



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

Unit code: F3F7 34

Unit purpose: The purpose of this Unit is to provide you with a knowledge of semiotics, as applied to the analysis and evaluation of representation and ideology within media texts. Through employing semiotic theory as a tool to explore issues, candidates will learn how to identify and explore the role of representation and ideology, and how to communicate these ideas successfully in a critical analysis of media texts.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Explain the fundamentals of semiotic theory.
- 2 Identify and analyse representations in media texts.
- 3 Evaluate the use of ideology in media texts.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: The knowledge and skills required to access this Unit are at the discretion of the centre delivering the Unit. It would be beneficial if candidates had good communication skills, practical research ability and a general knowledge of technical codes employed in the media.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, and *IT* at SCQF level 5, in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Assessment: A holistic approach to assessment is encouraged for this Unit. Outcomes 2 and 3 may be assessed together. Outcome 1 may be assessed by a restricted response exercise. For assessment of Outcomes 2 and 3, extended responses could be used, or alternatively, a presentation.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

Unit code: F3F7 34

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Explain the fundamentals of semiotic theory

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Semiotic theory
- ◆ Semiotic theorists and terms
- ◆ Perspectives
- ◆ Relevance of semiotic theory to media analysis

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ describe the fundamental concepts of semiotic theory.
- ◆ identify the semiotic theorists who are key to media analysis. This must include Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, as a minimum.
- ◆ for each theorist, explain their perspective of semiotic theory.
- ◆ explain the relevance of semiotic theory to media analysis. This must cover language, and sign.

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome could be assessed by 20–25 restricted response questions.

Outcome 2

Identify and analyse representations in media texts

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Semiotic analysis
- ◆ Stereotype construction
- ◆ Expressive use of technical codes
- ◆ Representations

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can apply semiotic analysis to a given media text.

For each analysis, candidates must:

- ◆ identify representations of stereotypes and analyse the process of their construction.
- ◆ investigate the role of technical codes in the construction of representations. As a minimum, this must cover two technical codes appropriate to the media text.
- ◆ differentiate between positive and negative representations in the media text.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 2 should demonstrate a candidate's ability to apply theory to identifying and investigating representations in the media.

Evidence may be submitted in the form of a report or a presentation and should be accompanied by a portfolio of research and references.

Outcome 3

Evaluate the use of ideology in media texts through critical analysis

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Critical analysis of media texts
- ◆ Ideological perspectives
- ◆ Reader/text relationship

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can evaluate the use of ideology in media texts, through critical analysis.

Candidates must choose one ideological perspective appropriate to the analysis of a given media text and evaluate why the chosen perspective is appropriate to the media text. In so doing, candidates must critically analyse the media text, giving examples which show how their chosen ideological perspective relates to the text, taking account of reader/text relationship.

Assessment Guidelines

Evidence may be submitted in the form of a report or a presentation, of around 500 words minimum, accompanied by a portfolio of research and references.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	F3F7 34
Unit title:	Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology
Superclass category:	FJ
Original date of publication:	August 2008
Version:	01

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2008

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Higher National qualifications.

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre for further details, telephone 0845 279 1000.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit employs and develops ideas and issues surrounding media representation and ideology to enable candidates to analyse and discuss texts in a manner that will assist them in the creation of their own projects.

This may be achieved through detailed research and analysis where the emphasis is not placed on an accumulation of facts, but focuses on the practical application of knowledge and skills.

The Unit can be based on a range of texts or a specific item. The Unit can be delivered as a general introduction to wider aspects of media theory, criticism and analysis. It can be integrated as a tool for evaluation of the candidates' own project.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

The following is for guidance only and may be read to favour film and television, although the Unit is developed to be inclusive of radio, print media and/or appropriate examples from new media.

Outcome 1 should explore the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes and how they apply to the analysis to media texts. Other theorists who may be of some value include Charles Sanders Peirce, Louis Hjelmslev, Umberto Eco, Anton Popovič, Yuri Lotman. Ideas and terms that could be explored may include some or all from the following: *signifier, signified, syntagmatic, paradigmatic, denotation, connotation, myth, iconic/indexical/symbolic signs*.

Outcome 2 should examine notions of representation. Various groups could be examined; societal such as: *gender, age, sexual orientation, race, class*; or institutional for example: *police, schools, government, church, media*.

Technical codes include: *camera (framing, movement etc), lighting, editing, sound (FX, music, dialogue), mise-en-scène*.

In order to differentiate between positive and negative representations, it is important for candidates to be aware that positive and negative representations may not necessarily be simple binary opposition between good and bad, but may refer more to the position of a character or group within 'society' as represented in the text.

Texts may be from any media such as film, television, radio, print, internet, or computer games.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

Outcome 3 should demonstrate a candidate's ability to apply theory to the critical analysis of ideology and their ability to propose legitimate rationales for its existence in the media. Semiotic theory will be applied in conjunction with theory and ideas appropriate to the chosen ideological perspective. Candidates will successfully demonstrate they have the ability to contextually analyse existing media texts. Among the ideological perspectives that may be examined are: *Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, Liberal Pluralism, Post-Modernism. Psychoanalysis* may also be looked given its importance in the development of Feminism.

Candidates should be made aware of how social and cultural differences can create differential readings, in order that they can take fully account of reader/text relationship in their evaluation of ideology in media texts.

The word and time limits placed on assessments are entirely at the discretion of the centre delivering the Unit, but it is recommended that Outcome 1 be a restricted response exercise of between 20–25 questions. For assessment of Outcomes 2 and Outcome 3, an extended response of a minimum of 500 words each or equivalent is recommended; or a presentation of no less than five minutes, with any relevant film or television clips being restricted to one minute's duration.

The mode of assessment should be flexible, taking into account specific learner needs.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Although Core Skills are not formally assessed, there are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, and *IT* at SCQF level 5. Candidates will be expected to analyse and evaluate complex information on concepts explored across various types of media. They will need to produce and present evidence responses accurately and coherently whilst using recognised industry terminology and formats.

The Core Skill of *Communication* is comprised of the components *Written Communication* and *Oral Communication*. The general skills of the *Written Communication* component are 'read and understand complex written communication' for its reading element and 'produce well-structured written communication on complex topics' for its written element. Specific reading skills required by candidates at SCQF level 6 include identifying and summarising significant information, ideas and supporting details in a complex written communication, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the communication in meeting its purpose. Specific writing skills required include 'presenting all essential ideas, information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order, use of a structure which takes account of purpose and audience, emphasising the main points and use of conventions as appropriate to the purpose/audience.

Candidates may need to utilise these skills throughout the Unit, particularly when covering the analytical aspects of Outcomes 2 and 3 eg when asked to identify representations of stereotypes and analysing the process of their construction, in the former.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

Depending on assessment instruments used, candidates may develop the *Oral Communication* component to SCQF level 6, if for example, delivering an oral presentation on complex topics. The general skill at SCQF level 6 is ‘produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic.’ In so doing, candidates would need to use specific skills including consistent and effective use of vocabulary and spoken language structures, use of an appropriate level of formality, use of supporting detail when conveying essential information, opinions and ideas and would need to respond to others, taking account of their contributions.

Reliant on particular activities undertaken, the delivery and assessment of this Unit may provide opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Information Technology* at SCQF level 5, the general skill of which is to use ‘an IT system effectively and responsibly to process a range of information.’

Specific skills required at SCQF level 5 include carrying out processing and searches, using applications in depth and integration of different types of data in a piece of work. Candidates may use IT systems and specific applications in drafting and editing their work, such as in Outcome 3 where they may be asked to research and prepare a portfolio or presentation concerning ideological perspectives within a media text. These skills may also be relevant throughout the Unit in any related research or study.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by distance learning.

Online materials could be used to the Unit in conjunction with a well defined brief taking account of any factors specific to open learning. Feedback from the lecturer and peers could come from the formation of an online group where discussions relevant to the Unit could take place.

Consideration should be given to learning methodology, planning and resources required for ongoing candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. A combination of new and traditional authentication tools may have to be devised for assessment and re-assessment purposes.

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Media Analysis: Semiotics, Representation and Ideology

This is a single credit Higher National Unit at SCQF level 7. The purpose of this Unit is to provide you with a knowledge of semiotics, as applied to the evaluation of representation and ideology within media texts. The knowledge and skills required will be delivered through lectures, screenings, class discussions and activities, in addition to your own research. The Unit will allow you to analyse media texts, and understand them in a wider cultural context. By the end of the Unit you will be able to:

- 1 Explain the fundamentals of semiotic theory.
- 2 Identify and analyse representations in media texts.
- 3 Evaluate the use of ideology in media texts.

In Outcome 1 you will learn about semiotic theory by looking at the ideas of key theorists in the field, principally Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes. You will look at their perspectives of semiotic theory and the relevance of semiotic theory to media analysis with particular reference to the concepts of language and sign.

In Outcome 2 you will begin to apply semiotic analysis to a given media text. You will learn about notions of representation, and through the use of texts from any media such as film, television, radio, print, internet, or computer games, you will identify and analyse representations in media texts.

In Outcome 3, you will look at the existence of ideology in the media, and apply semiotic theory to the critical analysis of ideology within a media text. You will learn about critical analysis, ideological perspectives and the reader/text relationship. Among the ideological perspectives that you may look at are: *Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, Liberal Pluralism, and Post-Modernism*.

For all three Outcomes you will be expected to appropriately document and reference your evidence.

For Outcome 1 you may be asked to complete a restricted response assessment of short answer questions, which demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of semiotic theory.

For Outcomes 2 and 3 you may be asked to produce extended responses demonstrating your ability to apply semiotic analysis to a given media text, and evaluate the use of ideology in media texts, respectively.

Over the course of this Unit, there are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and *Information Technology* at SCQF level 5.