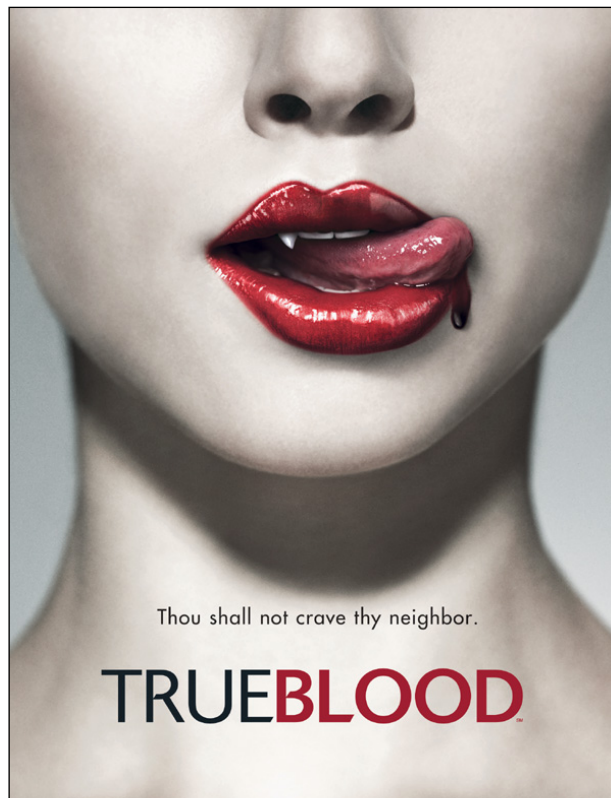




1. In an essay, critique this magazine ad for the long-running HBO series TRUEBLOOD as graphic design by evaluating:

- Rhythm | Balance | Contrast | Unity
- CVI
- Metaphor, denotation/connotation, chains of association
- The Big Idea (a mythic 'truth')
- Any other semiotic tool, principle, term or concept that might help you explain the ad's brilliance

For more information and historical context: <https://www.hbo.com/true-blood>.



2. View either **Black Panther** (the first one, starring Chad Boseman, who also did a great job portraying Jackie Robinson in *42*) OR **Barbie**. After viewing the film, write an essay analyzing it as a visual text using our semiotic tools, identifying signifiers and how meaning is made. Apply Berger's symbolic codes and Barthes's concepts of denotation/connotation, chains of association, and mythic 'truth.'

For **Black Panther**, catalog and analyze signifiers that celebrate African history, culture, and people groups. This is a story that imagines an African nation with no colonizing influence, with no spoiling "whiteness." Berger's codes will help you unpack what costume designers and set designers were likely doing in creating all they did for Wakanda, which is to say, a parallel

universe. Somewhere in your essay you will want to discuss the displaced code of all of this African heritage, much of it designed to signify royalty, rank, culture, and history into a superhero action movie. The vocabulary of symbols here is incredible. For example, note how many signifiers come from West African Adinkra symbolism: [http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra\\_index.htm](http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm).

Use part of your essay to focus in on the film's use of color as a signification code. And it's not just about race. Precious metals (gold, silver, vibranium?) should be interrogated, as well.

To help you, you might view the *New York Times* short video about the design of the film from the costume designer's perspective, that of Ruth E. Carter: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/arts/100000005735913/black-panther-costumes-merge-african-history-with-afrofuturism.html>.



For **Barbie** (the film, not merely the movie poster), apply a feminist gaze in combination with semiotics to unpack the critique that director Greta Gerwig offers up of male hegemony and patriarchy. Catalog and analyze signifiers. Apply Berger's codes and Barthes's ideas to reveal the symbolic universe Gerwig creates. (Barbie IS a symbolic code! So is her house, as we analyzed it early in the semester.)

As with *Black Panther*, of special attention for you should be the use of color, typeface, costuming/clothing, and absence (what ISN'T there). How are signifiers used to challenge but also to support gender stereotypes? Racial, ethnic, or cultural stereotypes and cultural identity? For example, the film at least seems to present inclusivity, but on its own terms. What are

those terms? To the extent you wish, you might consider other signifiers, such as sound (aural), backgrounds, scene composition (rule of thirds, foreground/background, etc.), and weather, just as we did with the *Cymbalta* ad. Gestalt and its principles also offer a great deal to a thoughtful analysis of the film.

You don't have to be exhaustive – that would require a dissertation, but do enough analysis to demonstrate your mastery of our semiotic “power tools”. By now, I'm sure there are semiotic analyses of the film online, so no Googling in order to ‘cheat’ or shortcut your way to answers. A student is only pre-empting his or her own education when doing this. Remember, your answers will be accompanied by a pledge of academic integrity. And your submissions will be checked by TurnItIn.

3. Analyze an ad promoting a company's cybersecurity "solutions", located online here: <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/tbEJ/cybereason-we-are-the-defenders>. Apply Aristotle's model of persuasion in an analysis and critique of the ad. Is the ad persuasive? Why or why not? Somewhere in your answer, hypothesize a viewer's reaction to the ad by applying Stuart Hall's model for responses to persuasive attempts (hegemonic, negotiated, oppositional). In other words, discuss how viewers might respond to the ad by taking each of these postures. For oppositional, for example, you might brainstorm a parody of the Cybereason ad.

*"The level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where already coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional more active ideological dimensions." —Stuart Hall, 1980*

4. **This is the most important question of the five**, at least to me. So, before you start clacking, get yourself a beverage. Sit back and reflect. In this last section, I want you to articulate how your time in COM 270 was productive, beneficial, and perhaps even sight- or life-changing. Demonstrate in your essay WHAT you learned, and please be as detailed and descriptive as you can, using specific examples. Describe also HOW you learned these things. In short, discuss how do you see differently now than how you saw before the course "happened" to you?

*"The form in which ideas are expressed affects what those ideas will be." –Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death**

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- *Type up and submit your answers in via Canvas. Do not email your answer sheets.*
  - *Do not submit this test booklet.*
  - *DO include the pledge of academic integrity, provided in the exam booklet and/or in class. **No signature, no grade.***
  - *You can submit earlier than the deadline if you wish.*
  - *Writing quality counts. It will always count.*
  - *Proof your work before submitting; writing quality counts. Follow instructions. Failure to do so will mean that the highest grade you can expect is a "C."*

**Deadline: 2pm, Monday, April 29**

*The last word in the 12-volume Oxford English Dictionary?*

*"Zyxt."*

*It means: "to see."*

## **Pledge of Academic Integrity**

As a member of the Berry College academic community, I recognize the importance of honesty, integrity, and respect for knowledge in all academic endeavors. I hereby pledge to uphold the following principles of academic integrity:

1. **Honesty:** I will be truthful in all my academic pursuits, including coursework, exams, research, and any other academic activities.
2. **Originality:** I will submit only my original work, ideas, and creations, acknowledging and appropriately citing the contributions of others.
3. **Attribution:** I will give proper credit to all sources used in my academic work, whether they are written, visual, oral, or electronic.
4. **Independence:** I will complete all assignments and exams on my own, unless expressly permitted to collaborate with others by the instructor.
5. **Respect:** I will respect the intellectual property rights of others, including copyright and fair use principles, in all academic materials.
6. **Ethical Use of Technology:** I will not use AI or software that employ it (ChatGPT, Grammarly, or even Google, for ex.) without BEFORE obtaining specific authorization from my instructor. Furthermore, I will not use any software or technology to engage in academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:
  - Unauthorized assistance in completing assignments.
  - Plagiarism or other forms of intellectual dishonesty.
  - Altering or falsifying academic records or credentials.
7. **Accountability:** I understand that academic integrity is my personal responsibility, and I will accept the consequences of any violations of this pledge. These consequences likely mean earning a zero ('0') for any assignment or activity for which I violated this pledge. Depending on the degree of the infraction, I understand I could earn a failing grade for the course or even expulsion from the College. Lastly, I understand that ignorance is no defense against charges of academic dishonesty.

By affixing my signature below, I commit to upholding the principles of academic integrity and maintaining the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct in all my academic endeavors.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

