

HANDOUT: TAKING PICTURES OF TEXTUALITIES
(follow-up exercise with cameras)

DIRECTIONS: WORK IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS.

This is an exercise in seeing first, filming second. It is an opportunity for you to learn how to do fieldwork at the same time that you learn to “see” with new eyes.

Scan the following list for examples of the terms you learned in class last week. Your task is to try to go out into the “real world” to find examples of these terms. If you can locate -- and film -- ONE (1) of the following during the next hour, that will be wonderful.

If you find more than one, all the better!

Remember, your task is not to do them all, but to READ them all and to LOOK for them all.

We hope that you will come back to class to demonstrate how “textual items” manifest to you and your “team players.”

1. Take a picture or pictures of items that seem to “**text**” or “connect” with one another, like a suit of clothes, a storefront window, a group of people talking, playing music, shopping, etc. What are the items that seem to “cohere into a seamless whole”? Why do you think they text together? Do you think that your viewing public will agree with you? Why?
2. Take a picture or pictures demonstrating “**intertextuality**,” i.e., how various things, items, performances, etc. in the real world “speak to” or “interact with” each other. For example, how does the way someone is dressed as s/he enters a shop, bar, store, campus building, etc. “**inter-text**” with the shop’s environment? How does music blasting from a shop “**inter-text**” with the people who are buying there? How does the food served at an establishment “**inter-text**” with the patrons who visit the place in terms of food choice, price of food, ways people are dressed, etc.? Think of the pedi-cab drivers. Why does the scene of one of them pulling along a newly-married couple visiting Charleston on honeymoon “make sense”?
3. Take a picture or pictures of some building, art exhibit, shop window, storefront, etc. that shows **entextuality**, i.e., how something that once had once had “meaning” in one context has been reconfigured to represent something else. The former Millenium Music at the corner of King and Calhoun is a good example. Once it was a thriving place; now it is a “scene of gratitude.” How and why is this “OK”?

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4. Take a picture of a “**meta-text**,” or how some place, thing or person tells the viewer what it or s/he “stands for.” The back of a DVD or CD is a good example. So is a movie marquis, or an ad for some product, or a menu in a restaurant window. **Can you combine the “meta-text” with any of the above?** That would be really cool, but it’s not necessary.
5. Take a picture of “**context**,” the wider environment that helps the viewer to understand what s/he is seeing, hearing, buying, etc. How far would you want to go with context? Greater CofC? Greater Charleston? Greater South Carolina? Greater American South? Greater USA? When does context become absurd?
6. Take a picture or pictures of “what came before,” i.e., “**pre-text**,” if you can. Some of you did this in your snapshot observations. How does the “pre-text” figure in to the “**text**” itself? Does it enable the “**text**” so that the latter makes more sense, or does it confuse it? Contradict it, even? What is missed if someone doesn’t know the “**pre-text**”?
7. Can you capture “**sub-text**” on film? This is really difficult, as you must look for the “unspoken,” intangible, unwritten “codes” that determine what is going on behind the scenes. How would you be able to capture them? Look for winks, body language that contradicts, verbal expressions that express sarcasm or irony, or the opposite. Things supposedly said “in anger” may really mean “I’m saying this ‘in jest.’” Compliments that on the surface imply approval may be subtle forms of ridicule and disparagement. How can you capture those on film? Or can you?
8. Can you take a picture of an “**after-text**”? The party’s over, and what remains is – are -- what? A huge mess to clean up? A room full of passed-out bodies? A hilarious party when the curtain falls? A dumpster full of food that could feed a family of four for free? How and why are **after-texts** important?
9. Things don’t happen in a vacuum. Car radios blare along with sirens; sirens blare to interrupt street-singers. Can you take a picture **with sound (or without)** to demonstrate how “**co-texts**” occur, how things with different meanings demand attention simultaneously? Jugglers and singers, musicians and food or drink servers – they all produce “the message.” Or “the messages.” Visiting the Market might be a good place to film and study **co-text**.
10. Finally, and this is really exciting for filmmakers, can you find elements that **defy** all – or some – of the above? What **anti-textual** features exist in your view? A homeless person standing outside of Saks Fifth Avenue, or, perhaps even more “weird,” shopping there? A person in a three-piece suit rooting through garbage? A teacher dressed like a student, and vice versa? **These are the items that perk curiosity and make the viewer ask, “What is going on?” The anti-text defies Bourdieu’s notion of the “habitus,” and for that reason, a good filmmaker is always on the lookout for it.**