

# ENGL 688

## multimodal composing

Fall 2015 • T 4:00-6:45pm • HM204

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Claire Lutkewitte, 2014

In a broad sense, **multimodal composition** can be defined as communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning.



Cindy Selfe, 2004

By visual literacy, then, I will refer to the ability **to read, understand, value, and learn from** visual materials (still photographs, videos, films, animations, still images, pictures, drawings, graphics)—especially as these are combined to create a text—as well as the ability **to create, combine, and use** visual elements (e.g., colors, forms, lines, images) and messages for the purposes of communicating.



Ed Fella, 1991

What fascinates me is interpretation, the idea of reading into something... That everything has a **multiplicity of meanings** that can never be pinned down; the supposed impossibility of a closed meaning. I like the play of loaded messages and hidden ones, too. Once you get into this idea, it easily translates into how **meaning in design** can be created. Not just on a surface level, but structurally, that you can encode it, that you can put references into it that may not be evident on the surface but that take a closer reading...

## overview

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More and more, writing today means collaging multiple media into rich, multimodal texts. Writers compose reports, manuscripts, webtexts, web pages, slideshow presentations, brochures, flyers, forms, digital video, and much more, and most of these texts require us to work across different media.

In this writing-, analysis-, and production-intensive course, we will:

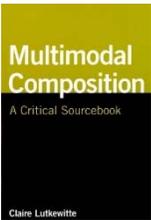
- play in the spaces where multiple media and rhetorical practices rub up against one another;

- explore the design, composition, and rhetorical elements of different types of “texts”;
- read some of the key—and peripheral!—texts related to multimodal composing; and
- explore the theory and methodology that frames multimodal composing, pedagogy, and research.

We will analyze different print and digital multimodal compositions and create and analyze our own using different tools (e.g., applying the theories of rhet/comp, technical writing, and graphic design scholars such as Cindy Selfe, Cheryl Ball, Steven Heller, Ellen Lupton, Claire Lauer, Anne Frances Wysocki, and others; e.g., exploring multimodal-composing possibilities in software applications like Microsoft Word; Apple iMovie or Windows MovieMaker, and Adobe Photoshop).

An eagerness and willingness to learn, play, and experiment is required for the course. No previous experience with the software is necessary. The course will meet in a computer lab, but you are also more than welcome to bring and work from your own computer.

## materials and spaces

| BOOK  | MATERIALS ON BLACKBOARD   | MATERIALS ON GOOGLE DRIVE  |
|---|---|--|
|  <p>Lutkewitte, Claire. (Ed.). (2014). <i>Multimodal composition: A critical sourcebook</i>. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.</p> <p><b>Marked by MC on the course schedule, below.</b></p> <p><i>Bedford has provided us with complementary copies of this text.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the syllabus (this doc)</li> <li>• readings (other than the book) in PDF; <b>marked by ON on the course schedule, below</b></li> <li>• daily folders, with the day's activities, slideshows, links, materials, etc.</li> <li>• dropboxes for submitting assignments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• space for us to discuss and respond to readings</li> <li>• space for us to share some of the work for class</li> <li>• links to resources, tools, and examples you want to share</li> </ul> |

# schedule

| WEEK | DAY    | READINGS DUE   |   | TOPIC  |
|------|--------|--|---|--|
| 1    | T 8/25 | 01   | Introduction to <i>Multimodal Composition</i> (MC and ON)   | introducing multimodal composition                                       |
|      |        | 02   | Yancey, "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key" (MC and ON)  |  |
|      |        | 03   | Cynthia L. Selfe, "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing" (MC and ON) |  |
|      |        | 04   | Cheryl E. Ball, "Show, Not Tell: The Value of New Media Scholarship" (MC and ON)                              |  |
| 2    | T 9/1  | 01   | Ehses and Lupton, <i>Rhetorical Handbook</i> (ON)   | situating visual rhetoric  |
|      |        | 02   | Schriver, "What is Document Design?" (ON)   |  |
|      |        | 03   | George, "From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing" (MC)                       |  |
|      |        | 04   | Bernhardt, "Seeing the Text" (ON)   |  |
|      |        | 05   | Wysocki, "The Multiple Media of Texts" (ON)   |  |
| 3    | T 9/8  | 01   | Chapter 1 of <i>Practices of Looking</i> : "Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics" (ON)           | thinking about critical visual analysis and the ethics of representation |
|      |        | 02   | Chapter 2 of <i>Practices of Looking</i> : "Viewers Make Meaning" (ON)  |  |
|      |        | 03   | Arnheim, "Pictures, Symbols, and Signs" (ON)  |  |
|      |        | 04   | Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" (ON)   |  |
|      |        | 05   | Sirc, "The Still-Unbuilt Hacienda" (MC)   |  |
| 4    | T 9/15 | 01   | Werner, "Speaking of Composing (Frameworks): New Media Discussions, 2000-2010" (ON)                           | researching multimodality, part 1: overview                              |
|      |        | 02   | McIntire-Strasberg, "Multimedia Research: Difficult Questions with Indefinite Answers" (ON)                   |  |
|      |        | 03   | McKee, "Ethical and Legal Issues for Writing Researchers in an Age of Media Convergence" (ON)                 |  |
|      |        | 04   | DePalma and Alexander, "A Bag Full of Snakes: Negotiating the Challenges of Multimodal Composition" (ON)      |  |
|      |        |  o-module 1 due by 5pm on Saturday 9/19 |   |  |
| 5    | T 9/22 | 01   | Selfe and Selfe, "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones" (ON)     | researching multimodality, part 2: interfaces and spaces                 |
|      |        | 02   | Gries, "Iconographic Tracking: A Digital Research Method for Visual Rhetoric and Circulation Studies" (ON)    |  |
|      |        | 03   | Turnley, "Towards a Mediological Method: A Framework for Critically Engaging Dimensions of a Medium" (ON)     |  |
|      |        | 04   | McCorkle, "Whose Body? Looking Critically at New Interface Design" (ON)                                       |  |

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|----|---------|----|---|---|
| 6  | T 9/29  | 01 | Purdy, "What can Design Thinking Offer Writing Studies?" (ON)   | seeing text and designing with text       |
|    |         | 02 | Brumberger, "The Rhetoric of Typography: The Awareness and Impact of Typeface Appropriateness" (ON)                 |   |
|    |         | 03 | Mackiewicz, "Audience Perceptions of Fonts in Projected PowerPoint Text Slides" (ON)                                |   |
|    |         | 04 | Trimbur, "Delivering the Message: Typography and the Materiality of Writing" (ON)                                   |   |
| 7  | T 10/6  | ★  | <b>FALL BREAK—NO CLASS</b><br><b>o-module 2 due by 5pm on Saturday 10/10</b>  | working on o-module 2                     |
| 8  | T 10/13 | 01 | New London Group, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures" (MC)                                    | digging deeper into multimodality, part 1 |
|    |         | 02 | Selfe, "Toward New Media" (ON)  |   |
|    |         | 03 | Lauer, "Contending with Terms: 'Multimodal' and 'Multimedia' in the Academic and Public Spheres" (MC)               |   |
| 9  | T 10/20 | 01 | Takayoshi and Selfe, "Thinking about Multimodality" (ON)  | digging deeper into multimodality, part 2 |
|    |         | 02 | Arola, "The Design of Web 2.0: The Rise of the Template, The Fall of Design" (ON)                                   |   |
|    |         | 03 | Halbritter, "Twenty-First Century Writing as Symbolic Action" (ON)  |   |
|    |         | 04 | Fraiberg, "Composition 2.0: Toward a Multilingual and Multimodal Framework" (MC)                                    |   |
| 10 | T 10/27 | 01 | Braun, McCorkle, and Wolf, "Remixing Basic Writing: Digital Media Production and the Basic Writing Curriculum" (MC) | exploring remix as multimodal composing   |
|    |         | 02 | Stedman, "Remix Literacy and Fan Compositions" (ON)   |   |
|    |         | 03 | Johnson-Eilola and Selber, "Plagiarism, Originality, Assemblage" (ON)   |   |
|    |         | 04 | Ray, "More than Just Remixing: Uptake and New Media Composition" (ON)   |   |
| 11 | T 11/3  | 01 | Westbrook, "Visual Rhetoric in a Culture of Fear: Impediments to Multimedia Production" (ON)                        | understanding intellectual property       |
|    |         | 02 | DeVoss, "Intellectual Property in College English—and English Studies" (ON)   |   |
|    |         | 03 | <i>Bound by Law</i> (ON)  |   |
|    |         | 04 | Lessig, "Do Copyright Laws Stifle Creativity?" (ON)   |   |

|    |          |   |   |  |
|----|----------|---|---|--|
| 12 | T 11/10  | 01  | McKee and DeVoss, <i>Digital Writing Assessment and Evaluation</i>  | evaluating and assessing multimodal work, part 1 |
|    |          |    | <b>o-module 3 due by 5pm on Saturday 11/14</b>  |  |
| 13 | T 11/17  | 01  | Davis and Yancey, "Notes Toward the Role of Materiality in Composing, Reviewing, and Assessing Multimodal Texts" (ON)                       | evaluating and assessing multimodal work, part 2 |
|    |          | 02  | Borton and Huot, "Responding and Assessing" (ON)  |  |
|    |          | 03  | Adsanatham, "Integrating Assessment and Instruction: Using Student-Generated Grading Criteria to Evaluate Multimodal Digital Projects" (ON) |  |
|    |          | 04  | Sorapure, "Between Modes: Assessing Students' New Media Compositions" (MC)  |  |
|    |          | 05  | Murray, Sheets, and Williams, "The New Work of Assessment: Evaluating Multimodal Compositions" (MC)   |  |
| 14 | T 11/24  | 01  | DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill, "Infrastructure and Composing: The <i>When</i> of New-Media Writing" (MC)                                     | thinking about the contexts of multimodal work   |
|    |          | 02  | Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss, "Hacking Spaces: Place as Interface" (ON)  |  |
|    |          | 03  | Selber, "Institutional Dimensions of Academic Computing" (MC)   |  |
|    |          | 04  | Sheppard, "The Rhetorical Work of Multimedia Production Practices: It's More than Just Technical Skill" (MC)                                |  |
|    |          | 05  | Karper, "Make It Do or Do Without: Transitioning from a Tech-Heavy to a Tech-Light Institution: A Cautionary Tale" (ON)                     |  |
| 15 | T 12/1   | 01  | Palmeri, Epilogue to <i>Remixing Composition</i> (ON)   | moving beyond Word/words                         |
|    |          | 02  | Shipka, "Conclusion: Realizing a Composition Made Whole" (ON)   |  |
|    |          | 03  | Selber, "Epilogue" (ON)   | final project sharing and workshopping           |
|    |          | 04  | Sheridan and Rowsell, "Learning in Today's Age of Composition" (ON)   |  |
|    |          | 05  | Miller and McVee, "Changing the Game: Teaching for Embodied Learning through Multimodal Composing" (ON)                                     |  |
|    |          | 06  | Murray, "Composing Multimodality" (ON)  |  |
| F  | Th 12/10 |  | <b>o-module 4 due by 5pm</b>  |  |

# assignments

note that these are just brief overviews—full-length assignments and examples will be provided online and in class

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>multimodal document collection</b></p> <p><i>optional (no points)</i></p>          | <p>This is an optional assignment, but one I much very recommend that you engage in. Every day, add a text (or two or three or four or more) to your collection. You might look for interesting animations, flyers, slideshows, syllabi, photographs, announcements, invitations, CVs, newsletters, images from the web, brochures, wrappers or labels, magazine ads, etc.</p> <p>Save these materials in a folder (physical and/or digital) and bring the folder to class. You might draw upon these examples during our conversations about the readings. We will also use the materials you collect for discussion points in class, and you should find the folder valuable as a portfolio of examples or models to consider as you work on your own texts.</p> |
| <p><b>contributing to reading responses and discussions</b></p> <p><i>700 points</i></p> | <p>Rather than composing and submitting individual responses to the readings, we will build our reading responses together on Google Drive. All of you have been added to a Google Drive folder where we'll build together. I expect you to offer comments, thoughts, illustrations, responses, etc., weekly.</p>  |
| <p><b>leading a class reading discussion</b></p> <p><i>400 points</i></p>                | <p>Once during the semester, you will work with another person to craft a reading discussion for class. You can—and should!—pull from our collaboratively created Google Drive materials. Your reading presentation should pose some questions, raise some issues, introduce some illustrations, etc., regarding key concepts from the week's readings.</p>  |
| <p><b>out-of-class modules</b></p> <p><i>400 points (100 each)</i></p>                   | <p>We will complete four out-of-class modules. The out-of-class modules are homework that will allow you to push at some of the concepts and ideas we've been reading about and discussing.</p>  |
| <p><b>in-class modules</b></p> <p><i>500 points (100 each)</i></p>                       | <p>We will complete five in-class modules. The in-class modules, some of which are individual and some of which are collaborative, will allow you hands-on practice with the multimodal composing approaches we're reading about and encountering.</p>   |

total points: 2000

| points          | percentage  | grade         |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 2000-1900 = A   | 100-96 = A  | 4.0-3.7 = A   |
| 1899-1800 = A/B | 95-91 = A/B | 3.6-3.1 = A/B |
| 1799-1700 = B   | 90-86 = B   | 3.0-2.7 = B   |
| 1699-1600 = B/C | 85-81=B/C   | 2.6-2.1 = B/C |
| 1599-1500 = C   | 80-76 = C   | 2.0-1.7 = C   |

# participation

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Come prepared to discuss the readings and engage the concepts by creating, composing, and exploring. Plan on expressing your ideas, frustrations, questions, confusions, etc., even if you're not able to articulate them without some hesitation—sometimes ambivalent or ambiguous remarks spark the liveliest discussions.

The use of multi-modal literacies has expanded the ways we acquire information and understand concepts. Ever since the days of illustrated books and maps texts have included visual elements for the purpose of imparting information. The contemporary difference is the **ease with which we can combine** words, images, sound, color, animation, video, and styles of print in projects so that they are part of our everyday lives and, at least by our youngest generation, often taken for granted .

**Images and words have long coexisted** on the printed page and in manuscripts, but relatively few people possessed the resources to exploit the rhetorical potential of images combined with words... **literacy has always been a material, multimedia construct** but we only now are becoming aware of this multidimensionality and materiality because computer technologies have made it possible for many people to produce and publish multimedia presentations.

In an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in **reading** (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in **composing** in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks that characterize workplaces, schools, civic life, and span traditional cultural, national, and geopolitical borders.

NCTE, 2005



Lester Faigley, 1999



Pam Takayoshi (and C. Selfe, 2003)

