Languages and Semiotics of Media Products (with Workshop)

Prof. Alice Cati

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with the tools for analysing contemporary media products. The goal is to develop their communicative potential in terms of register, narrative form and strategies for engaging potential targets. The course is built around the notion of the media experience, understood as the perspective from which to reinterpret semiotic tradition. Moreover, in an approach that combines textual studies with socio-anthropological studies on communication, the course will explore the theme of memory and the modes of representing and describing the past in the contemporary media.

*Intended learning outcomes*

At the end of the course, students will have to demonstrate:

– their acquisition of both the subject-specific technical vocabulary and the main methods and tools of semiotic analysis (Knowledge and understanding).

– their ability to carry out basic semiotic analyses and to be able to recognise and describe the different components of visual and audiovisual language (Application skills).

– their ability to elaborate the analysis of an audiovisual product with a critical-interpretative approach (Learning skills and communication skills).

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course is divided into two modules. The first module provides the methods for studying media communication processes from a linguistic and semiotic point of view.

Students will be introduced to the foundations of the discipline (schools, authors and categories) and supported in learning about the most recent semiotic approaches to the media and, in particular, the visual languages.

Module 2 aims to present a critical analysis of contemporary media products, the increasingly hybrid nature of which gives rise to complex textual and discursive forms, mostly based on audio-visual language. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to communication, the course will illustrate the new opportunities for semiotic applications in the various fields of contemporary audio-visual production (advertising, journalism, cinema, television, video art, web and new media). The course will also be accompanied by special lectures on the sensory effects generated by social and media practices that shape the relationship between self and collectivity, past and present.

***READING LIST***

The course reading list will be given at the beginning of lectures and can also be consulted on the lecturer’s webpage. Textbooks of reference:

Module 1

D. Barbieri, *Semiotica del fumetto,* Carocci, Rome, 2017.

P. Polidoro, *Che cos'è la semiotica visiva,* Carocci, Rome, 2008.

U. Volli, *Manuale di semiotica,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2007 (or following editions).

Module 2

A. Cati-R. Eugeni-M. Locatelli, *Le forme dell'audiovisivo. Cinema, televisione, digital media*, Carocci, Roma, 2023.

D. Panosetti-M.P. Pozzato (a cura di), *Passione vintage. Il gusto per il passato nei consumi, nei film e nelle serie televisive,* Carocci, Roma, 2013.

P. Peverini, *I media: strumenti di analisi semiotica,* Carocci, Roma, 2012.

The lecturer may provide details of further reading material during lectures and on Blackboard.

Students will also have access to the teaching material used in lectures on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures with case studies. Both modules will include exercises on analysing particular cases and media products. These exercises will be discussed and marked individually, or in sessions specially arranged by the lecturer. The study materials and exercises will be provided via Blackboard.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam based on Module 1 aims to assess the knowledge acquired by students during the course, as well as their ability to put into practice the methodologies offered by visual semiotics; the exam based on Module 2, instead, will consist in a written test aimed to assess the use of the key concepts and techniques for the analysis of audiovisual products.

Assessment criteria: the correctness and accuracy of the information (70%), and the use of an appropriate language in the practical activities (30%). The mark obtained in each module will determine 50% of the final mark.

In addition, students will be invited to join discussion forums, and present optional works in class – either individually or in group – for which they will be awarded with extra points (from 0.5 to 3 points to be added to the final mark).

Students may be asked to sit assessment tests throughout the year to assess the progress they have made. Sitting these tests is optional and recommended only for attending students.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students who, for a good reason, are unable to attend the course must contact the lecturer at the beginning of the year to agree on an exam syllabus to either supplement or substitute attendance to lectures.

Instructions on how to enrol and information on attendance and on recording marks for the workshop will be provided at the beginning of lectures.

This course is an introduction to semiotics, and so there are no prerequisites in terms of content. However, students will require good knowledge of contemporary media and a positive attitude to in-depth study and critical analysis. Finally, the theoretical models and methods presented during Module 1 prepare students to access the content, analytical methods and interpretative tools of Module 2.

In the event that the health emergency should continue, both teaching activities and any forms of learning monitoring, both in progress and final, will be provided also remotely through our University's BlackBoard platform, the Microsoft Teams platform and any other tools envisaged and notified at the beginning of the course, so as to ensure the full achievement of the formative objectives set out in the study plans and, at the same time, the safety of our students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.