

Rethinking *Multi-Media*:
An Interdisciplinary Overview of the Media, Information & Technoculture
Program

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Course: MIT 025

In introducing what are normally first year students to the multi-disciplinary purview of the Media, Information & Technoculture program at UWO, I encourage them to become media literate citizens who watch and listen responsibly, and think both actively and critically. The first lecture of the term in this core course consequently encompasses

three key learning objectives:

- 1) “Media” in its purest sense is an ethereal and multifarious concept, effectively constituting anything that can be actively read, interpolated, or otherwise conveys a message, either explicitly or implicitly
- 2) All media is to some degree connected, or is inter-textual in nature *ie*: Media begets media (parody, pastiche, etc). Media cannot exist in a vacuum
- 3) Media movements and trends reflect larger social, political, cultural, and economic values and realities. In this sense, media products serve as historical or documentary texts, even archeological artifacts, of a given period or culture

Over the course of 50 mins, these postulates are demonstrated “in action” through a series of exercises that demonstrate that all media is in a sense “multi” media, though perhaps not always recognizable on the surface as such

Exercise 1: Aesthetic Tour of the UWO campus: (20 mins)

A visual survey of the campus underscores the power of architecture as a medium, and how buildings are effectively “read” like texts that reflect the social mores of their vintage. From Victorian, to modern, to brutalist, I demonstrate how each building on campus functions as a rhetorical device and a unique cultural symbol

Exercise 2: Art Deco Slide Show (20 mins)

A Power Point slide show of the art deco movement picks up where the campus tour leaves off, with architecture, as I show slides of the Manhattan skyline and those buildings (Chrysler, Empire State, *et al*) built in the art deco style. In looking at subsequent slides of paintings, furniture, textiles, hairstyles, and other products endemic to this same period, students begin to understand how broadly defined media can be, and how a movement such as art deco can be simultaneously represented across all media, hence the construct of “multi” media in its truest sense

Exercise 3: Questions, discussion & wrap up (5-10 mins)

Lecture Keywords: inter-textuality, iconography, representation, Zeitgeist, mediation