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Goatly, A., & Hiradhar, P. (2016). *Critical Reading and Writing in the Digital Age: An Introductory Coursebook* (2nd ed.). Routledge. 334 pages; ISBN: 0415842611; £30.99 (pbk), £110.00 (hbk), £15.50 (e-book).

Critical thinking is one of the buzzwords of contemporary (Higher) Education: internationally recognized as a transferable employability skill, it is usually also the target of formulaic complaints about its alleged absence among today's 'Millennial' and 'Generation Z' students and young adults. Definitions of what critical thinking actually entails are plentiful and highly discussed, albeit often too abstract to be useful to instructors and students looking for best practices to foster this multifaceted skill. This book has the merit of exploring in detail the core reading-writing relationship for critical thinking as a teaching and learning strategy. Traditionally, reading and writing have been conceived as discrete skills (the first receptive and the latter productive), to be developed separately with dedicated practices. Departing from a conceptualisation of reading and writing as separate *products*, the book explores these skills as meaning-making *processes*, which are conceptualized and practised as fully interrelated as well as both equally functional to the exercise of critical thinking.

Compared to the first edition, the book has benefitted from a content reorganization into three main parts (namely A, B and C) which make it more intuitive and user-friendly. Suggested pathways for navigating this tripartite structure and a companion website featuring projects, quizzes and activities contribute to ease and enrich the reader's experience. Part A introduces Critical Linguistics, with a focus on Genre and (Multimodal) Systemic Functional Linguistics. Part B encompasses a number of key tenets from Pragmatics (e.g. Speech Acts, Presuppositions and Inferences) and (Critical) Discourse Analysis (such as Intertextuality). Part C is largely case-study-based, with a focus on the investigation of power behind discourse across different written genres. Catering to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, this volume can be fruitfully adopted as a textbook across different English-medium disciplines (English Language and Linguistics, but also Media and Communication, Education and Cultural Studies, to name a few).

Acknowledging their debt to critical theory and its profound impact on systemic-functional and discursive approaches, the authors conceptualize the ‘critical’ in reading and writing as the recognition of the deep embeddedness of both literacy practices in the context of society. In particular, they acknowledge the urgent need for a citizenry engaged in the practices of critical literacy to navigate the contemporary multilinearity, multimodality and multivocality of (digital) sources. Throughout the book, the drive for critique is grounded in a profound awareness of the non-neutral role of language in the “production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power” (Fairclough, 1989: 1), explored in and behind texts from a vast array of genres we encounter in our everyday life. This critical outlook on power and authority in discourse seems to be even more vital at the time of publishing of the second edition, which situates the book in the post-2008 financial crisis world and aims to account for its global economic, social and environmental repercussions. The case-study section of the book (Part C) is aptly dedicated to critical discursive approaches, with a focus on crisis in three different sectors: economy (the crisis of inequality); politics (the crisis of democracy); and the environment (the crisis of scientific authority). A well-designed exploration across genres, encompassing the language of advertising and news as well as poetry, further enriches these reflections on discourse and ideology in contemporary times of crisis.

The title features the addition of ‘in a Digital Age’ to the original ‘Critical Reading and Writing’ of the first edition published in 2000, marking the advent of the Web 2.0 as one of the most pervasive and impactful socio-technological changes of our times. Also known as the ‘Social’ or ‘Participatory’ Web, the Web 2.0 encompasses a vast array of information and technological tools (social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, but also blogs, wikis, podcasts, to name a few) which allow social interaction at an unprecedented volume and velocity. Introducing this new focus on the digital, the authors recognise the crucial need to take into account the participatory web as the new essential feature of our life-experience, which has proven to be the amplifier and catalyst of an unparalleled number of social phenomena (McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase, 2017). Shying away from utopian celebrations of digital liberty, democracy and equality, we must approach Web 2.0 critically in order to fully grasp and problematize the often-unacknowledged digital power structures and their hierarchical dynamics of exclusion, dominance and silencing (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). Most importantly, this book foregrounds critical reading and writing as authentic ‘survival skills’ in the so-called ‘Post-Truth Era’, where the ever-growing user-generated, ‘ordinary’ digital media performance has contributed to reconfiguring and reshaping the very concepts of accuracy, reliability and (mis-)information.

The book incorporates variety as one of the core features of Web 2.0, a semiotic technology (Poulsen et al., 2018) characterized by a vast array of new and emerging modalities of meaningful interactions and indigenous communicative resources. Adopting a broad definition of text to include “any instance of communication in any combination of modes” (Kress, 2003: 48), Part A systematically integrates Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) Social Semiotics as a natural expansion of the traditional Hallidayan Systemic-Functional approach (SFL), in order to account for the innate multimodality of contemporary (digital) communication. In the same vein, the core concept of intertextuality (and the related intertextual chains) is expanded to account

for this phenomenon in a digital context, one of the most famous examples being Wikipedia. New digital affordances (and related social phenomena) are also touched upon to introduce core tenets such as transitivity and SFL process types, cleverly presented in an article on the award-winning mobile game *Candy Crush Saga*.

At the same time, 'the digital era' is somewhat backgrounded in many sections of the book, which maintains the initial focus on traditional media that characterized the first edition. This is particularly true for the section of the book dedicated to critical discursive approaches (section C), which now explores the relationship between discourse and power in some new case studies, while some have been kept from the first edition. Although the late 1990s advertising case-studies in Chapter 7 are still interesting, they could have been updated to be more representative of contemporary advertising trends. Overall, the authors manage to introduce an impressive number of key concepts, theories and examples with the appropriate degree of depth and rigour, while keeping a strong, cohesive focus on the critical aims of the book.

A side-reflection stemming from the encounter with this sound handbook for students and instructors alike is that it makes explicit the *de facto* continuum between Systemic Functional, Discursive and Critical approaches, which is particularly relevant for the field of Linguistics and its practitioners, albeit rarely acknowledged. From metaphors to transitivity, from pronoun use to intertextuality, this book highlights the many and profound commonalities between these approaches, too often separated under different flags by petty divisions among scholars and schools. It is by navigating this actual continuum, marking the bridge between the linguistic/textual and the social, the *micro* and the *macro*, that the field of Linguistics can make its most significant and impactful contribution to the interpretation of the complex configurations of our contemporary life-worlds.

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