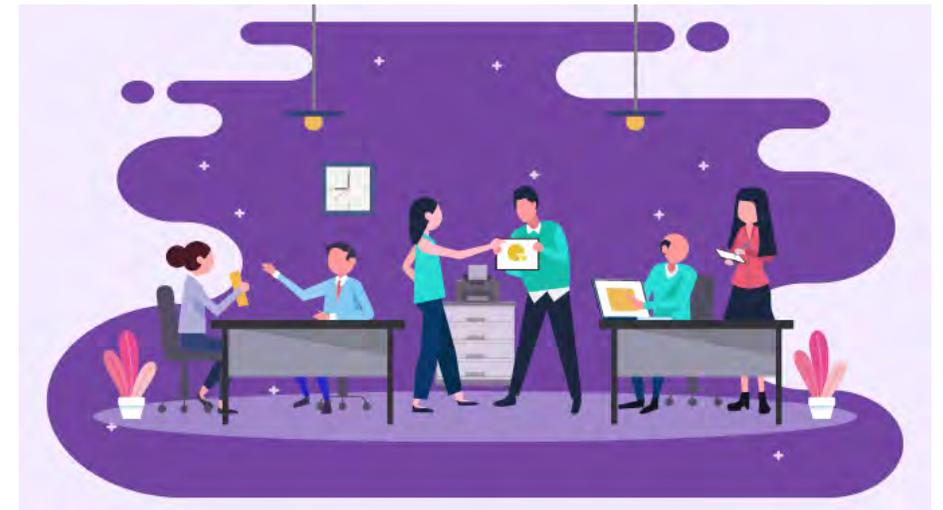




# Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

## Content Analysis: Communicative Functions and Critical Theory

Slides for lecture on Visual Personality and Ideology  
MA Course: Visual Communication and Digital Culture, 2020



*Henrik Juel, October 2020, see this again, and more on*  
[www.henrikjuel.dk](http://www.henrikjuel.dk)

# The Humanities and Communication Studies are all about:

- 1) Experience - *phenomenology*
- 2) Understand, Analyze - *hermeneutics, rhetoric, D.A., Jakobson*
- 3) Interpret, contextualize – *history, society, psychology, culture*
- 4) Evaluate, Criticize, Improve – *critical theory, ideology, dialectics*

Not just “factual” or “objective” measuring, counting, calculating, and describing as in Natural Science and as in Social Science.

But then, isn't it all just “subjective”?

No, it is about being truly “there” (or: “being truly here”)!

Where? – *in this world, in this life!*

Step 1  
(experience):

How do you  
“immediately”  
react to this  
photo?  
Compare with  
next two  
photos?



Step 2  
(analysis):

What do you  
see, what parts,  
how is it  
constructed,  
how is it  
shaped and  
styled?

Compare with  
the next two.

Step 3  
(Interpret,  
contextualize):

What is the  
cultural or  
psychological  
context and  
significance of  
images like this?  
Compare with  
the other two  
photos?



Step 4  
(Evaluate,  
criticize):

Consider  
gender roles,  
power/  
hegemony,  
capitalism in  
this?  
Compare with  
the other two  
photos?



PS: consider if this **must** be shown to school children in DK in order to defend “freedom of expression”?

And now a little philosophy:

# Phenomenology

**Edmund Husserl (1859-1938):** Seeks a safe base for science and philosophy

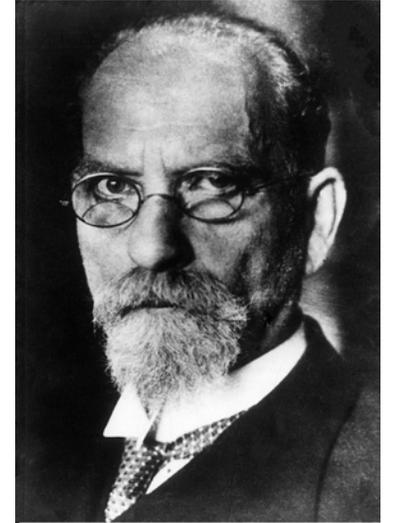
He wants to do away with the subject-object theory of knowledge that has dominated since Descartes and still prevails today in "positivism" and a natural science view of philosophy and academic (humanist) subjects.

÷ subject / object

- + Intentionality of consciousness (reaching out, not "purpose")
- + what appears
- + epoché (parenthesis around the phenomenon itself)

A small video about the experience of cereals:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/edmund-husserl-phenomenology.html>



# Heidegger:

tries to understand “the being” of humans  
(phenomenological existential-ontologist)

**Dasein:** being-there – (not abstract “consciousness”)

**Befindlichkeit, Stimmung:** embedded, situated,  
and mood-specific (not neutral registration)

**In-der-Welt-Sein:** In the middle of using things, engaged in projects, time-stretched.

**Zuhandenheit/Vorhandenheit:** tool-in-use, contextual understanding/ abstracted-from-use, a measurable “thing”

**Mitsein:** We are always already there with others, immediacy

(Husserl learns from his pupil, Heidegger, and continues with “Lebenswelt”)



**Gadamer:** Hermeneutics, interpretation,  
tradition

Whole – part

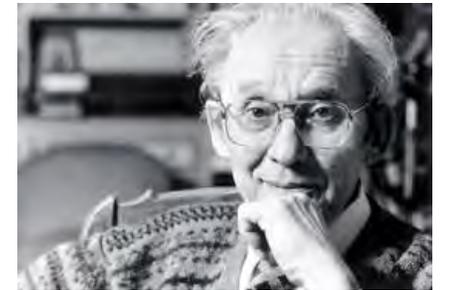
Pre-understanding, pre-conception

Horizon, Spiel (play-game), Erlebniss (“up-  
living”, not just experience)

**Ricoeur:** Hermeneutics, interpretation, meeting  
Event/Structure

**Merleau-Ponty:** corporal (body) phenomenology

We experience and think as corporal  
beings



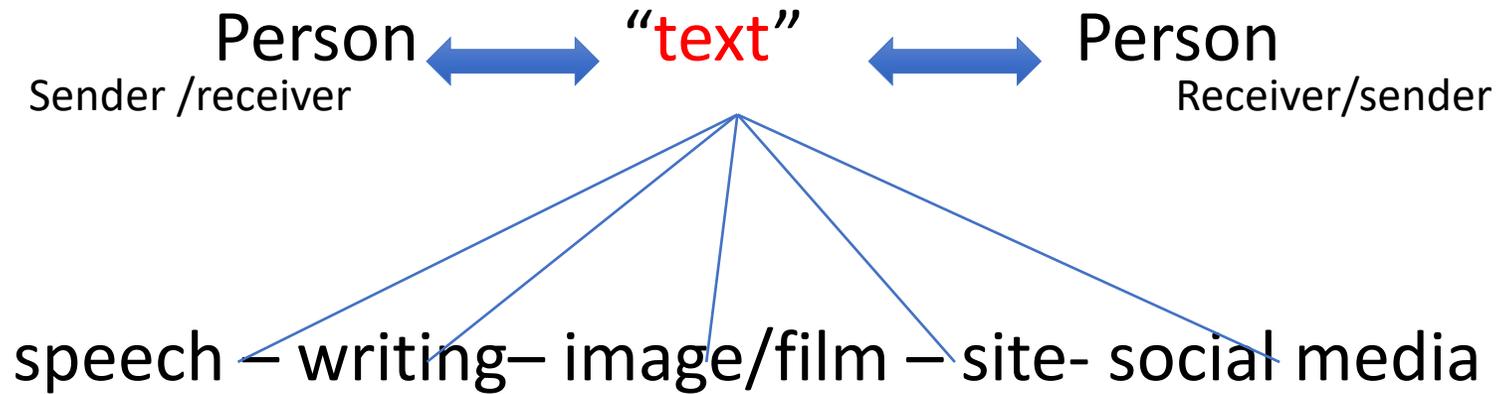
# What is Communication?

- a broad and vague question, perhaps, but it's important to consider the basic theoretical assumptions if we want to be "academics"! The next slides offer some broad definitions – and clarifications?

- What is "Content Analysis"?
- What is "Reception Studies"?

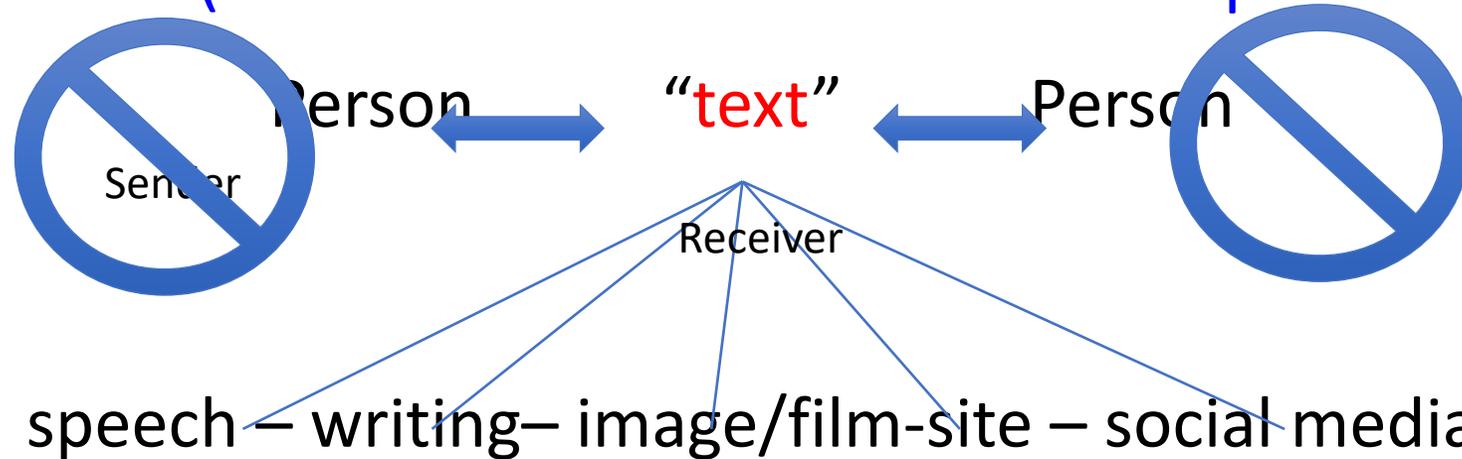
- These two lines of research and study are often confused. In the following you can find a quick "separation" of the two aspects.

Communication is an interaction between persons by means of media products (“texts”)



Content analysis (a phenomenological one) examines how a specific “text” (communication/media product) appears, what it consists of, its form, structure and parts, features of persuasion and mood, the composition, layers, narratives...

Content analysis is looking only at the “text” (the elements and form present)



Content analysis is not – and should not – in itself be concerned with the intentions of the actual sender or the reception by an actual audience.

We try to “isolate” the product and to hear and see – with an open mind - what it is “saying” in and by itself by means of features that we can point out and discuss (with colleagues)

(this is where we practice phenomenology and hermeneutics)

Does any of this really count when you **content analyze** the 'text' (form and content) of a film you saw on TV/YouTube yesterday?

- the TV overview labels the film a “documentary”
- an interview with the film director about her intentions
- film reviews in papers and magazines
- information about the location of the recordings
- information about payment of participants
- public political debate following the broadcast
- your friends immediate reaction to the film
- who paid for the film
- the reception in other countries
- the budget of the film
- who edited and produced the film

**NOPE!**

## Content analysis:

What is being shown!

Analysis of the form of the media product:

The specific design and features of the text (the media product) that scholars, and in principle everybody, can note are present and active

## Reception research:

What is being received!

Investigating the reaction of the audience:

A specific target groups actual reaction, understanding and use of a text (a media product)

Besides, one can also make a separate **Production analysis:**

How was the media product made? With what intentions, equipment, budget? Etc.

## Procedure (“method”) of a Content Analysis:

- 1) We delimit and isolate the “text” (the media product) we want to investigate, and note us our **immediate experience**, impressions, reactions, sentiments, wonderings...
- 2) The **analysis** proper: we **investigate what is actually present** in terms of elements, forms, structures, features, signs etc. in the product (here we can use concepts from rhetoric, etc., and also the 6 “communicative functions” from Roman Jakobson (see the following)).
- 3) We **interpret and “re-contextualize”**, put into perspective, compare perhaps with other text-external information (about original intentions of the sender, reactions by certain target groups, cultural norms, etc.)
- 4) We **evaluate, criticize, improve**.

A content analysis of the film on TV/YouTube yesterday would run like this:

- 1) How do we actually **experience** it, how does it affect us, how do we react and feel (serious, laughing, horror, wonder, boring? Etc.)
- 2) **Actual organization of parts**, structure, narrative, montage of sound/picture, use of music and technical effects etc.? (forms of appeal, com. functions?)
- 3) **Interpretation** and placing the film in its present and/or historical context, its social and cultural context.
- 4) Positive/Negative critique of the political-ideological values and perspectives, re-mediation, recirculation – response.

# Roman Jakobson (in 1958-60) about the 6 functions of language

An analytical tool

- *This can be read in a **phenomenological-hermenutical** way as a meeting with **the text in itself**, and as an analysis of what it contains and points at – what we can see and understand from the text itself*
- *can be extended to a meeting with **all kinds of media products** and an analysis of what a given media product (a specific instance of communication like a film, a website, a weather forecast, a dinner conversation) consists of and what it points at*
- *it is only about **what we can see and hear and note** in the media product itself – and that all other reasonable sensible persons would also be able to see and hear and receive as actually present there – in the product.*

Again again

Communication is much more than an exchange of true or false statements (descriptive propositions, information, facts)

Whenever we communicate we are in principle doing 6 things:

We show something about **ourselves** *emotive function* SYMPTOM

We are **talking about something** (topic, the world) *referential* SYMBOL

We are trying to **influence** whoever we adress *conative* SIGNAL

We are showing/establishing how we **relate to each other** *phatic* SOCIAL

We are **toying** with form, language, and design options *poetic* SENSUOUS

We are **meta-commenting** on the interaction itself *meta-communicative* SYSTEMIC

# The six communicative functions (examples from verbal language)

|                           |          |   |
|---------------------------|----------|---|
| <b>Referential</b>        | SYMBOL   | The temperature here is 25°                         |
| <b>Conative</b>           | SIGNAL   | Open the window!                                    |
| <b>Emotive</b>            | SYMPTOM  | Gosh, I am feeling hot.                             |
| <b>Phatic</b>             | SOCIAL   | Hello, all my friends!                              |
| <b>Poetic</b>             | SENSUAL  | In Spain the rain falls mainly on the plains        |
| <b>Meta-communicative</b> | SYSTEMIC | This sentence is an example of a meta-level comment |

The six communicative functions can be found also in "audio-visuals": pictures, film, tv, and web-sites

## Referential

The sound-image deals with a subject, and issue.

## Conative

The sound-image is trying to persuade you or making you do something

## Emotive

The sound-image is expressive, revealing something about (the mood) of the (implied) sender

## Phatic

The sound-image establish or maintain a specific relation (contact) between sender and receiver

## Poetic

The sound-image has aesthetic qualities, form and style are predominant features

## Meta-comm

The sound-image makes meta-comments or references to itself

# 6 communicative functions – ready at hand



Me: the thumb *emotive*

That: index finger *referential*

the long !@!! finger *conative*

Us: the ring finger *phatic*

Playing: little finger *poetic*

About it all: the whole hand

*meta-communicative*

## “Truth and Method”?

Nope, in the humanities we experience and interpret  
- and that is the way to gain new insights!

- Sense what is predominant, stands out
  - In principle look for all functions when analyzing
  - Interpretation, but this is also a professional investigation that can be repeated, discussed and shared with others
- Don't talk nonsense about “objectivity” and “subjectivity”!

# Procedure:

(and structure in a report or in a portfolio chapter)

- 0). Wondering, **motivation/problem definition/delimitation** – what happens in this text/film/exposition/site?
1. Immediate impressions (**phenomenological experience**)
2. Analysis of the different elements and features (**media competent analysis**)(horizontal/vertical montage, look for rhetorical features, (visual)discourses, signs, symbols, shapes and appeals, go through the 6 functions, the 5 senses, etc.
3. Interpretation of it all (**history, culture, society**) Context and perspectives– does it meet the intentions, how was it received? (**professional evaluation and critique, perhaps preparing for a new reception analysis**)
4. **Critique of ideology, response, suggestions.**

# More on R. Jakobson:

- Roman Jakobson: “Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics” in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Seabeok, M.I.T. Press, 1960 (Conference 1958, Indiana University).
- See also some essays on <http://www.henrikjuel.dk/>

Examples to analyze follows (try to use the concepts from Jakobson here) ....



|   |
|---|
| Jacques-Louis David   |
| 1801  |
| Oil on canvas   |
| 261 cm × 221 cm<br>(102 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub> in × 87 in) |





# Repetition of main points about "Communication":

Communication is an interaction (between persons)

(not just a 'transmission' of data re-presenting the world)

This interaction takes place by means of gestures, speech, drawings, writing, photo, video, sites, even architecture, etc.  
– academically often referred to as "texts".

Media phenomena are too often seen (in theory) as mainly **re-presentations** of something (e.g. photos of some original events)

and not as part of a communication process (**interactions**) where someone is presenting something to someone in order to influence, to do, or express something

Communication is interaction between people

Interaction is vital, it is how we live, feel and breathe with each other, and how we develop:

Interaction is about power and affection  
*–not just sending info*

Let's take it one (philosophical) step further:

Neither language nor pictures are just copies of reality – but this is the naïve attitude, and the theoretical 'positivism' that still haunts us!

Now, what if, indeed, communication practices - language and pictures - are constructing "reality" - and us?

So, now we plunge into: *DIALECTICS?*

More philosophy, dialectics

**Hegel:** history takes us all! Dynamic concepts, ideas evolve.

Illustrations: Little boy throwing a stone in the lake, The black cat in the dark room.....

**Marx:** Production mode shapes history and our minds.

- Class struggle and ideology.
- Division of labor, production for market: Fetishism.
- Don't just describe the world, change it!

**Critical Theory /Frankfurter School:** Distrusting power and media,  
No success for Civilization or Reason.

# The critique of ideology is a concept in Critical Theory

Ideals of modern liberal society:

Freedom – Liberty – Brotherhood, etc. are promises not fulfilled, but turned into the opposite!

“Individual personality: white teeth and no arm sweat!”

A figure of critique often used, e.g. by Martin Luther King: “All we say to America is: Be true to what you said on paper!” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oehry1JC9Rk>

Die Funktion der Ideologie ist nach [Adorno](#) Rechtfertigung.<sup>[16]</sup> Da sie bestehendes Unrecht mit Idealen und Theoremen der Gerechtigkeit zu rechtfertigen sucht (worin Adorno „ihre Wahrheit“ sieht), bestehe die Aufgabe der Ideologiekritik in der „Konfrontation der Ideologie mit ihrer eigenen Wahrheit“.<sup>[17]</sup> Das heißt, dass Ideologiekritik durch [immanente Kritik](#) den erhobenen Anspruch von Gerechtigkeit beim Wort nimmt und die von der Ideologie verdeckte Ungerechtigkeit entlarvt. Im Falle des Äquivalententausches bedeutet das, aufzuzeigen, dass nur scheinbar Vergleichbares getauscht wird. Viele Arbeiten der Vertreter der Frankfurter Schule basieren auf dem Kritikmodell der Ideologiekritik. Das bringen bereits die Titel einiger ihrer Schriften zum Ausdruck, z. B. [Jargon der Eigentlichkeit. Zur deutschen Ideologie](#) (Theodor W. Adorno), [Der eindimensionale Mensch. Studien zur Ideologie der fortgeschrittenen Industriegesellschaft](#) ([Herbert Marcuse](#)), *Technik und Wissenschaft als ‚Ideologie‘* ([Jürgen Habermas](#)).



BMW is a manly vehicle and the [brand](#) has made it clear from the start.

- Facebook etc– we give away “info” about us: values, norms, emotions, interests, fascinations.
- It is then sold – not to us - but to someone with money and power
- Info is: more money and power
  
- What we receive back: Rhetoric and ideology persuading us to buy commodities and politicians (same thing) and continue “the system” of growth, capitalism and suppression
- And “diversions” in the form of “religious” or “racial” or “nationalist” conflicts appearing as essential.
- Is “sexism” a diversion too from the basic problems in our civilization? Is Climate Change? Is Covid-19?

## **Critical analysis of (visual) media:**

look at the production as rhetorical  
(and structurally based) power and  
persuasion manifestations,

and look at the reception as (norm  
based) emotional and social media  
use, consumption and dynamics

# (Visual) Rhetorical Aspects of Film

- 3 'layers'

1. What is in front of the camera?

- What the man (!) looks like, how he is dressed and what he does
- Followers, surroundings, buildings, symbols

2. What camera work is going on?

- Viewpoint, framing, movement, light, etc.

3. The work of montage

(horizontal and vertical)

- Selections and omissions, construction of story (e.g. 'arrival', 'addressing') and mood (e.g. 'sorrow', 'determination')



Again, this old example: Visual Communication – at first sight persuasive, perhaps, but can you analyze it, and find solid (academically well established) reasons to doubt it?



Hans Blix, March 7, 2003

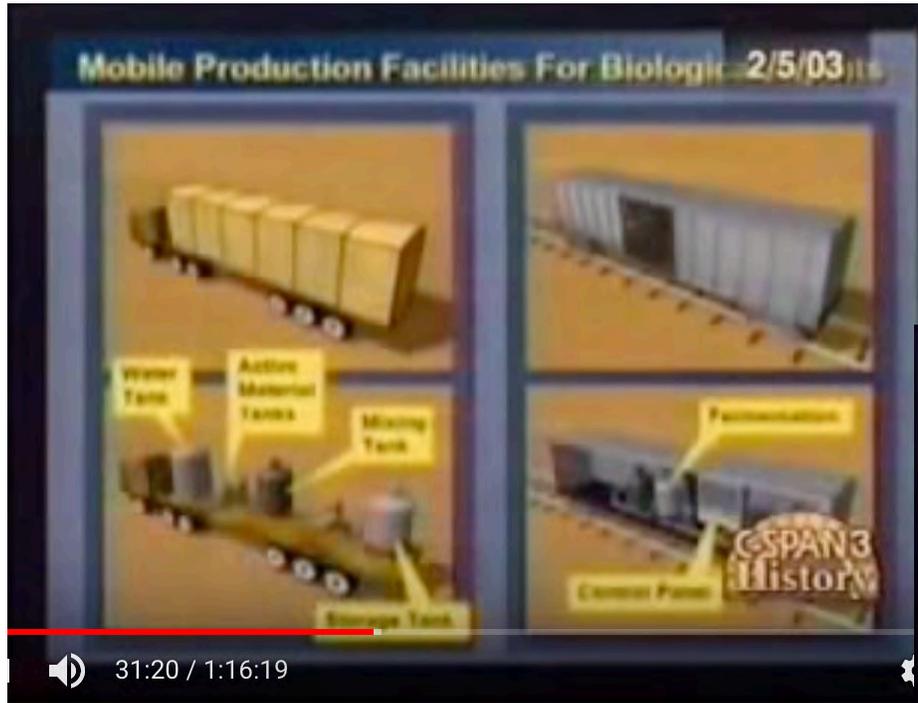
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IImVN1dmGuY>



Colin Powell, Feb. 5, 2003

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt5RZ6ukbNc>

Same place and issue: Weapons of Mass Destruction?  
Who is the most trustworthy and persuasive?  
Consider the camera work: angle, frame, background?



Colin Powell offered this as  
Visual proofs – really?

# ***Where there is Power there is Rhetoric and ideology!***

- *Power manifests itself visually, visual artefacts (images, video, buildings, clothes, class rooms) are also rhetorical.*

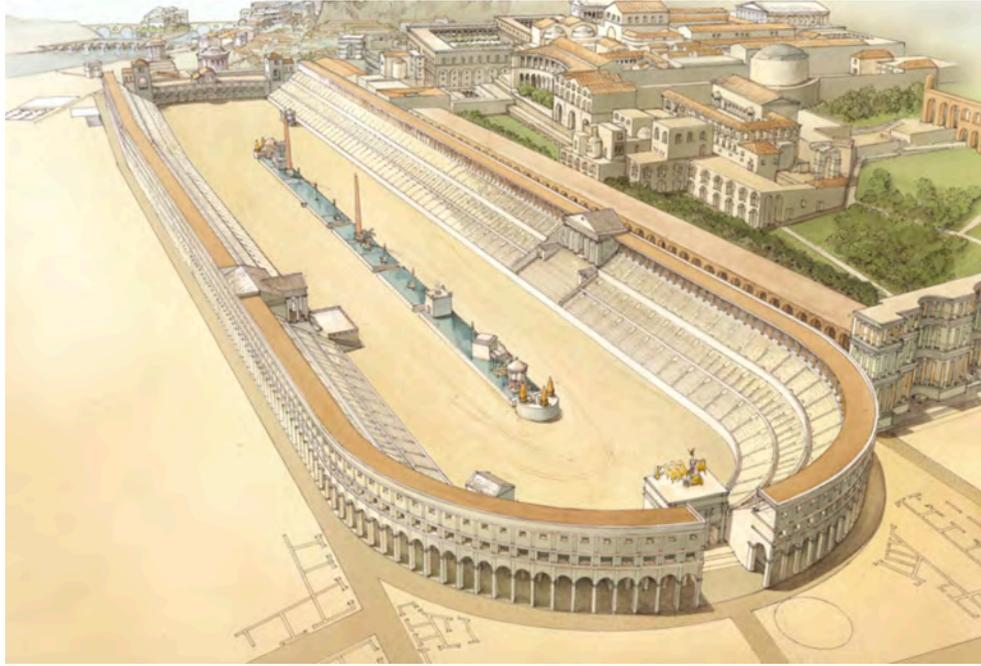


Sport is nice – and also a lot more than that:  
See next slides

- The first Olympics is traditionally dated to 776 BC
- The games became a political tool used by city-states to assert dominance over their rivals.
- The games were also used to help spread Hellenistic culture throughout the Mediterranean.
- Sculptors and poets would congregate each olympiad to display their works of art to would-be patrons.
- The ancient Olympics had fewer events than the modern games, and only freeborn Greek men were allowed to participate, [\[9\]](#) although there were victorious women chariot owners



[The palaestra of Olympia](#), a place devoted to the training of wrestlers and other athletes



Circus Maximus, Rome.

First early 500-B.C, new in 103 A.D – continued till around 500 A.D.

621 m long

Horse race, 12 teams (with cart, driver, 4 horses), 6,4 km.

Gaius Appuleius Diocles, won 1462 of his 4257 races, retires at age 42, had won 35.863 sesterces

His earnings could provide a year's supply of grain to the entire city of Rome, or pay the Roman army at its height for a fifth of a year. Classics professor [Peter Struck](#) describes him as "the best paid athlete of all time".<sup>[1]</sup> In equivalent basic good purchasing power, Diocles' wealth would be between approximately \$60 million and \$160 million.<sup>[7]</sup> In a single day, he earned more than the annual pay of a [procurator](#).<sup>[8]</sup>



**A Visual Social Medium:** Colosseum, Rome, Constructed 72-80 A.D – continued as “public theater” till about 404 A.D.

**In terms of rhetoric:** this building had an *epideictic (ceremonial)* function, it served to “praise or blame”, to reaffirm values, and confirm national/tribal community and identity.

**At display:** Historic drama, Roman battles, even naval battles re-enacted.

Exotic animals and slaves from all over the world. Horror-shows and executions. Sport and gladiator-fights.

**Inherent display (as an artifact):** Stratification of society, 3 classes; Visual representation of the wealthy and powerful in their special seats.

**Compare** to a modern arena: Colosseum was built in a few years, held some 65.000 people, quick to evacuate.

- Olympics, Jesse Owens, Berlin 1936, with reactions, 15min.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1inifMJ0xio>



- Olympics, Jesse Owens, Berlin 1936, friendship with Luz Long, 2:45 min.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quQopJmQry4>





Women's rights campaigner Kathrine Switzer was attacked by an official who tried to remove her from the Boston Marathon in 1967 CREDIT: BOSTON GLOBE

## 1968: Black athletes make silent protest

Two black American athletes have made history at the Mexico Olympics by staging a silent protest against racial discrimination.

Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gold and bronze medallists in the 200m, stood with their heads bowed and a black-gloved hand raised as the American National Anthem played during the victory ceremony.



Tommie Smith, centre, and John Carlos, right, make their protest



Danish player N. Bendtner seems to have earned 2 Mill D kr (= 266.000€) displaying his underwear during a match (2012)

# Suggestion 1) for an exercise/portfolio chapter

Celebrity endorsement:

Select two different, famous sport athletes and analyze how they are presented in a commercial/advertisement/campaign.

You can use concepts from Roman Jakobson, Rhetoric, Critical Theory, or even Henrik Juel – and literature from the course as well as other sources.

You may also sketch out how further research - a reception study - involving testing on a specific target group/social media entries, could prove one of the two commercials more successful (appropriate, liked) than the other.

# Suggestion 2) for an exercise/portfolio chapter

## The Personality of Influencers:

Select two different influencers on (the same) social media, and analyze their different appearance, trustworthiness, likeability – and “personality”.

Here it could be relevant to use the course literature article by Bernie Hogan and the concepts of “front stage” and “back stage” (Goffmann) and “performance - presence” and “exposition - representation”. But other concepts and theories can be applied too.

You can also suggest how further research should be done when it comes to understanding the “influence” and “personality” of “influencers” in our digital culture.

# Thank you!

See more material on my web-page:

<http://www.henrikjuel.dk/>

Such as:

*Critical Analysis of Visual Communication*

*The Ethos and the Framing*

*– a Study in the Rhetoric of the TV camera*

*Communicative Functions*

*The Rhetorical Power of the Camera*

*How to understand Film, TV, and Video*

*Defining Documentary Film*

*Social Media and the Dialectics of Enlightenment*

[https://prezi.com/gek48dgqf04\\_/the-dialectics-of-enlightenment-and-critical-theory/](https://prezi.com/gek48dgqf04_/the-dialectics-of-enlightenment-and-critical-theory/)

