Instructor Information

Instructor: Sarah A. Bell  
Office Location: 340 Walker  
E-mail: sabell@mtu.edu (email is the best way to contact me)  
Office Hours: MW 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm and by appointment

Course Identification

Course Name: Communication & Culture  
Course Number: HU 2820 R04  HU 2820 R03  
Course Location: 134 Walker  109 Walker  
Class Times: MWF 9:05 am – 9:55 am  MWF 11:05 am – 11:55 am

Course Description/Rationale

Introduction to the ways that communication creates and maintains culture. Considers a variety of perspectives on the significance of communication. Explores the importance of communication for understanding culture.

Communication is not only about transmitting intended meanings but is, in itself, a process of making meaning in cultural contexts. We will explore the process of semiosis: how and why signs make meaning, shape possibilities, and are the focus of cultural struggles.

Course Learning Objectives

This course is a HUFA 2000-level course that meets University Learning Goal #4 Critical and Creative Thinking. The assessment rubric is at http://www.mtu.edu/assessment/program/university-learning-goals/Goal%204_Critical_CreativeThinking.pdf *

Learning objectives for this course include:

1. Understand semiotics as a way to study culture and communication.
2. Apply key concepts of a constitutive view of communication and ideology.
3. Use semiotic tools to examine the work of signs in real-world experience, especially in creative problem-solving.
**Course Materials**

All course readings will be posted to the Canvas course page. Homework and exams will also be submitted through Canvas.

**Course Supplies**

Please purchase and register an iClicker through the Canvas course site before Wednesday, September 9. Bring your iClicker to class every day beginning on September 9.

**Grading**

**Grading Scale**

Grades will be figured according to the following scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% – 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83% – 87%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>78% – 82%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73% – 77%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>68% – 72%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 67%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student’s control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up by the close of the next semester or the grade becomes a failure (F). An (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as an (F) grade.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Assignments**

Grades will be based on the following assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework (8 practice essays x 12.5 points each)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (4 exams x 250 points each)</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance/participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>1200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Policies

- In class preparation and participation:
  Please complete readings before class, attend class, pay attention during class, and contribute productively. iClicker responses will not be graded, but failure to bring and use your iClicker will result in a loss of participation points.

- Phones, laptops, and other e-devices:
  I will send you a cautionary email if I observe you using e-devices in ways that distract you or those around you from class activities. If the distraction persists, I will deduct your participation points.

- Late work:
  Late homework will only be accepted under extraordinary circumstances and when arrangements are made in advance.

- Completion of all exams is required to pass this course.

University Policies

*Student work* products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.

Cheating and plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students so carefully document any sources used in your work. Please refer to the MTU Academic Integrity Policy at http://www.admin.mtu.edu/usenate/policies/p109-1.htm

Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at (906) 487-2212 or go to http://www.mtu.edu/ctl/instructional-resources/syllabus/syllabus_policies.html

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Readings are posted through the first two exams. Some readings after that are to be determined but will be provided to you well in advance. Note that exam dates will never be moved ahead of what is posted to this schedule.

**Week 1: What is communication? What is culture?**

| M 8/31 | Course introduction |
| W 9/2  | Read Fiske, What is communication? |
| F 9/4  | Read Williams, Culture is ordinary |

*K-day recess begins at noon*
### Week 2: How does communication work?

- **M 9/7**  
  LABOR DAY, no classes
- **W 9/9**  
  Read Barnard, chapter 2 from *Graphic Design as Communication*
- **F 9/11**  
  Read Barnard, pgs. 30-34
  - practice essay due

### Week 3: Semiotics 101

- **M 9/14**  
  Read Chandler, Introduction and Signs
- **W 9/16**  
  exam review
- **F 9/18**  
  No class—Exam #1 opens; due before midnight on 9/20

### Week 4: How do we read signs?

- **M 9/21**  
  Read Barnard, pgs. 35-45
- **W 9/23**  
  Read Barnard, pgs 45-50
- **F 9/25**  
  Read Wood and Fels, The nature of maps
  - practice essay due

### Week 5: How is meaning cultural?

- **M 9/28**  
  Read Barnard, pgs. 50-55
- **W 9/30**  
  exam review
- **F 10/2**  
  No class—Exam #2 opens; due before midnight on 10/4

### Week 6: How do codes work?

- **M 10/5**  
  Read Chandler, Paradigms and Syntagms
- **W 10/7**  
  
- **F 10/9**  
  practice essay due

### Week 7: Communication across time and space

- **M 10/12**  
  *this week's reading TBD*
- **W 10/14**  
  
- **F 10/16**  
  practice essay due

### Week 8: Materiality of communication

- **M 10/19**  
  *this week's reading TBD*
- **W 10/21**  
  
- **F 10/23**  
  practice essay due

### Week 9: New views of communication

- **M 10/26**  
  Read Hall, from *Representation*
- **W 10/28**  
  exam review
- **F 10/30**  
  No class—Exam #3 opens; due before midnight on 11/1

### Week 10: Signs and ideology

- **M 11/2**  
  *this week's reading TBD*
- **W 11/4**  
  
- **F 11/6**  
  practice essay due
**Week 11: Economics of signs**
M 11/9 Read Barnard, chapter 4 from *Graphic Design as Communication*
W 11/11
F 11/13 practice essay due

**Week 12: Signs of race, class, and gender**
M 11/16 Read Barnard, chapter 5 from *Graphic Design as Communication*
W 11/18 No class; Sarah at a conference
F 11/20 No class; Sarah at a conference practice essay due


**Week 14: Globalization**
M 11/30 this week’s reading TBD
W 12/2
F 12/4 practice essay due

**Week 15: Review and final exam**
M 12/7
W 12/9 exam review
F 12/11 No class—Exam #4 opens; due before midnight on 12/13