PROJECT BABEL

The Background

The New London Group, an international collaboration of literacy scholars, makes two arguments about what it means to be literate in the contemporary world:

1. "Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries" (6).
2. "Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal - in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning" (5).

This project invites you to exercise your literacy in a way that takes up language and other modes of meaning-making as "dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (5).

ELEMENTS OF MEANING DESIGN

1. **Linguistic meaning**: *e.g.,* text, narration
2. **Visual meaning**: *e.g.,* images, page layouts, screen formats
3. **Audio meaning**: *e.g.,* music, sound effects
4. **Gestural meaning**: *e.g.,* body language
5. **Spatial meaning**: *e.g.,* environmental spaces, architectural spaces
6. **Multimodal meaning**: *i.e.,* relationships between any and/or all the five above

The Task

Drawing on your individual linguistic repertoire and modes of communication including (but not limited to) those listed above, you will design and produce a multimodal composition that

1. falls somewhere in the mixed-genre territory of essay, research project, and creative work, and
2. directs your response to a particular line of inquiry (spurred by the larger inquiry of this class) to a public audience.

The product will be multimodal, meaning it must engage its audience with a coordination of multiple channels of communication (i.e., linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, etc.). It also must be made accessible to the public, published online or otherwise publicly displayed.

Where to Start

- What issue(s) from this class do you most want to pursue? What ideas or problems have you had a strong reaction to?
- What language varieties do you speak or want to develop/experiment with?
- What artistic/creative abilities to you have or want to develop/experiment with?
- What technical skills do you have or want to develop/experiment with?
- How might you bring these interests and abilities together in a way that would engage a public audience with the thinking/learning you are doing for this course?

Possible Forms

- Option 1: Video Essay
- Option 2: Hypertext Essay
- Option 3: Art (Annotated)
- Option 4: you choose

Collaboration

This is an individual project that will be workshopped and developed in close collaboration with a team of classmates.

Timeline

See course website for more detail:
- **30 Apr 07** - Project proposal due
- **07 May 07** - Initial draft / mock-up due
- **21 May 07** - Complete draft / working prototype due
- **30 May 07** - Revised draft / advanced prototype due as part of complete draft of final portfolio
- **06 Jun 07** - Final version due as part of final portfolio

Resources

See course website for an ever-expanding list of resources. Please let me know about any resources I should add.