

St. Joseph's College of Commerce

(Autonomous)

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Department of English

Syllabus Document for the Academic Year 2023-2024

B.A. English

B.A. English General English – Semester I

Media Literacy and Communication Skills

Course Description: The Media Literacy and Communication Course has been designed as a response to the questions—where and what do our students often read and write? Which are the new spaces that significantly shape their experiences? Do our courses address the challenges present in the emerging media spaces?

The term 'media' has an expansive meaning in today's context. It may refer to a piece of paper on which news is printed or to a political advertisement that pops up while browsing for the latest TV show on the internet. Media often acts as a tool to manufacture consent, and at the same time it is also a space where such 'manufacturing' can be resisted. Hence, understanding media is critical to understanding the modern world that is saturated with information.

The Media Literacy and Communication Course also intends to inculcate LSRW skills and thereby enable them to analyse and interpret the information received from different sources. Also, the course aims to support students in developing the much-needed aptitude to assess socio-political, economic, and cultural developments. The syllabus of the course has been conceptualized to make it a foundation for developing informed perspective by engaging in evidence-based discussions. The activities designed aim to facilitate the fostering of skills needed to fact-check, source materials for research, and navigate through the online space.

Course Objectives

The course aims to help the students to:

- navigate through the digital world
- understand the news media ecosystem
- learn how to look for information in digital spaces, organize them, and validate the credibility of the information collected for academic and everyday needs
- analyse and interpret media discourses to understand the society and study how they shape individual experiences
- develop and refine the LSRW skills through discussions and activities

Course Outcomes

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- source and organize information from reliable resources and figure out the credibility of news reports, articles, stories, and other information available on diverse media outlets
- display an understanding of the ways in which media platforms influence perceptions and shape experiences
- display an ability to critique media generated socio-political and cultural discourses
- articulate issues/ideas with greater clarity and communicate effectively

Module 1: News Analysis and Interpretation

12 hours

- a) **Evaluating news articles:** Read articles and opinion pieces published in various newspapers, web-portals, and magazines to evaluate their authenticity, bias – if any, and the perspective from which the news is reported or the opinion is stated.
- b) **Analysing television news and debates:** Watch television news debates and discuss the authenticity, bias – if any, and the perspective from which the news is presented or reported. Also discuss both common and exclusive aspects of news reported on television and print media. The activities in this module will study the impact created through both television and print media on individuals and the society at large.

The activities will focus on developing and refining the LSRW skills. The course instructor is free to select news article/report/TV shows/documentaries/videos of his/her choice for the activity other than those prescribed in the syllabus.

Readings:

1. The Propaganda Model – Extract from *Manufacturing Consent* by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky
2. “Why so many people believe fake news – and how to get them to see through conspiracy theories” by Mark Lorch, *The Conversation*
3. The Indian Tale of Lost Credibility of Journalism: Who to Blame? – Sidhant Dubey
4. Private Interest Journalism – Hartosh Singh Bal
5. Open Letter to the Chief Justice of India – P Sainath

Module 2: Digital Media and the Internet

12 hrs

- a) **Information gathering in online spaces:** Select a topic and search online to find in-depth information about the topic. Students may speak about the processes that they underwent while collecting the information, including the websites they visited and how they got to know about the sources.
- b) **Video analysis:** Watch well-researched YouTube videos and engage in discussions based on select themes. Give chance to each student to briefly express their experience of selecting and watching the video.
- c) **Producing content for the online spaces:** Discuss various ways of producing content for the internet. Encourage students to come up with content for a media platform of their choice, and conduct peer review sessions. Encourage students to go through the content assigned to them and use the skills learnt in the semester to analyse the content and share feedback.

Readings and Viewings

1. Youtube Channels: Ted Talks, Big Think, Kurzgesagt
2. Case Study: People's Archive of Rural India (ruralindiaonline.org)
 - a) In Haveri, Ratnavva's Life of Hopes and Seeds – S. Senthilir
 - b) I Never Got a Chance to Play for India Again – Riya Behl
 - c) The Headmaster of Dabli Chapori – Priti David
 - d) Rita Akka's Life is Going to the Dogs – M Palani Kumar

Module 3: Understanding Social Media

12 hrs

This module includes a set of activities related to how experiences are represented in social media. The course instructor may conduct any two activities from the list given below in class.

- Discuss the students' relation with social media. Ask students to write how social media spaces influence their everyday experiences
- Imagine a month without social media and write about the possible impacts
- Ask students to identify an important change they discovered within themselves after engaging with social media
- Discuss the impact of social media on society and individuals by discussing an essay

Readings and Viewings:

1. "I type, therefore I am" by Tom Chatfield, Aeon Magazine
2. The Social Dilemma (2020)

Module 4: Communication Skills

9 hrs

Reading activity:

- a) Read a passage and identify key words
- b) Read a passage and identify the purpose of the punctuation marks used
- c) Read a passage and identify the relevance of paragraph breaks
- d) Read a passage and identify the key points or arguments
- e) Read a passage and identify the sentence structure

Listening activity

- a) Listen to a radio broadcast of a discussion, talk, or a YouTube video and comment on the content
- b) Listen to the ideas/perspectives shared by fellow-students and respond
- c) Listen to a conversation/story/narrative and narrate it to the class

Writing activity

- a) Write about personal experiences/personal narratives
- b) Recollect and write about a conversation that you had with friends or family members
- c) Describe an incident that you have witnessed
- d) Recollect a memory associated with an object and write about it
- e) Describe a photograph or painting
- f) Explain a process (e.g., opening an email account, riding a bike, operating a machine)
- g) Write about a topic that emerges through a classroom discussion
- h) Write about an inspiring topic

Speaking activity

- a) Conduct discussions on contemporary issues
- b) Presentations by students on select themes or topics
- c) Narrate a story or an incident

B.A. English General English - Semester II

Introduction to Academic Conversations

“In an increasingly diverse, global society, this ability to engage with the ideas of others is especially crucial to democratic citizenship”. - Gerald Graff

Introduction to Academic Conversations views academic reading and writing as a process of entering into a conversation, a response to what others have said about academic or social issues. It attempts to help students develop the much-needed skills such as identifying arguments, summarising, note-making, quoting, referencing, and articulating responses. The modules in the course will focus on demystifying the conventions of academic engagement (orally/writing) by clearly explaining the layers of articulating academic responses. Overall, the course will enable students to understand and engage with social and academic debates both orally and in writing.

This course is designed around the book *They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerard Graff and Cathy Birkenstein.

Course Objectives

- To understand the conventions of academic writing
- To develop the skills of summarising, note-making, quoting, identifying arguments, and referencing
- To develop one’s own perspective through engaging and responding to texts and commentaries.

Course Outcomes

After the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Display an understanding of the conventions of academic writing
- Demonstrate skills needed for engaging in academic conversations
- Articulate one’s own perspective by engaging with other opinions, arguments and perspectives

Module 1 – “They Say”

10 hrs

- “They Say”
- Her Pont Is: The Art of Summarizing
- As He himself Puts It: The Art of Questioning

Module 2 – “I Say” 10 hrs

- “Yes / no / okay, but” Three Ways to Respond
- “And Yet” Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say
- “Skeptics may object” Planting a Naysayer in Your Text
- “So What? Who Cares?” Saying Why It Matters

Module 3: “Tying It All Together” 10 hrs

- “As a Result,”: Connecting the Parts
- “Ain’t so / is not” Academic Writing Doesn’t Always Mean Setting Aside Your Own Voice
- “But Don’t Get Me Wrong” The Art of Metacommentary
- “He says contends” Using the Templates to Revise

Module 4: In Specific Academic Contexts 10 hrs

- “I take your point” Entering Class Discussions
- “IMHO” Is Digital Communication Good or Bad – or Both?
- “What’s motivating this writer?” Reading for the Conversation
- “On closer examination” Entering Conversations about Literature
- “The data suggest” Writing in the Sciences – Christopher Gillen
- “Analyze this” Writing in the Social Sciences – Eric Ackerman

Module 5: Templates for Effective Academic Writing 5 hrs

The Course will provide students with templates for the following:

Summarizing what someone else says, framing a quotation in one’s own words, indicating the view that the writer is responding to, marking the shift from a source’s view to the writer’s own view, offering evidence for that view, entertaining and answering counterarguments, and explaining what is at stake in the first place. In showing students how to make such moves, templates do more than organize students’ ideas; they help bring those ideas into existence.

Recommended Readings

- Don’t Blame the Eater David Zinczenko
- Hidden Intellectualism Gerald Graff

B.A. English General English – Semester III

Debate and Argumentation

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the art of argumentation, both ancient and modern. Through the examination of texts from various time periods and cultures, students will explore the ways in which ideas are expressed and debated.

Course Objectives:

- to develop critical thinking skills through the analysis and evaluation of arguments presented in the course materials
- to explore the historical and cultural contexts in which arguments are presented and debated
- to understand the role of language and rhetoric in argumentation
- to develop effective communication skills through practice in presenting and defending arguments

Course Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- analyze and evaluate arguments presented in course materials and in real-world situations
- effectively communicate their own arguments through written and oral presentations
- demonstrate critical thinking skills in a variety of contexts, both inside and outside of the classroom

Module 1: Ancient Dialogues

15 hrs

1. Excerpts from Meno (Dialogue on Virtue) – Plato
2. Excerpts from Milinda Panha – Nagasena
3. What the Tortoise Said to Achilles – Lewis Carrol

Module 2: History of Thought and Action

15 hrs

4. The Frailty of Human Affairs from ‘The Human Condition’ – Hannah Arendt
5. The Argumentative Indian – Amartya Sen

6. Are There Two Sides to Every Questions - Trudy Govier

Module 3: Arguments in Context

15 hrs

7. Annihilation of Caste - B R Ambedkar
8. Arguing with God - Daniel Cohen
9. The Will to Believe - William James

References

1. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Robert J Fogelin - Understanding Arguments_ An Introduction to Informal Logic (2014)
2. David Kelley - The Art of Reasoning_ An Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking-W. W. Norton & Company (2013)
3. Daniel Cohen - Arguments and Metaphors in Philosophy-University Press of America (2004)

B.A. English General English – Semester IV

Thinking Creativity

Course Objectives:

- To understand creative processes in social theory, philosophy, art, and literature
- To understand the nature of imagination and its role in creative thinking
- To develop an interdisciplinary approach towards thinking about creativity

Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course student must be able to

- Demonstrate an understanding of creative processes in social theory, philosophy, art, and literature
- Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of imagination and its role in creative thinking
- Display an ability to comment on creativity from an interdisciplinary perspective

Module 1: Creativity and Social Theory 15 hrs

1. Dead Zones of the Imagination: An Essay on Structural Stupidity – David Graeber
2. The Nature of Mass Demonstrations – John Berger

Module 2: Creativity, Philosophy & Science 15 hrs

3. Thinking Creatively About the Creative Act: A Dialogue with Daya Krishna – Daniel Raveh
4. On Creativity – David Bohm

Module 3: Creativity, Art & Writing 15 hrs

5. The Creative Anxiety of Henri Matisse – George Hagman
6. That Crafty Feeling – Zadie Smith

Further Reading:

1. Franklin, Samuel Weil. *The Cult of Creativity: A Surprisingly Recent History*. The University of Chicago Press, 2023.
2. Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in the Art of Writing*. London Harpervoyager, 2015.

3. Hagman, George. *The Artist's Mind*. Routledge, 18 June 2010.
4. Rickards, Tudor, et al. *The Routledge Companion to Creativity*. Routledge, 19 Nov. 2008.
5. Graeber, David. *The Utopia of Rules : On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. Brooklyn, New York, Melville House Publishing, 2015.
6. Koestler, Arthur. *The Act of Creation*. London, Penguin Books, 1989.