INF383E: Interpreting Implicit Information on the Web

Fall 2011
UTA 1.504
Monday 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

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Email: Lecia@ischool.utexas.edu  Office Hours: By appointment (send email)

Rationale

Web-based information is inherently multimodal, consisting of dynamic and static text and images and often, sound. It contains both explicit and implicit information, included either intentionally or unintentionally by authors. This course will explore the implicit, asking: What information is present in web-based discourse beyond the explicit meaning of the words, images, or sounds themselves? How does the intersection of the various modes influence our interpretation or messages? Students will learn theories and methods to interpret the use of language and images as resources for persuasion, claiming belonging to social groups, intentionally or unintentionally communicating values, and more. This course will be useful to students wishing to make explicit the embedded meanings of visual and textual information.

Course Aims and Objectives

Aims

• To provide students with a set of “tools” for interpreting meaning and function from texts and images.
• To allow students to explore topics of personal interest using these “tools.”

Specific Learning Objectives – Students will be able to:

• Apply conceptual frameworks to the interpretation of web-based texts.
• Use specialized software to create and interpret meaning.
• Use various methods to develop alternative and explicit understandings and explanations of information.
• Justify the choice of a particular explanation based on knowledge and understanding of relevant social contexts.

Format and Procedures

Class will be taught in a seminar style, in which we will discuss readings, raise questions, and apply readings to the interpretation of web-based information, often chosen by students and based on their interests. Students should expect to fully participate in class processes by engaging in the exchange of ideas and in collaborative learning. Students should help to create a physical environment that engenders informal, collaborative learning.
**Reading Materials**

Please purchase the following two books. All other readings are in Dropbox (or online).


**Course Requirements**

Grading will be based on the following:

- Participation in class (35%)
  - Discussing key concepts by bringing in questions and engaging in exchanges with professor and other students
  - Exploring analysis of texts in class

- Weekly assignments (30%)
  - Demonstrating engagement with course readings through summaries, explicit connection to other readings, construction of good questions, and application of weekly readings to web-based texts. Summaries are due by 9 a.m. on the day of class. Summaries can be in the format of your choice, provided that I can access it. Summaries may not be more than one page per author.
  - Sharing objects of analysis and interpretation

- Fun Projects (35%) (described more fully in other documents)
  1. Interpret a Composition Space: all students will interpret the same CombinFormation composition space, using textual and visual analysis frameworks.
  2. CompoSwap: Students will create a meaningful composition using CombinFormation and swap with other students. They will interpret each other’s compositions using textual and visual analysis frameworks.
  3. Interpret an Information Space: Students will choose a web page / object of personal interest and use several frameworks from readings to do “thick” analysis: multimodal and from multiple theoretical perspectives.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments, Class Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 29</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bring a web site to share with the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Please share the URL with your classmates via email or Dropbox</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No Class: Labor Day*
<table>
<thead>
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| **September 12**  
**Symbol Users**  
**Reading the Visual CombinFormation Demo** | Burke, both readings  
Chandler modules 1-7 | Written: Summarize the Burke and Chandler readings; relate to web pages presented on August 29.  
Special Visitor: Professor Andruid Kerne, Texas A&M Computer Science, will demonstrate CombinFormation |
| **September 19**  
**Identity**  
**Intro to Discourse Analysis** | Gee, Ch. 1-4, 10  
Cronk on Mead | Written: Summarize each author, relate Gee and Mead to Burke and Kenney to Chandler  
Student 1: Web site of choice |
| **September 26**  
**Meaning in Contexts**  
**Comics** | Gee, Ch. 5-6  
Westin  
Handa Ch. 11 & 20 (Kenney, McCloud) | Written: Summarize each author, generate questions  
Student 2: Web site of choice |
| **October 3**  
**Rhetoric of the Image** | Handa, Ch. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 19  
(Arnheim, Barthes, Ehses, Mishra, Stafford, Birdsell & Groarke) | Written: Summarize each author, relate to Gee  
Students 3 & 4: Focus on images |
| **October 10**  
**Doing Analysis** | Gee: Ch. 7, 8, 11  
Jewitt & Oyama | All students: Bring web site from week 1; analyze in class according to Gee and Jewitt & Oyama conceptual frameworks |
| **October 17**  
**Sharing and Discussing Project 1** | Handa Ch. 13, 14, 16 & 17  
(Buchanan, Trimbur, Helfand, Solomon)  
Byrne | Project Due: Interpret a Composition Space  
All students be prepared to present and discuss *informally* |
| **October 24**  
**Rhetoric of Design Social Networking** | Handa Ch. 21 & 25 (Blair, Rogoff)  
Fogg and Iizawa  
Redström | Written: Summarize each author, relate Gee to Byrne  
Students 5 & 6: Focus on social networking site |
| **October 31**  
**Designing to Persuade** | Handa Ch. 21 & 25 (Blair, Rogoff)  
Fogg and Iizawa  
Redström | Written: Summarize each author, relate Handa chapters to Fogg & Iizawa and Redström  
Students 7 & 8: Medical information |
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 7</td>
<td>Oudshoorn, et al.</td>
<td>Written: Summarize each author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Design</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Tanya Rabourn, Ph.D. Student, School of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>Oudshoorn, et al.</td>
<td>Project Due: CompoSwap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing Project 2</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>All students be prepared to present and discuss informally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>Gee, Appendix</td>
<td>Written: Summarize each article, generate question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Handa, Ch. 28</td>
<td>Students 9-10: Moving images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Images</td>
<td>Chandler Module 8</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Iedema</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 28</td>
<td>Gee, Appendix</td>
<td>Interpret an Information Space</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handa, Ch. 28</td>
<td>All students be prepared to present and discuss informally ~25 minutes</td>
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**Students 1-10**

On August 29, students will be randomly assigned a number. When your Student # appears in the Assignments, Class Activities column in the Schedule, you will be responsible for bringing one or more web-based resource (URL) of your choice that can be analyzed using ideas from the readings of the day (“of your choice”) or within the genre or category as assigned (e.g., “focus on images”). These numbers will also be used for swapping your second project (due November 14) so that you can analyze another’s composition and they can analyze yours.

**Readings: Found in Dropbox**


Chandler, D. (2008). Reading the visual. Found under the category Lectures here: [http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/MC10220/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/MC10220/) or in Dropbox folder


University of Texas’ Statement on Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e mail, an e mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be
needed. See website below for more information:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php

University Electronic Mail Notification Policy: Check your Email

All students should become familiar with the University’s official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html.

This Course Uses Blackboard

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening. Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys. You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date. Blackboard is available at http://courses.utexas.edu. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.