

“Memefication” Design Workshop

Back, Andi
Mahan, Natalie
Miner, Joshua

This assignment was developed for a cross-listed Film & Media Studies and Indigenous Studies course called Indigenous Film & Media. This is a group project that asks students to reconcile visual and rhetorical messages within a discipline by creating an original meme which is situated in a relevant socio-historical context. Students will move through a critical design process in which they must consider their visual thesis, write a proposal and design a mock-up for their meme. Once the meme is created, students are encouraged to share it on a social media platform such as Instagram using a hashtag specific to their course. This step allows students the opportunity to consider their work in a larger context and how their positionality as the creator of the meme affects its consumption by viewers. The final step is to write a critical reflection on their experience as both a creator and consumer of information.

This assignment was the product of a KU Libraries Information Literacy Mini-Grant. The mini-grants program pairs faculty with a team of librarians to redesign an assignment in an undergraduate course to meet an information literacy learning outcome. One outcome of the mini-grants program is to share information literacy assignment materials as an Open Educational Resource (OER).

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“Memefication” Design Workshop

Your job today, as a group, is to design a socially-engaged meme that fits the themes of our course, in four steps:

1) Identify the CONTEXT and VISUAL THESIS you want to communicate

Choose the social/political **conversation** you wish to participate in. What popular or institutional **discourses** must you engage with, relative to your issue? Will your **intent** be to raise awareness by sparking **critical** thought, engage in **advocacy** toward policy change, or **mobilize** a community to a particular kind of protest action? This will help you...

2) Choose your GENRE and CONTENT

Choose the recognizable content (image, video, phrase) that will form the basis for your meme. How will you **repurpose** or **remix** these elements and design it for **spreadability**? Will you **remediate** a photograph from a protest or a news story, some iconic piece of art, an ethnographic photograph, or a corporate logo or other commercial image? Or maybe a short video you could edit and post to social media. Will the content involve **participation by other users**? Your **positionality** will shape the **interpretive statement** that you want to make. All that's left is to determine the best intervention, which will involve...

3) Deploy DESIGN PRINCIPLES through your added CONTENT (text, image, etc.)

How will you **manipulate** your text, image, or video content? Will this impact the **principles of design** and **composition** you use to organize your meme? If so, how will your manipulation **reframe** these visual and textual elements? If using digital image manipulation, how can you think critically about your **remediation** of that content? If working with video, what principles will guide your addition of voiceover or visual framing effects? Finally, you should...

4) Determine your MODE of CIRCULATION

Memes rely on **circulation**, but what will the **structures** of this circulation be? If your meme is a small image with broad political appeal (women's rights or environmental issues), or if it engages other movements (Black Lives Matter or Occupy), it might share far beyond your digital community on the level of **advocacy** and **awareness**. If it is more focused on Indigenous political sovereignty or education, it might be working to **mobilize** in-group.

What **social media platforms** will you use to circulate your meme? Consider the technical aspects of your content, its size and/or duration, and the levels to which these match a **spreadability paradigm**. What **aesthetic principles** may guide your choice of **circulation/distribution**? Twitter and Facebook might allow you to better “occupy” certain organizations or political figures’ digital spaces, but a site like YouTube might allow for broader circulation not limited to active shares.

****Proceeding through steps 1-4, your group will produce a short (1 paragraph) proposal + mockup of the proposed meme.** In your proposal, you should address the following:

- 1) Identify some specific aesthetic principles (visual and textual) relevant to the design of your meme.
 - 2) How will the aesthetics of your meme produce a multimodal rhetorical statement?
 - 3) What elements of spreadable design do you plan to integrate?
 - 4) How will the Indigenous models of communication and content-creation we've discussed inform the aesthetics, rhetoric, and circulation of your meme?
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Assignment Post-Test

Write a one-page critical reflection on

- 1) Your experience of the design process in your role as CREATOR
 - 2) Your experience of the Instagram feed in your role as CONSUMER
 - 3) And the politics of your engagement in these roles relative to Indigenous social issues, models and ethics of communication
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Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will learn how rhetorical meaning emerges at the juxtaposition of image and text, through a critical design process.
- 2) Students will situate memes in their sociohistorical and political contexts and analyze them according to authorship and consumption.



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