



UNDERSTANDING MEDIA LITERACY
AN ONLINE COURSE FOR TEACHERS



CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY

Press Kit

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- 500 word article about the course available for publication
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Contacts

Athabasca University

Website

[Understanding Media Literacy:
Inside Plato's Cave](http://salsa.athabascau.ca/cmns/mediaLiteracy-overview.php)

<http://salsa.athabascau.ca/cmns/mediaLiteracy-overview.php>

Communications Studies Program

Dr. Evelyn Ellerman, Director

780 485-5831

1-866 242-8769 (toll free)

evelyne@athabascau.ca

Media Relations

John O'Brien, Manager

403-298-2931 (office)

403-990-1131 (cell)

jobrien@athabascau.ca

Project Team

Lead Writers

John J. Pungente, SJ

Jesuit Communication Project

416-920-3286

pungente@sympatico.ca

Carolyn Wilson

Association for Media Literacy / OISE

416-460-1571

carolyn_wilson@hpcdsb.edu.on.ca

Producers

Gary Marcuse, Betsy Carson

Face to Face Media

604 251 0770

marcuse@smartt.com, carson@smartt.com

www.facetofacemedia.ca

Canada's Leading Media Educators
Team Up with Athabasca University to Create

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave

An online course, available July 2010

"The potential for this project has me awake at night and dreaming of the possibilities."
— Connie Morrison, teacher, St. John's

A breakthrough course fills a gap in media education

Finally, an online credit course for teachers, teachers in training, and students interested in communications studies and media education. *Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave* is a breakthrough online three credit course written, tested and endorsed by teachers and delivered in partnership with Athabasca University.

Media literacy is a mandated part of the curriculum across Canada, yet there is very little training available at any level. In the past teachers looking for professional development found little or no support. Many avoided teaching media studies because of their lack of education. This new online course will meet that need.

John Pungente and Gary Marcuse, the originators of the award winning *Scanning Television* classroom resource, gathered Canada's best media educators together to write this powerful new course.

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave consists of 13 online units designed to aid grades 7 – 12 teachers in helping their students to develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature, impact and techniques of the mass media. The units are highly-interactive and will assist teachers in developing skills to adapt these lessons to their students' needs and their teaching situations.

Field tested by teachers

The course was tested by teachers in communities across Canada. Here are some of their comments:

When I think about this project and the potential it has to change the way our students can be taught I feel as though a giant weight is lifted. This is just what our students need—teachers who have a grasp on the complex media machine and an understanding of how to teach about it... The potential for this project has me awake at night and dreaming of the possibilities.

Connie Morrison – St. John's

I don't have any formal media studies training, so it has been really informational and full of engaging activities. I really liked the set up of the lessons with the overview, lesson summary, and lesson breakdowns. I felt like I could use a similar outline for teaching a semestered Media Course, and use various concepts for teaching media components in English courses.

Kylie Lozon – London

Download the [Press Kit](#) for more reviews of *Inside Plato's Cave*.

What's in a title?

The title *Inside Plato's Cave* is based on a parable in Plato's *Republic*. Plato describes the situation of prisoners trapped in a cave who only see flickering shadows of the outside world cast on the wall. Unable to escape, these phantom images are the only reality they know. Only knowledge, Plato suggests, can enlarge our perceptions and liberate us from these illusions. The creators of *Inside Plato's Cave* selected the title to represent the need for universal media literacy in the Information Age.

Created by Canadian Media Educators, delivered by Athabasca University

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave was written and field tested by members of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO) working with Face to Face Media and the Jesuit Communication Project. The course is delivered in partnership with Athabasca University. The project, developed over the past six years, was produced with assistance from Citytv, CHUM Ltd., and the Virtual Teacher Centre.

More information, registration, press kit available

For a sample unit, a list of the writers, how to register, and more visit the website for the [Communications Studies Program at Athabasca University](#). Download a [Press Kit](#) including a 500 or 1000 word overview of the course for educational publication.

Contacts

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[Understanding Media Literacy:](#)

[Inside Plato's Cave](#)

<http://salsa.athabascau.ca/cmns/mediaLiteracy.php>

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pungente@sympatico.ca

Carolyn Wilson

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416-460-1571

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604 251 0770

marcuse@smarrt.com, carson@smarrt.com

www.facetofacemedia.ca

Inside Plato's Cave

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA LITERACY
AN ONLINE COURSE FOR TEACHERS

Athabasca University course description

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave

EDUC 115 / CMNS 315 – 3 credits

Online Paced and Individual Study

Designed for teachers, parents, and students of communication, this course in media education recognizes that, although mass media has come to dominate many aspects of our society, children have few opportunities to develop media literacy skills in formal settings. A basic assumption of the course is that media literacy helps children to an informed understanding of the nature of the mass media, its techniques, and effects. More specifically, media literacy increases their understanding and enjoyment of how the media works: how it is organized, how it produces meaning, and how it constructs reality. The course aims to provide the means by which teachers and others can foster media literacy in children so that they can critically analyze and evaluate the form and content of media, create media, communicate using media, and understand its use and purpose.

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave

Short article for educational publications, word count: 1100

Cleared for publication: immediately

For additional information:

Athabasca University
Nancy Biamonte, Manager,
Communications and Creative Services
T: 780 421 5049

Face to Face Media
Gary Marcuse or Betsy Carson, Producers
T: 604 251 0770
Carson@smartt.com

Inside Plato's Cave

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA LITERACY
AN ONLINE COURSE FOR TEACHERS



Interested in Media Education?
Want to teach media literacy?

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave is a new online course from Athabasca University, starting July 2010.

Inside Plato's Cave is a good place for eager teachers

"Those who do not understand how the media work, how they construct meanings, how they may be used, and how the evidence they present can be weighed and evaluated are, in contemporary cultures, considerably disadvantaged and disempowered."

Len Masterman, Media Educator and Author

The good news

Canadian educators have great reason to be proud of the fact that media education is mandated in every provincial curriculum. This means that teachers have nation-wide support in helping their students learn the accessing, assessing, evaluation and production skills that will be a part of their everyday adult lives.

The bad news

While ministries of education have made an effort to include Media Literacy in their curriculum documents, the nation's faculties of education have not kept up. Teachers seeking media education professional development find little or no support, and have often avoided teaching media studies because of their lack of education.

Media educators fill the gap

John Pungente and Gary Marcuse, the originators of the award winning *Scanning Television* classroom resource, gathered Canada's best media educators and combined their years of teaching experience with distance education experts at Athabasca University to produce a powerful resource.

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave is made up of 13 online units that will make grades 7 – 12 teachers proficient in helping their students understand and appreciate a variety of media forms, genres and technologies. The units are highly-interactive and will help teachers develop skills to adapt lessons to their students' needs and their teaching situations.

The title is taken from the description of a cave in Plato's *Republic*. Plato described prisoners who only knew of the world from shadows cast on a cave wall. Plato used the cave-wall shadows as a metaphor for the limits of human perception. The *Inside Plato's Cave* designers selected the title to represent the need for universal media literacy in the Information Age.

As teachers work their way through the nine units, they will learn media theory, then immediately apply that theory to appropriate media texts, most of them Canadian. This will help them consolidate their new understanding. They will then apply the theory by developing lessons for their own students and teaching situations. Online mentors will be available to provide guidance and feedback.

The 13 Units

The 13 units cover the range of media forms and genres, from the more established to the more recent. They include:

Introduction to Media Education explores the roles that media play in our daily lives and what constitutes media education. It also introduces key concepts that provide a useful framework for teaching media.

Media Literacy and the Curriculum examines curriculum documents and engages the learner in developing a curriculum unit and cross-curricular activities that meet student provincial expectations. Teachers also develop assessment tools and evaluation strategies.

Canadian Popular Culture examines the many perspectives needed to explore the elusive “Canadian identity.” It also explores how Canadian comedy and satire can reveal issues of identity and national concerns.

The Art of Persuasion - Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations begins with information about advertising and marketing to teens along with its close relationship with pop culture trends, the rise of celebrities and our lifestyle choices. The second part examines the ways in which advertising has evolved into sponsorship, personal testimonials and celebrity spokespeople. The unit also explores the ways in which marketing strategies shape public relations and sponsorship arrangements and examines their effect on various aspects of public life.

Media and Values examines contentious issues. On the one hand media creators have been accused of promoting a value system predicated on materialism, narcissism and the acceptance of superficial lifestyles. On the other hand, media producers are sometimes accused of subverting political and ideological change. This unit helps teachers support their students as they explore these issues.

Media Languages is an examination of how visual, sound and structural languages combine to create meaning. The better we understand media languages, the more we can understand and appreciate media messages.

The News examines the processes newsmakers use when choosing the news of the day. Who are the people making the choices? What factors influence their decisions? What might people do with the news they receive?

New(er) Technologies examines recent developments in communications technologies. It addresses questions such as, ‘How are new technologies changing the ways people learn, know and think?’ It also suggests ways teachers might use new technologies to support student learning.

Ideology and Representation explores how cultural groups are represented, how their representations reveal ideologies and how these representations reveal sites of struggle. Teachers will learn how to help students analyze representations to reveal ideological positions.

Audience explores the notion of audience in a broad sense; that is, not to focus on the decoding of a text, but rather on how audiences make sense of texts, and, to provide ideas of how to teach the notion of audience to students so that they are not only conscious of their own readings of media texts but also to broaden their understanding of how media texts are understood by audiences and, in the case of marketers, by target groups.

Movies helps students understand society's longstanding love affair with story, ritual, entertainment, and our unending urge to understand the human condition.

Prime Time Television examines the daily entertainment that remains on top of most people's lists, from sports to reality-based TV. It helps teachers support their students' understanding of how television connects to their social, political and personal lives.

Popular Music provides an historical and pedagogical context for the study of music as a medium of communication. It also attempts to better understand and appreciate the types of music students are listening to today. Teachers will explore music's technological, economic, political and social factors.

One Canadian teacher who previewed *Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave* wrote: "When I think about this project and the potential it has to change the way our students can be taught I feel as though a giant weight is lifted. This is just what our students need—teachers who have a grasp on the complex media machine and an understanding of how to teach about it."

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave is available from Athabasca University as a 3-credit online course offered in two separate disciplines: Educational Studies and [Communication Studies](#). The courses are designated as EDUC 115 and CMNS 315, respectively. The course is suitable for undergraduate and graduate studies and for additional teacher qualifications in the area of media education. For more information please visit <http://salsa.athabascau.ca/cmns/mediaLiteracy.php>.

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave
Short article Word count: 570
Cleared for publication: immediately

For additional information:

Athabasca University:
Nancy Biamonte, Manager,
Communications and Creative Services
T: 780 421 5049

Face to Face Media
Gary Marcuse or Betsy Carson, Producers
T: 604 251 0770
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Inside Plato's Cave

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA LITERACY



**Interested in Media Education?
Want to teach media literacy?**

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***Inside Plato's Cave* is a good place for eager teachers**

The good news

Canadian educators can be proud that media literacy is mandated in every province. Teachers have nation-wide support in helping their students learn the accessing, assessing, evaluation and production skills that will be a part of their everyday adult lives.

The bad news

But faculties of education have not kept up. Teachers seeking media education professional development find little support, and as a result, often avoid teaching media.

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Teachers will learn media theory, then apply that theory to appropriate media texts, most of them Canadian. Online mentors will be available to provide guidance and feedback as they develop lessons for their own students.

The 13 Modules

Introduction to Media Education explores the roles that media play in our daily lives and what constitutes media education.

Media Literacy and the Curriculum examines curriculum documents and engages the learner in developing a curriculum unit and cross-curricular activities that meet student provincial learning goals.

Canadian Popular Culture examines the many perspectives needed to explore the elusive "Canadian identity."

The Art of Persuasion - Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations examines advertising and marketing to teens, sponsorship, personal testimonials and celebrity spokespeople.

Media and Values examines contentious issues such as materialism, narcissism and the acceptance of superficial lifestyles.

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Reviews by Teachers

In the summer of 2007, 40 teachers participated in the field testing of Inside Plato's Cave. These are their comments:

Professional Development

Like many teachers practicing now, I never had an opportunity to take a Media course in university. This is why I see your course as being so valuable. ..I would feel confident after taking this course to teach it in the high-school. - *Marsha Lemon – Vancouver*

I don't have any formal media studies training, so it has been really informational and full of engaging activities. I really liked the set up of the lessons with the overview, lesson summary, and lesson breakdowns. I felt like I could use a similar outline for teaching a semestered Media Course, and use various concepts for teaching media components in English courses. - *Kylie Lozon - London*

Teacher support - whether it be in the form of an online course, college credit, or department in-service is greatly needed. - *Lisa Percey – St. John's*

... very much needed in terms of professional development for teachers. -*Sue Scott - London*

The Course Design

The tone of it is 'spot on'. *Jeanne O'brien – St. John's*

I liked the clarity and the design/ layout. I found the overview gave me a sense of direction and clearly defined the expectations. Well thought out and carefully constructed so as to be useful to the most inept users of technology ...even though I've finished all the degrees I need to complete (and then some) I would consider taking this course if it were offered. - *Eileen Edwards – Vancouver*

The thing I liked most was how effectively everything has been set up for the learner. It is organized in a manner that allows easy movement from one module/lesson/activity to the next, and with the necessary links provided for work outside the module. . . Also, there are

lots of fabulous resources for educators that can be adapted to various grade levels. The discussion board is another super feature. -*Lisa Percey – St. John's*

I value and appreciate the integrated connection of resources, balance of informational text with direction to integral links, process-based and project oriented activities, including teacher as learner, and the focus on self-evaluation as a vital assessment tool... I also like the Resource Library and Readings sections. -*Joanie Koch-Kalanj - Vancouver*

Teaching media literacy in the classroom

... the modules contain many ideas that the teacher can take right back to the classroom and implement. And the handouts, such as the glossary of terms and charts, were invaluable. -*Tracy Rockwood-Fry – St. John's*

The content and activities were rich and adaptable and even though intriguing to an adult learner, easily shaped for my upper intermediate students. -*Eileen Edwards – Vancouver*

The introductory unit – Media Education – alone was worth the investment. I have 8 keys to work with as a starting point for any media I am using in my classroom and deconstruction. . . For me, these were very useful ideas and learnings that I can use in my own classroom, and I feel more competent doing so. The course is very much needed. -*Beverly Moss - London*

The potential for this project has me awake at night and dreaming of the possibilities. It couldn't happen soon enough here in Newfoundland – and I can see it making waves across the entire country. Having used many of these clips and activities in my media classroom (and having snuck several of them into my English classroom as well) I can say with complete confidence that they were probably the most meaningful and memorable classes I have been privileged to teach. Every teacher begins his/her career vowing to make a difference – but at the end of these classes, I know that I actually did. -*Connie Morrison – St. John's*

Inside Plato's Cave

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA LITERACY

Authors and Acknowledgments

This course is made available by a collaboration between Athabasca University and Face to Face Media with support from media educators across Canada.

Editorial Board:

Neil Andersen, Barry Duncan, John Pungente, SJ, Carolyn Wilson, Carol Arcus

Contributing Writers:

- British Columbia Association for Media Education (BCAME) : Dan Blake
- Alberta Association for Media Awareness (AAMA): Wayne Blair
- Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS): Bob Pace
- Manitoba Association for Media Literacy (MAML): Brian Murphy
- Ontario Association for Media Literacy (AML): Neil Andersen, Barry Duncan, Ian Esquivel, John Pungente, SJ, Carolyn Wilson
- Association for Media Education Quebec (AMEQ): Maureen Baron, Lee Rother
- Media Literacy Nova Scotia (MLNS): Peter Smith
- Association for Media Literacy New Brunswick (A4MLNS): Mike Gange
- Association for Media Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador: Alex Hickey, Rene Wicks

This course was produced by Face to Face Media and the Jesuit Communications Project, with funding support from CHUM Ltd. and Citytv Vancouver.

Producers: Betsy Carson and Gary Marcuse, Face to Face Media

Project Director: John Pungente, SJ, The Jesuit Communication Project

Project Manager: Carolyn Wilson

Clearances: Paula Sawadsky

Programming: Alex Hickey, Brian Pittman, The Virtual Teacher Centre

Field Testing: Thanks to the 40 teachers in Vancouver, London, Toronto and St. John's who took part in the summer 2007 field testing.

For Athabasca University

Margaret Haughey, Vice-President Academic

Evelyn Ellerman, Associate Professor, Communications Studies

Tim Slaughter, Director, Learning Services Collaborations

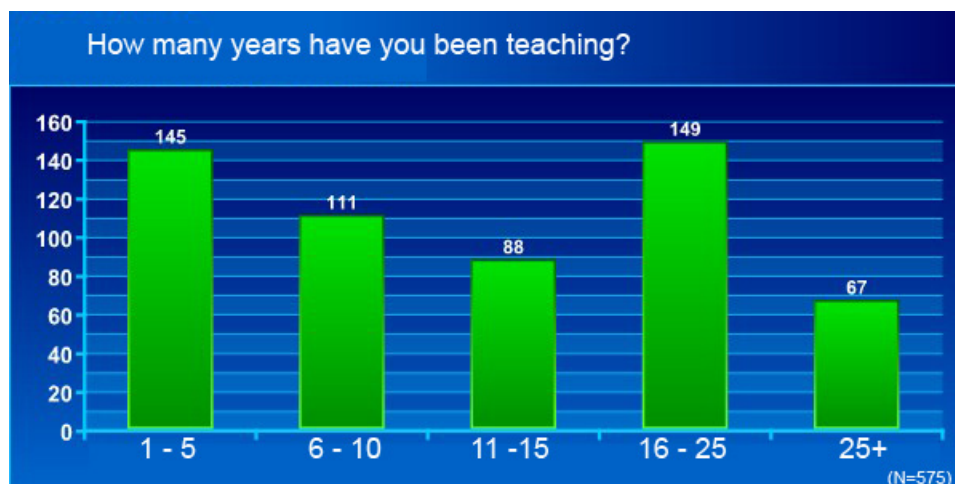
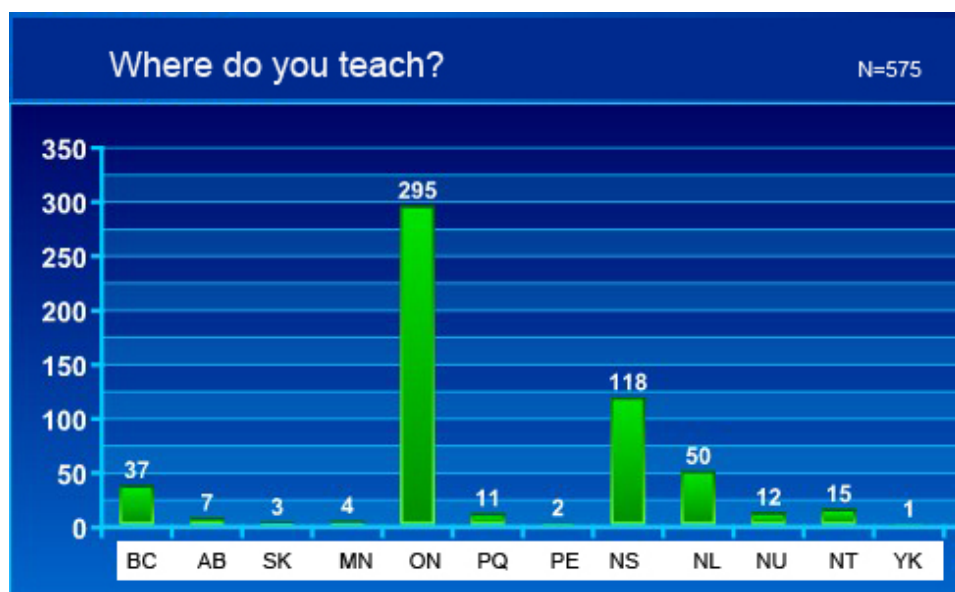
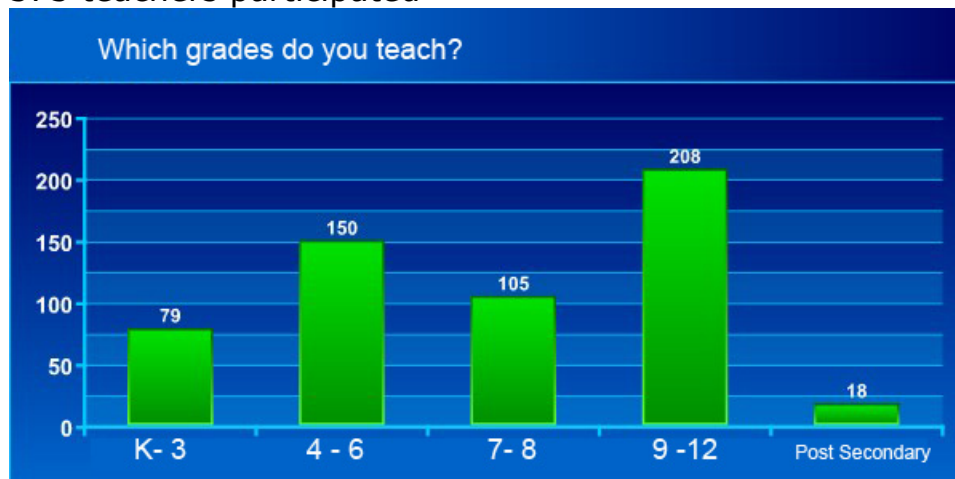
Stella Lee, Analyst, Instructional Media

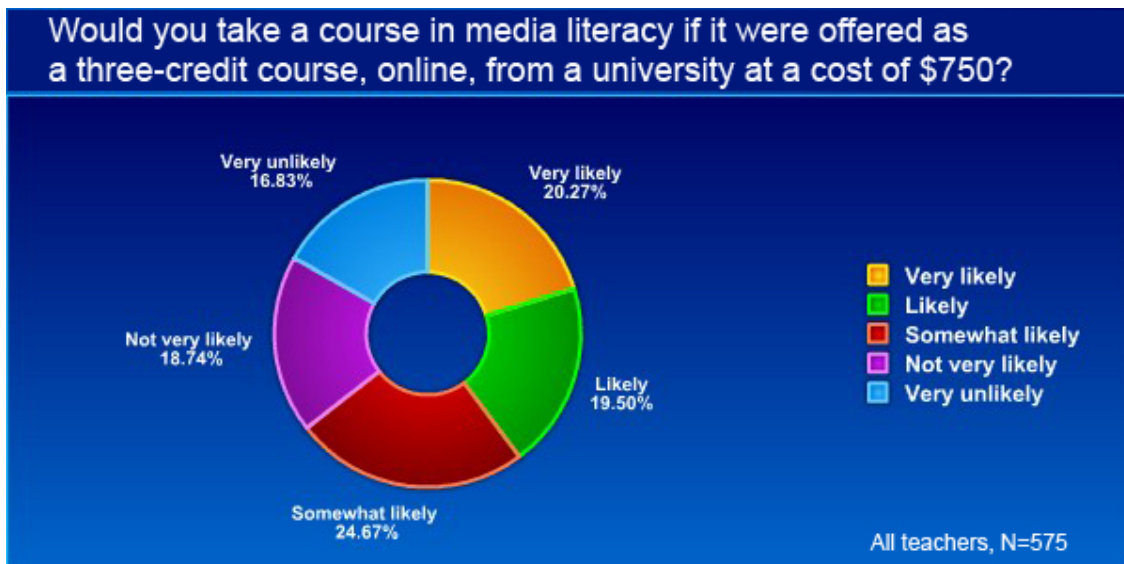
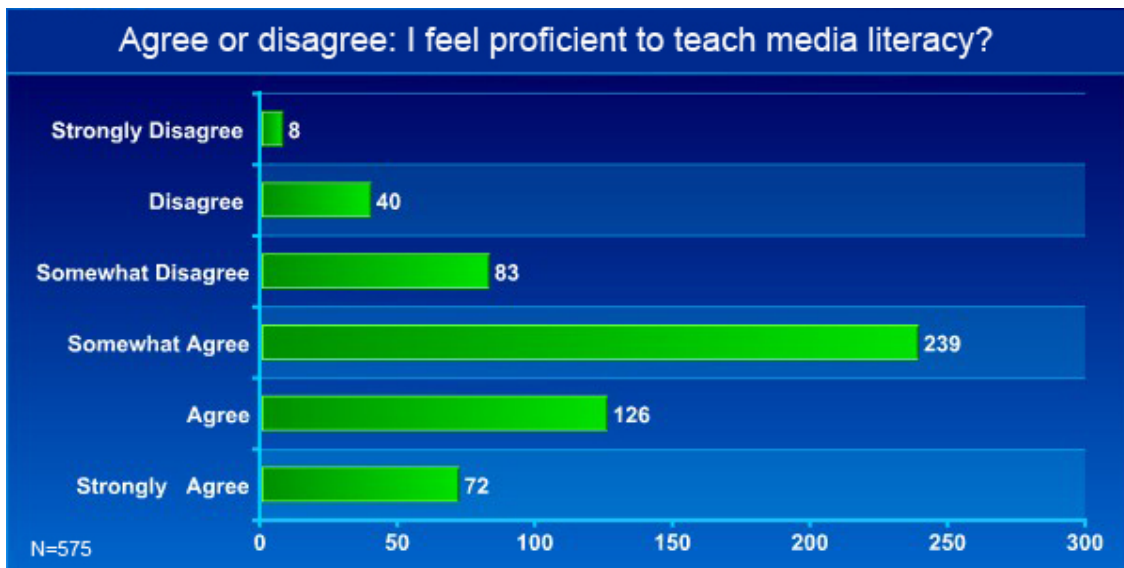
Highlights from an online Media Literacy online survey.

Survey offered online September- December 2008

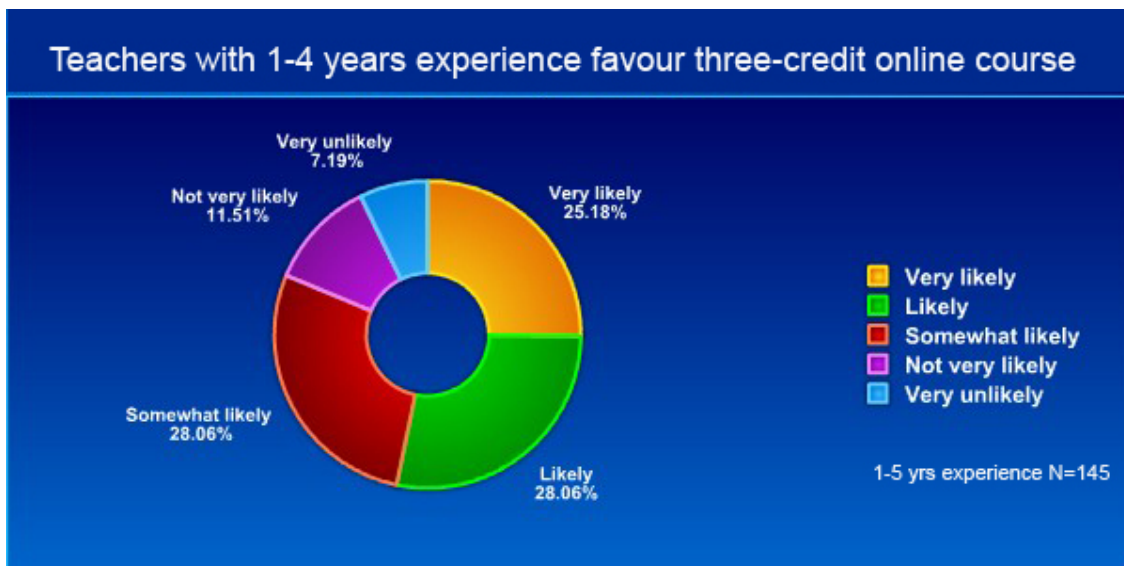
Distributed by the Media Awareness Network, the Canadian Teachers Federation and the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations, produced by Face to Face Media.

575 teachers participated



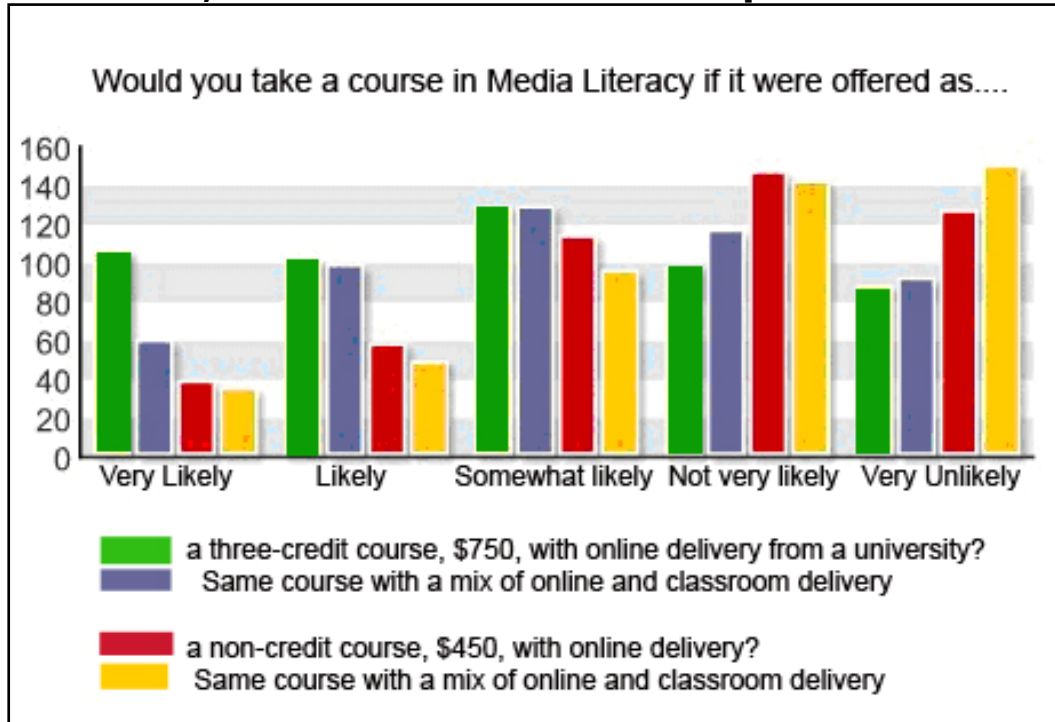


"Likely" or "Very Likely" total 40%



"Likely" or "Very Likely" total 53%

**Credit and convenience count:
An online, three-credit course was preferred overall.**



- Interest is greatest for an online credit course.
- A less expensive course, for no credit, elicited much less interest.
- Online delivery is more popular than a mix of classroom and online delivery.

For more information and complete survey results please contact
 Gary Marcuse
 Face to Face Media
 604 251 0770 _marcuse@facetofacemedia.ca