

# STEVEN JOHN THOMPSON

---

## RESEARCH FIELDS

chaos & fractals • cognition • cybernetics • emergence • iconics • informatics • new AI • new media arts • presence • rhetorics • science, technology & society • semiotics • spiritual violence • terror • virtual warfare • word & image

I study media iconics as rhetorical existential phenomena rooted in cybernetics/cyberspace. The psychosocial global impacts of iconics are at the forefront of research in what I call iconicology.

## TEACHING STATEMENT

### *Philosophy*

My passion is theory and application of new media as it deconstructs semiotically to word, image, and motive, and I have taught both media theory and practice in the classroom. My research is indicative of inquiry into engineering components and psychosocial impacts on minds and societies from integration of art, media, science, and technology exchanged across digital media channels.

I have taught with a collaborative discussion-based pedagogy, leveraging the emerging technologies accessible for teaching and learning with the coaching, development, and empowerment of others, but prefer a Socratic classroom environment. I believe in encouraging individual participation and personal contribution to the community of scholars while providing effective, clear, and concise direction to both traditional and non-traditional learners as each course and classroom might afford.

### *Commitment to Students*

My students are stretched to excel in professional presentation. I have been teaching students to publicly speak with the requirement of a presentation aide for more than a decade, and require one for every major speech. While I stress the importance of learning to work with the appropriate technologies, I am not averse to – but actually encourage – low-tech, demonstrative presentations as part of their speeches, as well. I enjoy opportunities that allow students room for calculating risk and failure; e.g., when the technology fails them – or at some point in the semester, me. I try to ensure in students a healthy propensity for understanding the consequence and appropriateness of risk and failure. I want my students to learn and understand that it is the process which builds the successful dynamics for a media event, and a speech is not simply a stuttering rush to get to a breathless result.

I believe in supporting students after our course has ended. I write my share of letters of reference for students who have excelled in class and desire feedback for progression forward in their careers.

### *Commitment to Diversity*

My students taking 100-level communication studies courses at Clemson University are encouraged to grow in two primary areas: critical thinking and stereotyping, both tenets culled from their texts. Having taught for the past four years in a part of the country struggling with homophobia and still

racially charged from the civil rights era, I have gauged the tensions and relations associated with such cultural phenomena, and assuaged them whenever possible. I have seen recent evidence, even in just the four years since I began teaching here, that the upcoming generation is more graciously addressing the cultural issues pressed upon them than has been evidenced in prior generations.

My students at the 200-level are brought under similar constraints; however, they are given more freedom to choose their own speech topics, since I usually assign 100-level students a choice of topics that I have predetermined, despite the fact that seniors are often in my class. Their brainstorming abilities are frequently pushing the envelope through our class discussions on contemporary media issues of the day. They are also encouraged to participate in our campus speech competitions, events that I have helped judge for the past three years.

I have taught in major cosmopolitan areas such as Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego, and that has assured provision of an extremely diverse group of students in every class. Whether corporate executives who wish to hone their skills, or convenience store clerks working evenings on multimedia projects, or Hispanic students biking miles across the city just to prove they can earn a well-deserved degree in graphic arts, such has been the typical diversity of my students.

### *Technology*

My students are encouraged, when appropriate, to become efficient with multiple operating systems, as well as any specialized software they need to use for their professions. I have been privileged to maintain a portfolio of student work, mostly from several courses where I taught graphic design and the use of software from the Adobe CS Suite. I have taught students how to build Web pages with simple text editors, though we have also used more sophisticated software such as Flash and Dreamweaver. I was Brainbench-certified in the past in both of those software applications as well as Fireworks and Windows NT. I am fully versed in the Adobe CS and Microsoft Office Suites. Please note from my C.V. that I have taught the use of several of these software applications. I have also used Maya animation software, Director, and Cold Fusion. I own both a PC and a MAC.

The client list near the end of my C.V. contains samples of creative projects I have technologically created from conception through to implementation. Nine out of 10 client projects for me were professional redesigns of existing web sites that needed to be clean, cohesive, and competitive. My set of highly literate computer skills helps me transition from one software application to another as a virtually seamless process. I continue to stay abreast of changes in emerging technologies.

### *Character*

I am a very adaptable individual who rewards original thought and risk, yet also appreciates wit and humor when it fits into the learning environment. Despite an emphasis on critical thinking, the class mood I most often create is that of a sanctuary, not a battleground. My students are also encouraged to give more speeches that are value-oriented: a rewarding, yet often neglected area of persuasion. For a recent example, one student stumped for a persuasive speech topic ran with my suggestion that he do his speech on the subject of lying. He began with acknowledgment of how shocked he was to have caught himself telling a string of various types of falsehoods for no valid reasons in a typical, casual 20-minute conversation. Aside from his compelling reasons given why one should consider integrity of speech in seemingly unimportant everyday scenarios, this student was especially grateful to have been made aware of his unknown practice.