Languages and Semiotics of Media Products (with Workshop)

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***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. Therefore, the course will be focused on semiotics as a discipline devoted to the study of both the mechanisms at the basis of sense production and understanding and the expressive and semantic aspects that characterise any form of communication, including the ones related to media. Furthermore, thanks to an approach combining textual and socio-anthropological studies, the course will carry out an in-depth analysis of environmental sustainability and the ways to represent and talk about the nature of 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. In addition, through the analysis of some case studies (packaging, advertising campaigns, reports, naturalistic photography, etc.), the course will try to examine the structure of the nature-culture relationship, traditionally at the core of semiotic reflection.

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. Thanks to an interdisciplinary approach towards communication, the course will therefore illustrate the new opportunities for the application of semiotics in different fields, with a focus on comics, videogames, and linear audio-visual languages. The nature-culture relationship, introduced during module 1, will be explored also in this module, through the analysis of specific case studies.

***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

G. Ferraro, A. Giannitrapani, G. Marrone, S. Traini (edited by), *Dire la natura. Ambiente e significazione,* Aracne, Rome, 2015 (selected pages).

D. Mangano, *Che cos’è la semiotica della fotografia,* Carocci, Rome, 2018.

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, Rome, 2023.

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

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, quizzes, case studies on analysing and media products. These exercises will be discussed and marked individually, or in sessions specially arranged by the lecturers. 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 2 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.

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.