

2026.10.22

CMNS  
3500  
Power and  
Language

WORDS  
ARE  
POWERFUL.

# News and events

**Every Monday 9:30-10:15**  
**Every Wednesday 2:00-2:45**  
1522 Old Main  
*Yoga for Self Regulation*

**Thursday, October 22 noon**  
*TRUSU Building*  
Community Meal

**Friday, October 29 6:00-8:00**  
Clocktower Theatre  
*Beyond the Labels: Understanding  
Neurodiversity*



# Territorial Acknowledgeme nt



# Where we're going today...



Same CDA questions, more than words



Reading images and words: Kress and van Leeuwen,  
Machin and Mayr



Practice: a news media homepage, your panel

# Words – a bit of a review

1

## Word choice

‘Regime’ or ‘government’? ‘Protesters’ or ‘rioters’? Each word brings different ideas with it.

2

## Overlexicalisation

Extra, unneeded words flag something as unusual: ‘male nurse’, ‘female CEO’. What norm does that reveal?

3

## Suppression

What’s left out? ‘Jobs were lost’ never says who cut them, or who gained.

4

## Oppositions

Contrasts that a text sets up, often unstated: ‘hard-working families’ implies someone else isn’t.

**Ask: do the headline and the photo tell the same story?**

*Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction. SAGE.*

# Video of Hurricane Katrina

# Texts are more than words

**Social practice** power and ideology

**Discursive practice** production,  
circulation, viewing

**Text** words, images, layout, gesture

## Same three questions

What choices did this text make, in words and in pictures?

Who produced it, for which viewers?

Whose view of the world does it make seem natural?

*Last week's Mai & Jocuns toolkit had an Images column. Today we unpack it.*

# Halliday's metafunctions, for pictures

1

## **Representational**

Ideational. Who is shown, doing what, to whom, and where?

2

## **Interactive**

Interpersonal. How does the image position you, the viewer?

3

## **Compositional**

Textual. How are the parts arranged into one message?

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

# Representational meaning

1

## Participants

Who and what is shown: people, places, things. Who is included, and who is left out?

2

## Narrative

Someone acts. A line of action (an arm, a gaze, a pointed finger) runs from actor to goal. Who acts, and who is acted on?

3

## Conceptual

No action. People shown as types, as parts of a whole, or as symbols: what they are, not what they do.

# What's in the picture?

1

## Connotation

Denotation is what's shown. Connotation is the ideas it carries. A tired worker, or a failing economy?

2

## Attributes

Objects that carry meaning: a hard hat, a lab coat, a flag pin. What does each say about the person?

3

## Settings

Where people are placed: a podium, a kitchen table, a hospital corridor. Settings signal values and identity.

4

## Symbols

Machin and Mayr add cultural symbols to salience: a flag, a cross, a skyline. They pull the eye and bring ideas with them.

*Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction. SAGE.*

# Read it: Representational

## The image



Komulainen, S. (1990). *Face to face* [Photograph]. *The Canadian Press*. [Face to Face \(photograph\)](#), Wikipedia.

## Discuss in pairs

- Participants: what do the uniform, mask and trees connote?
- No one acts. The vector is a stare: who reacts to whom?
- Neither looks at us. Demand or offer?
- Peacekeeping or Indigenous resistance: whose reading does it support?
- Whose ideologies?

# Interactive meaning

1

## Gaze

Demand: the person looks at you and asks something of you.  
Offer: you look at them, as something to view.

2

## Distance

A close-up feels personal. A long shot keeps people impersonal, at a stranger's distance.

3

## Angle

Looking down gives you, the viewer, power. Looking up gives it to the person shown. Eye level suggests equality.

# Read it: interactive

## The image



## Discuss in pairs

- Demand or offer? What is the gaze asking of you?
- Distance and angle: close-up or long shot? Eye level, above or below?
- Who produced this image, and who has circulated it since? Does that change its meaning?

*Fulton County Sheriff's Office. (2023). [Mug shot of Donald Trump](#) [Photograph]. Wikipedia.*



Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/universal-ostrich-kill-cull-avian-5150000>

# Compositional meaning

## **Information value**

Left reads as given, right as new. Top as ideal, bottom as real. The centre as core.

## **Salience**

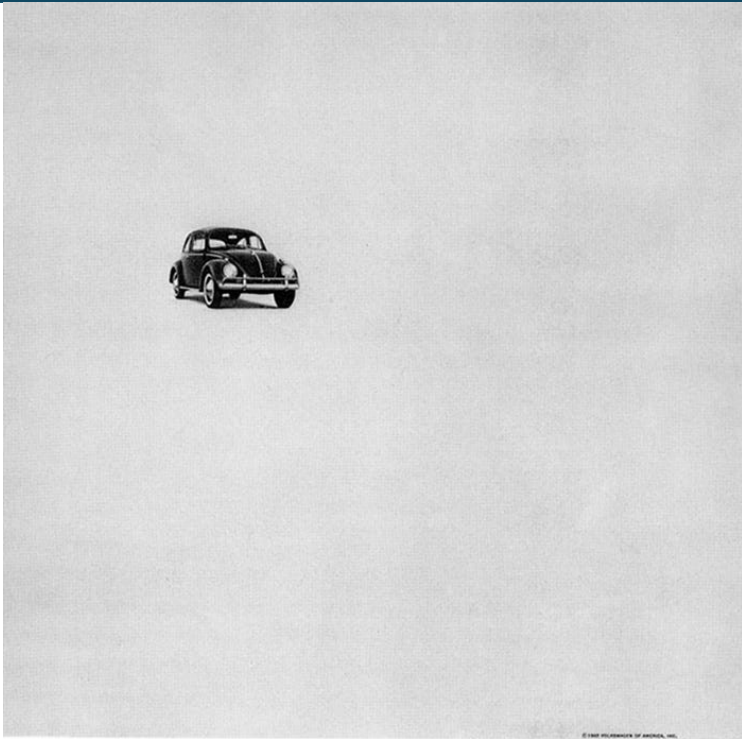
What draws the eye first: size, colour, sharpness, foreground, a human face.

## **Framing**

Lines, borders and white space connect elements, or cut them apart.

# Read it: compositional

## The image



### Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more.  
A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it.  
The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes.  
Nobody even stores at our shop.  
In fact, some people who drive our little

flivver don't even think 32 miles to the gallon is going any great guns.  
Or using five pints of oil instead of five quarts.  
Or never needing anti-freeze.  
Or racking up 40,000 miles on a set of tires.  
That's because once you get used to

some of our economies, you don't even think about them any more.  
Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or renew your small insurance. Or pay a small repair bill.  
Or trade in your old VW for a new one.  
Think it over.



## Discuss in pairs

- Salience: what draws your eye first, the car or the empty space?
- Ideal and real: what sits at the top of the page, and what at the bottom?
- How does the layout make “small” seem like a virtue?

Doyle Dane Bernbach. (1959). *Think small* [Advertisement]. Volkswagen. Wikipedia.



© 1988 VOLKSWAGEN OF AMERICA, INC.

## Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more.

A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it.

The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes.

Nobody even stares at our shape.

In fact, some people who drive our little

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Or using five pints of oil instead of five quarts.

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# Your turn: One news homepage

**1**

**Pick**

Open one news outlet's homepage. Find the lead story's main image and headline. (macleans.ca or Vancouversun.com or aptnnews.ca)

**2**

**Depicted**

Attributes, settings, symbols: what do they connote? Do the headline and photo agree?

**3**

**Interactive**

Gaze, distance, angle: how does the image treat you?

**4**

**Compositional**

What's most salient? Where does it sit? What's framed together?

*In your trio, share one sentence: "This layout makes \_\_\_ seem natural, which serves \_\_\_."*

## Hurricanes &amp; Tropical Storms

More Slideshows: [Select Category](#)Speed: [Manual](#)

REPLAY



Photo 549 of 565

[Single Photo](#) | [Multiple Photos](#)**AP** Associated Press AP - Mon Aug 29, 7:32 PM ET

Looters carry bags of groceries through floodwaters after taking the merchandise away from a wind damaged convenience store in New Orleans on Monday, Aug. 29, 2005. (AP Photo/Dave Martin)

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)

**RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO** » Recommended Photos  
Recommend It: Average (79 votes)



## RELATED

- [Katrina's Effects, at a Glance](#) AP - Tue Aug 30, 8: PM ET

## Hurricanes &amp; Tropical Storms

More Slideshows: Speed:  

Photo 334 of 565

Single Photo

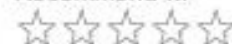
AFP/Getty Im  
3:41 PM ET

Two residents wade  
through chest-deep  
water after finding bread  
and soda from a local  
grocery store in New

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO [» Recom](#)

Recommend It:

Average



## RELATED

- [Katrina's Effects, at a Glance](#)  
PM ET

[Hurricanes & Tropical Storms](#)ADD SLIDESHOW TO MY YAHOO! [O](#)[\(About My Yahoo\)](#)

# Preparing for next week

- **Fri Oct 23, 9:00 am**  
Proposal due, with your  
AI disclosure
  - submit in Moodle and email  
your co-panelists
- **Tues Oct 27, 9:00-11:30**  
Panel recordings, no  
regular class
  - **Grey Room in the  
TRUSU Building - arrive  
5 mins early**
- **Thurs Oct 29, 9:00-11:30**  
Panel recordings, no  
regular class
  - **Location TBA - arrive 5  
mins early**