

Introduction to Semiotics: DSGN 3100

Course Code:	DSGN 3100
Course Name:	Introduction to Semiotics
Semester/ Year:	Winter 2024
Day/ Time/ Room:	Thursday 9:00-12:00, Location: N230
Instructor's Name:	Robert Currie
Instructor's Contact Information:	rcurrie@nscad.ca or rcurrie@mac.com
Office Location/Hours:	Slack or email
Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s):	6 LASC credits at the 2000-level
Credit Value:	3 Credits
Class website:	http://nscad.geneva9.com/

Course description

This course surveys various theories of signs, especially with relation to problems of visual communication.

Prerequisite: 6 Credits of 2000-level LAS

Learning outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course the student will demonstrate the ability to:

- Conduct contextual and media research and critically review
- Demonstrate openness to new approaches and ideas during the design process.
- Apply relevant aspects of design process appropriately.
- Demonstrate capacity for taking risks as a means of generating innovation.
- Test, create, and apply appropriate strategies to devise concepts that inform and invent.
- Employ oral and written structured presentations to illustrate their strategy and decision-making.
- Practise oral and written feedback in exchanges with peers, instructors and collaborators.
- Critically analyze and historical, theoretical and practical methods of design practice.
- Demonstrate and articulate how context was analyzed and synthesized into their design concepts
- Identify a problem, dilemma or ambiguity in real / future world scenarios.
- Search, identify and recognize the skill or technique they will learn in order to facilitate self-initiation of professional development.

Course goals

- demonstrate an understanding of the main schools of thought in semiotics
- identify the types of signs, codes and rhetorical devices
- apply semiotic and rhetorical principles to practical and written work.

By the end of the course, students should be familiar with the context of semiotics as it relates to philosophy, linguistics and contemporary critical theory, and be able to use semiotics as a core design problem-solving skill. *Please note that each learning outcome must be successfully achieved before a final grade for the course is assigned.*

Student workload: Total student workload for a 3 credit course is estimated to be 9 hours/week.

Course format: This will be conducted online or in person. Weekly online lectures, readings, class discussion, written and visual design assignments and in-class presentations. Students will be expected to attend weekly sessions, participate in class exercises and discussions. All course projects need to be completed in full by the set due dates.

Course requirements, resources, materials: *Design Papers 5 - Rhetorical Handbook*, by Ehses, Hanno and Ellen Lupton is a required text, and is available at the NSCAD bookstore. Order online: <https://nscad-art-supply-store.mybigcommerce.com/design-papers-5-rhetorical-handbook/>

There may be some additional free software you will need to install on your computer (details will be provided later) so you will need the ability in install programs on the computer you are using.

Readings will be assigned weekly. Information will be provided via the class website and class Slack:
Website: nscad.geneva9.com/dsgn3100/

Interdisciplinary approach:

Interdisciplinary design involves working across traditional boundaries of media and disciplines, and requires a set of intellectual tools that can address a broad set of problems.

Semiotic analysis is an approach that can be applied to any process that involves the communication of meaning. This course will use examples and assignments from a range of disciplines – advertising, product design, landscape architecture, interaction design and others – as starting points for students to develop a semiotic toolkit for design.

NSCAD University occupational health and safety policy

At NSCAD safety is a priority. All students are required to obtain and maintain up-to-date safety (WHMIS) certification. An on-line Brightspace certification process is available to all NSCAD students.

Please note that your NSCAD ID card needs an up-to-date Health and Safety (WHMIS) sticker to access shops and studios, and for Security to permit you access to the university campus sites after hours. WHMIS training is provided online through students' Brightspace account.

Evaluation criteria:

Completion of all assignments is mandatory. Evaluation will be based on a number of assignments, quizzes, and an essay assignment. Participation in class discussion will also account for a portion of the grade. Assignments and projects will be completed outside of normal instruction hours. Dates and details will be provided as the course progresses. All work must be submitted in English. Each class will include class discussion of assigned readings from the text or other sources. Expect to spend significant time on the readings; many of the readings will be challenging. There may be brief in-class quizzes on readings.

Assignments:..... 70%
Class discussion and participation..... 15%
Quizzes 15%

Grading system: Successful completion of this course requires that students perform to an acceptable standard in reaching the course objectives. This course will be graded as follows:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Grade Point Score	Descriptive Term
A+	95 and above	4.3	Excellent
A	90-94	4.0	Excellent
A-	85-89	3.7	Very Good
B+	80-84	3.3	Very Good
B	73-79	3.0	Good
B-	67-72	2.7	Good
C+	63-66	2.3	Satisfactory
C	59-62	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	55-58	1.7	Satisfactory
D	50-54	1.0	Marginal
F(Fail)	49 and below		Unsatisfactory
AUD	n/a	n/a	Audit
INC	n/a	n/a	Incomplete

Academic integrity

A climate and culture of academic integrity is an expectation of everyone. Students at NSCAD are required to comply with standard academic practices in acknowledging sources in all work presented for academic credit. Please refer to the NSCAD Academic Calendar for the full description and regulations on 'Academic Integrity and Plagiarism'.

Note on use of machine learning/artificial intelligence tools

Machine learning and artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, dall-e, midjourney, and many others) are evolving rapidly.

These tools generate text, images or other media by recombining elements of existing works.

The NSCAD Academic Integrity policy is clear. Use of such tools without fully crediting the source is a violation of NSCAD's plagiarism policy. Punishments range up to a mark of zero for the assignment, failing the course or expulsion from NSCAD. Material created, in whole or in part, by tools like ChatGPT or other similar AI/ Large Language Models (or any other software to generate text, images or other media) cannot, ever, be considered your own work.

Each assignment will have clear rules for use of media and citations. Ask if you have any questions, and keep in mind the basic rule: all work you submit must be your own, unless the assignment includes clear written instructions stating otherwise.

Writing Centre

The NSCAD Writing Centre in S403 offers professional tutoring for any kind of written assignment, at any level of study, at any stage of the work. Please see the Writing Centre web page for more information and booking online at <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/home/studentresources/the-writing-centre/>

Accessibility policy

Accommodations can be arranged for disability-related needs by contacting accessibility@nscad.ca. Students are encouraged to connect with the Accessibility Office as early in the term as possible. Students can connect with the Accessibility Office at any point in the semester or time as a NSCAD student to access or learn more about the available supports. Visit: <https://nscad.ca/student-experience/academic-resources/accessibility/> for more information and to find the Accessibility Policy which includes a protocol that clearly outlines everyone's roles and responsibilities in the accommodation process.

Spiritual/ Religious Observance:

Requests for accommodations for spiritual or religious observances must be presented in writing to the instructor within the first two weeks of class.

Planned Schedule:

- Class 1 Introduction to semiotics
- Class 2 Anatomy of signs
- Class 3: Codes
- Class 4 Modes of signification/models of communication
- Class 5 Semiotics as method/ Connotation, denotation, myth
- Class 6 Decoding the everyday
- Class 7 Barthes: Semiotics of design
- Class 8 Rhetoric
- Class 9 Political semiotics
- Class 10 Semiotics of product design
- Class 11 Urban semiotics: signs and the city
- Class 12 Technical semiotics: Software, interfaces and communication
- Class 13 Conceptual metaphors
- Class 14 Final quiz and wrapup

Copyright notice:

All materials used in this course and distributed within the Brightspace Course Management System are subject to the Canadian Copyright Act and NSCAD's Use of Copyright Materials Policy. <https://tinyurl.com/y8h3lk8j>

Copyrighted materials include, but are not limited to, the following: recorded lectures, notes, books, poems, essays, articles, audio and video recordings, works of art and images. These materials are to be used only for private study, and research. Creating copies or redistributing these course materials without the permission of the copyright owner may be an infringement of copyright law.

Fair Dealing usage guidelines as outlined in NSCAD's Copyright guide are here: <https://guides.nscad.ca/copyrightpages/fairdealing>

Please see NSCAD's Copyright Guide for guidelines and contact information

<https://guides.nscad.ca/copyrightpages/home>

Territorial Acknowledgement

Teaching and learning at NSCAD takes place in Mi'kma'ki, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq Nation. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) peoples first

signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

At NSCAD University, we share a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), as expressed in NSCAD's new EDI Targeted Action Plan. This Action Plan will be used as a guide to ensure EDI principles are prioritised throughout all of NSCAD University. We are committed to an equitable experience for our entire community, in our learning and creative practice, our freedom from discrimination based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, ability, age, and other forms of discrimination. We are committed to ensuring that the diversity of Canada is reflected in every aspect of our activities and that everyone is welcome and united by a sense of belonging at NSCAD University.

NSCAD Covid-19 Update

NSCAD University is highly committed to ensuring the health and safety of its entire community – students, faculty and staff. The protocols which have been put into place are based on advice provided by Nova Scotia Health regarding COVID-19, the Nova Scotia Department of Advanced Education, as well as on best practices as discussed by CONSUP and other Atlantic university consortia.

As a member of the NSCAD community, it is our collective responsibility to familiarise ourselves with our Safe Return to Campus Policy and to abide by the protocols and regulations contained therein. Our Plan provides for a multi-layered approach, which will provide our community with measures of health and safety protection while attending classes, studios, and working on campus. These protocols apply to anyone visiting the Fountain, Port and Academy campuses, NSCAD grounds or attending a NSCAD-sponsored activity.

As a precautionary measure in view of recent public health events, we are making some modifications to our academic dates, as described below:

Schedule

Orientation – no classes except for new undergraduates.....January 2, 2024
Classes beginJanuary 3, 2024
Last day to add a courseJanuary 9, 2024
Courses dropped begin to be recorded.....January 26, 2024
No classes – Heritage DayFebruary 19, 2024
No classes – winter breakFebruary 20-23, 2024
Faculty mid-semester warningFebruary 27, 2024
Last day to drop a courseMarch 11, 2024
No classes – Good FridayMarch 29, 2024
No classes – Easter Monday.....April 1, 2024
Classes endApril 22, 2024
Last day for grade submission.....April 25, 2024

Attendance Policy

To achieve this course's learning objectives, students are required to attend and participate in classes, according to your instructor's requirements. For studio and non-lecture courses: many of the topics and content delivered in this course will be taught through class demonstrations, discussions, and activities. As such, your attendance and participation are essential to your successful learning process. However, students should NOT attend in person classes if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, if they have been in any sites where COVID-19 cases have been detected/identified, if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or if they are feeling unwell.

Students should familiarise themselves with their course's attendance policies and pay special attention to their instructor's guidelines regarding attendance requirements. Your instructor will provide information on the attendance policy specific to this course. In case of illness or COVID-related symptoms, please contact your instructor immediately by email to discuss options for completing your course work.

Students will not be penalised for having to self-quarantine if required to do so. In this event, course materials and assignment will be made available for completion in an alternative way to be communicated to you by your instructor.

Need support/help?

NSCAD is aware of the challenges caused by COVID-19 and is concerned about our students' health and well-being. Here are some resources to help you have a successful and productive academic term:

COVID-19 Information and Updates : <https://nscad.ca/covid-19-information-and-updates/>

Accessibility and Wellness Services: <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/wellness/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/home/academicsadministration/occupational-health-safety/>

Counselling and Psychological Services: <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/home/academicsadministration/occupational-health-safety/>

Writing Centre – PLEASE WATCH FOR SPECIAL WORKSHOPS TO BE ANNOUNCED IN EARLY WINTER 2022 TERM https://nscad.ca/student_life/writing-centre/

Financial Aid: <https://nscad.ca/current-students/student-resources/scholarships-and-bursaries/>

SUNSCAD Food Bank: <https://suncad.org/food-bank/>

The Learning Commons <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/home/services/learning-commons/>

Design Students' Personal Hardware, Software, English Language Settings (HSELS) Requirements:

Required computer hardware

Apple computers are the predominant choice for the design profession, and that's why the Division of Design instructs using Apple technology. Students are required to purchase a laptop (a MacBook Pro is strongly recommended) and specified software prior to commencing the program.

All current Apple MacBook Pros can run the required software for the Design program. Students should consider buying an Apple laptop with the fastest available processing speed, along with any RAM upgrade that the student can afford to buy. 16GB of RAM (or more), and at least 512GB of flash storage are recommended for new laptop purchases. In the long run, the initial expense for greater RAM and storage will be offset by improved software performance and lifespan.

If the student already owns or vastly prefers a Windows-platform laptop that is powerful enough to serve, the Division of Design has no objection to using it. However, the bulk of faculty and technician experience is Mac-based; issues with a Windows machine will not be resolved by NSCAD. The student will be responsible for managing any cross-platform issues that arise. Furthermore, a student's inability to complete specified course work due to working on a Windows-platform laptop will not be an acceptable excuse for failing to meet a course's requirements; this situation could cause a student to receive a below average grade, if not fail a course.

Where to purchase:

Canadian-based students can configure and purchase an Apple laptop online, via Apple's Online Higher Education Store at https://www.apple.com/ca_edu_93120/store. Students outside of Canada can select their country-specific online store at <https://www.apple.com/choose-country-region/>.

Students can also visit an Apple retail store, if preferred. If shopping in person make sure to mention that it is an educational purchase (be sure to have proof of enrollment or student ID).

If a student is purchasing elsewhere, prices should be compared with Apple; generally, Apple's educational pricing offers the best value.

Please note—Extended warranty coverage:

Students are strongly encouraged to purchase the AppleCare Protection Plan, rather than other service plans offered by certain retailers. More information is available here: <https://www.apple.com/ca/support/products/mac/>

Required Adobe software

NSCAD has a low-cost, all-access pass for students to the Adobe Creative Cloud. <https://nscad.brightspace.com/d2l/le/content/6606/viewContent/124039/View>

Students will install at a minimum: Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Acrobat Pro. Other applications may be needed for future courses but those four are the core applications in the degree program. While there are many other graphic design software packages available, knowledge of the Adobe suite is currently a requirement for the design profession.

Apple computers come standard with their office software suite: Pages, Keynote, and Numbers. These programs open and edit equivalent Microsoft Office files.

NSCAD software licenses (applicable to Winter 2022 Term):

Adobe licenses are available for all NSCAD students.

Required and recommended hardware and internet service plan:

Hardware accessories. Students are encouraged to buy a mouse to go with their laptop; many students find working solely with the trackpad challenging. If the student works with a 3D modeling software, such as Autodesk Rhino, a mouse will be necessary. Drawing Tablets (\$99.95 and up) are useful tools but not required. Some packages include a tablet, mouse, and stylus.

External monitor for laptop users. Many students with laptops report frustration when working in design applications with dense or cluttered UIs (user interfaces: floating panels, tools, etc.). The Division of Design recommends that laptop users consider purchasing an external monitor compatible with the capabilities of their computer. A minimum recommendation would be an inexpensive flat panel display with a native resolution of at minimum 1920 pixels by 1080 pixels (HD). These displays typically measure 21.5–27 inches diagonally, with prices starting around CAD\$120.

Data backup. It is critical that all students have a reliable backup strategy. Data backup is part of workflows in all professional design practices, for this reason a data management routine needs to be part of a student's plan for completing and keeping all course work. The following backup strategies afford quick data recovery, particularly at the greatest moment of need:

Cloud-based storage, such as Dropbox, OneDrive, or Google's Backup and Sync ensures that work/data is safe and always acces-

sible, for example, if a student's hardware is damaged beyond repair, or lost due to theft they can resume working with new equipment in minimal time.

Another strategy is an external, directly connected hard drive. **Apple users** should set their external drive to automatically backup using Apple's free Time Machine utility. See <https://support.apple.com/en-ca/HT201250> for setup steps.

Windows 10 users should consider Microsoft's free Backup and Restore utility. See <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/backup-and-restore-in-windows-10-352091d2-bb9d-3ea3-ed18-52ef2b88cbef>

Please note that some professors may not grant a project extension if an assignment is lost due to the absence of an active backup process.

Minimum recommendations for internet access speed. Successful online participation with fellow students, faculty, and remote tools and resources can be frustrating if a student's internet access speeds are low. It is recommended that an internet service plan with a minimum download speed of 20 megabits per second (Mbps), and a minimum upload speed of 8-10 Mbps. There are free internet speed test websites that will measure your download and upload speeds, such as speedtest.net and fast.com. NSCAD recognizes that internet access speed might be beyond student control, due to geographical considerations, budget, limited service provider offerings, etc.

Required: English language operating system and software (international students):

All students are required to have an English language operating system on their laptop with all software operating in the English language.

If a student is using an existing computer and software that both meet the requirements listed in this document but it does not operate with the English-language setting, they will need to visit a computer service/repair shop to have it properly initialized in the operating system and software. If the student is residing in Halifax, this must be done locally, see the following list of service providers:

Halifax Computer Repair Shops, Assessment fee: \$45 — \$95 (base charge):

Century Computer 902-423-2500

Brilliance Computers 902-453-0050

Halifax Computer Repair 902-444-2615

NSCAD University does not service or repair computer hardware or software.

NSCAD financial support/Student bursaries:

NSCAD is committed to eliminating barriers to acquiring these required hardware and software course tools based on financial hardship. The Office of Student Experience may be able to provide a bursary to students in need. Please contact the Manager of Financial Aid ose@nscad.ca for more information.