2 pages double-spaced), provide a general description of your example of communication and situate it in relation to the historical period and sociocultural location in which it takes place. In short: What is it? When and where does it take place? Who are the participants? Through what mechanism/medium does it occur?

B) In a two-column format, provide a close reading of the object or event (no more than 4 pages single-spaced):

- In column one, provide a detailed comprehensive *denotative* description that breaks your example down into basic meaningful elements. You should provide a fine-grained literal account that avoids implied meanings or interpretations as much as possible. (Catalog specifically what was said; visual elements and qualities—color, texture, motion, etc.; characteristics of sound or other elements of perception).
- In column two provide *connotative* readings of the elements described in your denotative description. What meanings and association do the denotative meanings convey or imply. This requires more interpretation, but still focuses on the immediate context and commonly available associations of each element. While analytic, the connotative description aims to articulate *broadly shared* meanings of the events.

## Part 2: Analysis and Synthesis (Due in Section week 7)

Write an analytical essay (4-6 double spaced pages) that draws on your description of the communication event in part one. Begin by formulating a set of questions to ask about the wider significance of this example of communication. Your paper needs to be more than just descriptive of what the communication example means. It should provide critical insights into or an argument about the importance or significance of this example to society or culture more broadly. And it should link this to analytic frameworks from the readings (for example; historical frameworks, frameworks for understanding how discourse functions in relations to institutional structures or interpersonal communication, etc).

- How might you relate this communication event to other social, political, economic, cultural, aesthetic phenomena?
- Consider what connections you might be able to make between this instance/example of communication and other communication.
- Draw upon key concepts, theoretical or critical approaches/frameworks that we have been covering in the course to help answer the questions that you framed about the event. ***Be sure to cite the texts that you are drawing on, paraphrasing, and/or quoting directly (engage at least 2 readings)***. Do this by putting author's name, page # in parenthesis; if you cite an author who isn't in the reader, do the same and also list the text in a bibliography.
- Describe some of the limits to your interpretation and/or challenges to understanding the issues you take up.

**Part 3: Extended Investigation through other Methodologies** (Final Draft due in Section week 10. Submit your complete project with any revisions on Wednesday, December 17 by 6pm)

The third component of your project involves the development of a *proposal* for further study/research about a form of communication. Ideally your proposal will expand on your consideration of the form of communication you analyzed in Parts 1 and Part 2. If you would like to select a significantly different topic please run this by your TA.

Your research proposal should convey the questions you want to ask; explain why they are important; and describe the ways you will collect the data or evidence that will help you answer these questions; and finally the modes of analysis or interpretation you will engage. Your overarching questions might look at how this mode of communication is situated in and is shaped by broader institutional structures, social forces, and discursive practices.

*Note of Clarification:* We are asking you to think about questions and the methods of studying them. You will not actually be carrying out this research project as part of this course. The objective is to formulate thoughtful questions and well-considered methods of answering them that you would need more than the time of this course to carry out. In the end you are giving detailed account of a process by which you might you gain more knowledge about the form/example of communication that you select.

- Begin by articulating a set of questions that you feel are compelling. (1 page double-spaced. It's OK if it's just a little longer) Discuss why they are important or provocative. What can be clarified or uncovered that seems uncertain about this object? What are some of the things that other scholars have written about this (what conversation are you entering—provide bibliographic references)?
- Explain your methodology (formulate a structured approach to inquiry. 1.5-2 pages double-spaced):
  - Select and describe a manageable object or set of data that you would collect that would allow you to answer or clarify your thesis question(s).
  - Discuss in specific terms how you will find/collect/select your data or objects for analysis. Some general methods include: ethnographic study, interviews, surveys, content analysis, textual analysis, historical/archival research, and controlled experiments, among others. Depending on your methods you might include proposed research tools such as interview questions, surveys, etc.
  - Describe how you might analyze your observation or findings.