

COMM370: Contemporary Political Communication with Dr. Christina Knopf ("Dr. K.")

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Course Description & Objectives: An examination of domestic (U.S.) politics in order to better understand how "political reality" is constructed through communication. To that end, the course will examine communication during particular political events, during acts of governance, and particular campaigns, and will discuss how that communication effects and is effected by the media. We will consider five broad areas of political communication: civic engagement & deliberation, campaign communication (especially presidential), race & gender in politics, media, and satire.

By the end of this course you will be better able to...

- Understand and explain the roles of communication in society – including its relationship to other disciplines and the issues of marginalized and/or minority voices: This course is focused on the ways in which communication shapes political reality and influences political efficacy.
- Read and understand contemporary scholarship, with knowledge of the discipline's history: Through the readings, you will learn about different scholastic studies of political communication.
- Construct and evaluate oral, written, and/or visual arguments & messages, with consideration to appropriate audience analysis: You will be engaging in three public speaking activities, each with different structures and purposes within civic/political life.
- Employ effective listening skills: As a political communication, and speaking intensive, class you will engage in formal and informal discussions and debate. Your attentiveness and engagement are graded portions of these activities.

This course carries the General Education designator of "SI" – Speaking Intensive. This means you will participate in a semester-long series of oral communication assignments that strengthen understanding of effective oral communication. The assumption is that everyone has already taken an FS course and therefore knows how to create and deliver a speech and is ready to refine their speech skills. Students who take this class are expected know how to: find, use, and cite evidence to support ideas; decide what ideas to include in a speech; arrange ideas effectively; relate ideas directly to the audience; employ language to make ideas meaningful and interesting; construct clear and effective introductions and conclusions; and, use a delivery style that is vigorous, varied, and vivid.

Texts & Course Materials:

- Moodle access for readings & assignment support
- Syllabus & Assignment Packet
- Notebook paper

Grading:

- Article summaries (20-22 total): 20%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Surrogate Campaign Speech: 20%
- NIF Discussion: 20%
- Satire: 20%

Full assignment descriptions, instructions, explanations, and grading procedures are found in the accompanying "Assignments Packet."

Final Grades are broken down **in this class** as follows:

- 4.0 = 95-100
- 3.7 = 90-94
- 3.3 = 86-89
- 3.0 = 82-85
- 2.7 = 78-81
- 2.3 = 72-77
- 2.0 = 67-71
- 1.7 = 61-66
- 1.3 = 56-60
- 1.0 = 51-55
- (0.0 = below 51)

☆Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is completed on time and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a 2.0. A 2.0 is a "satisfactory" grade that indicates the *minimum has been achieved.* Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce papers or presentations that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis and overall creativity in the approach towards any given assignment. A 4.0 is attainable but will require much more than minimal effort. ☆

Challenging a Grade: If you identify an error in grading, I am always willing to admit to a mistake and correct it. If you want me to *reconsider* a grade, follow these steps:

- Wait at least 24 hours before deciding to seek reconsideration, but no longer than one week.
- Write a 1-2 page explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered identifying what type of change you seek and providing a reasoned argument and evidence in support of that change. The burden of proof in any disagreement over evaluation of your performance rests with you.
- Resubmit the original work (complete with grade & comments) along with the rationale.
- Allow two weeks for reconsideration. Accept the final decision. *I will reconsider each assignment only once.*

Extra Credit: Extra credit will not be available as an end-of-semester option to make-up-for or replace work that you did not do throughout the semester. It will never be given on an individual basis.

Due Dates/Late Work: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.** *If you know in advance you will not be in class when an assignment is due, turn it in early. If you wake up sick when something is due, please email it by class time.* All due dates are on the course calendar. Any in-class work – whether it is a speech or an exam – should be treated seriously. Make-ups for such assignments will only be granted in rare instances and usually only with documentation of an unavoidable emergency, or with advance notice of college-sanctioned activities or religious observances.

Attendance: This is a live, non-virtual, non-mediated, speech communication course. Being present is necessary to communicate. Regular, timely, attendance is expected. Attendance is a job skill: failure to report to work on time can result in lost income, inability to be promoted, or termination. If you cannot consistently be present, on time, for class, you should withdraw. I do not tally absences as part of your grade, but I do reserve the right to adjust your grade if I believe your attendance has been problematic for you and/or for your classmates. You are solely responsible for catching up on work that you miss (always refer to the course calendar and to the potential kindness of classmates). I will not accept an absence as an excuse for being unaware of any course assignment or expectation. Work will not be accepted late because of an absence, except as indicated above.

Absences of two or more straight weeks: If you miss, or will miss, two straight weeks of class (4 consecutive class meetings), you must contact me before or within those two weeks. Four or more consecutive absences without contact will result in an automatic failure of the course.

Absences of four or more total weeks: If you miss, or will miss, four or more total weeks of class, particularly if the absences are close together, you must choose one of these options: Withdrawing from the course, or; Taking an Incomplete in the course.

Attendance for the Final Exam: Finals week is part of the required number of class meeting hours set by the SUNY system. Final exams, or activities scheduled during the final exam timeslot, will not be rescheduled unless you have 3 or more exams on a single day. (If that happens, please see the policy online at <http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/registrar/exams.cfm>). **You must make travel/work/childcare arrangements around the final exam,** just as you do for normal class meetings. If you do not attend the final exam, be prepared to accept the consequences to your grade. Final exam times are scheduled by the school to ensure that exams do not overlap, therefore the full week is needed – do not blame your professors or the school for end-of-the week exams; even though regular classes are not in session, the week is part of the semester.

Incompletes: Incompletes, or other arrangements for course completion, can be planned only in advance to the semester's end in extreme circumstances with documentation. To receive an incomplete, there must be a serious **emergency** so late in the semester that there isn't time to make up what you miss.

Academic Integrity & Dishonesty: As stated in the Undergraduate Catalog, a pledge of academic honesty is made by students at SUNY Potsdam. This pledge is regarded as an indication that you understand and have complied with the requirements and assignments as set forth by the course instructor and as stated in the Academic Honor Code.

To plagiarize is to pass off *ideas or words of someone else as your own or to use created productions without crediting the source.* Any time you incorporate the words &/or ideas of another person into your work, no matter what the medium/source, without giving their creator the credit, you have plagiarized. It is literary and intellectual theft when you present work that someone else did as being new and original. This includes user-generated content on sites like Wikipedia. **I have a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism. In the event of plagiarism on an assignment in this course you will A.) Definitely fail the assignment. B.) Possibly fail the course.** Therefore, you will be responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted in this course. I recommend that you keep copies of all drafts of your work, make photocopies &/or careful notes of research materials, save drafts or versions of assignments under individual file names on computer disks, etc. Other forms of dishonesty or cheating are also not tolerated and will result in a failure of the assignment and/or class. If you think you are engaging in questionable behavior, you probably are, so either don't do it or seek clarification.

Technology/Electronic Devices: Technology use is permissible in the classroom IF:

- Your usage is polite. You are taught from kindergarten on that it is not acceptable to carry on personal conversations with others or to pass notes to people during class time.
- Your usage does not interfere with your performance in class. Multitasking is a fact of modern life, but if you're not good at Facebooking and listening at the same time, don't do it.
- Your usage does not bother your neighbors. Be aware of and polite to people near you. Communication devices should always be set to silent & only answered outside the room.
- You are willing to apply your technology use to course materials in productive ways.
- You do not secretly record any portion of a class without seeking permission from all involved parties.

Consider your technology use outside of class, too. If contacting me via email, be professional: use an appropriate and informative subject, address me politely, and use good Standard English. Many (potential) employers will not be impressed by communication like, "hey-idk wuts du 2mrw. tia"

Etiquette: The success of this course is directly related to the sense of community that we develop in the classroom. Participation is essential to this process. I encourage you to share your views and listen to those of others. Debate and discussion are an important part of the learning process. While there will no doubt be disagreements, I expect the members of this community (including myself) to challenge ideas in a manner that reflects respect and recognition of opposing viewpoints without attacking individuals.

Any communication – digital or live – that potentially interferes with the learning environment of other students will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior - even minor disruptions - will result in your being told to leave class. Repeated offenses may result in course failure.

COMM370: Contemporary Political Communication Calendar

All dates are final unless discussed and agreed upon in class.

Tu 8/28: Syllabus, expectations, assignments	Th 8/30: Publics & Counterpublics - Porrovecchio
Tu 9/4: Web Engagement - Bennett et al & Min	Th 9/6: <i>Battle in Seattle</i>
Tu 9/11: <i>Battle in Seattle</i>	Th 9/13: Partisan Speech Patterns – Jarvis
Tu 9/18: Acceptance & Keynote Speeches - Jarvis2 & Benoit et al	Th 9/20: Concession & Victory Speeches – Ritter/Howell
Tu 9/25: Ad Buys & Strategies (<i>The Living Room Campaign</i> or <i>The West Wing</i> "King Corn" <small>S6E123D37</small>) – Franz/Ridout & Hoegg/Lewis	Th 9/27: Debate Strategies & Perception (<i>The West Wing</i> "Debate Camp" or "Freedonia" <small>S6E125D37</small>) – Benoit & Warner et al
Tu 10/2: Campaign Speeches	Th 10/4: Campaign Speeches
Tu 10/9: No class → fall recess	Th 10/11: Pornification of Politics Anderson
Tu 10/16: Minstrelry & Race Card in Politics Sparks & Lee/Moran	Th 10/18: <i>Bullworth</i> or <i>Contender</i>
Tu 10/23: <i>Bullworth</i> or <i>Contender</i> (last day to withdraw)	Th 10/25: Campaign Communication in 08 Frontline
Tu 10/30: YouTube & Social Media Hess & Kushin	Th 11/1: Polling Wei et al
Tu 11/6: <i>All the President's Men</i>	Th 11/8: <i>All the President's Men</i>
Tu 11/13: NIF Forum	Th 11/15: No class → Dr. K @ conference
Tu 11/20: No class → Dr. K @ conference	Th 11/22: No class → Thanksgiving
Tu 11/27: Parody & Late-Night Trends Hariman & Feldmen/Young	Th 11/29: Comedy Central Rally & Satire Effects Placone/Tumolo & Hoffman/Young
Tu 12/4: <i>TV Land</i>	Th 12/6: Satire presentations
	Fr 12/14 @ 10:15-12:15 → Final short-essay exam. See details in Assignment Packet.

Remember: For each assigned article (available on Moodle) you should do a half-page, hand-written summary (details in Assignment Packet).

COMM370

Contemporary Political Communication

with Dr. K.

Fall 2012 Assignment Packet

This packet is designed to provide you with all the basic information and instructions to succeed at the graded portions of this course. Instructions and grading schemes for every assignment in this class, for the entire semester, are provided here for you. Use this resource in conjunction with the Syllabus and class meetings.

You are responsible for reading the information in this packet just as you are responsible for reading any other assignment in class.

NOTE ABOUT POLITICAL PREFERENCES & PARTISANSHIP

This class is designed to encourage student participation. This is not, however, a forum for arguing about political positions, beliefs, and affiliations; partisanship in class is not encouraged and it is asked that students keep their praise and criticisms focused on the communication elements of campaigning, not on parties or individual candidates (that is, it's OK to criticize or compliment a candidate's communication strategy but not to discuss at length the merits or weaknesses of people & parties). Views from all political affiliations are welcome in class and a friendly environment should be maintained, without students feeling threatened for having conflicting views; I will not tolerate excessive unrelated political discussions. I will likewise strive to keep my personal partisanship out of the classroom. Also, you may find that excessive cynicism about politics generally will be as counterproductive to you as partisan zealotry; to get the most out of this class, you will need to keep an open mind, be willing to self-challenge your current beliefs, and think critically about all perspectives and positions.

Readings & Article Summaries

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, you will be reading 3-4 scholastic journal articles about political communication each week. The articles are available on Moodle. The use of individual journal articles rather than one or two textbooks offers several advantages:

- **Cost & convenience.** The articles are freely available, and can be read according to your preference: on the computer, a tablet, an e-reader, or paper.
- **Currency.** Books take a long time to write and publish, so many political communication books available don't yet discuss the 2008 election – and here we are in 2012. Our journal article selection focuses entirely on politics since 2000, making the readings up-to-date.
- **Breadth.** Most political communication textbooks have a singular focus, such as campaign communication, civic deliberation, presidential rhetoric, media, etc. This is good to let readers go in-depth, but is not always engaging at the undergrad level (especially if you don't like politics.) Using articles lets us explore 5 different areas of poli-comm this semester.
- **Exposure & practice.** You'll gain valuable experience in learning to read/ understand academic writing. (Many textbooks don't use the same style.) If you are a comm major, you'll have to read journal articles on your own for Communication Theory. If you are a politics major, you may have to read journal articles for your Senior Seminar. This class provides you with more structured exposure to this kind of reading, if you haven't yet experienced it elsewhere – and is also good prep for graduate school.

This is a 300-level (upper-division), speaking-intensive class. The expectation, therefore, is that class will be participatory and that everyone will actively engage the material as much as possible. Discussions will be more robust and meaningful if you do the assigned readings on time – especially because class lectures will not be strictly a review of the assigned articles, but will build on the readings for more in-depth information. To encourage you to keep up with the readings, and to help you through them, **for each article you are required to HAND write an article summary in your own words on a half-sheet of paper.** (The reason for this approach is to reduce the urge to copy-and-paste things from the internet and to keep the workload in check, pushing you to be concise and keep your focus narrow). There are 22 summaries total. You can miss 2 without repercussions to your grade. **This summary will take the following form:**

Your Name
Article Topic
2-3 Things you found interesting from the Literature Review/Introduction
The article's goal/or research question
What the author(s) discovered in the research.

Abbreviated Article Title

The following information should help guide you through the article reading process:

HOW TO READ AND TAKE NOTES ON A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE

First, keep in mind that authors of journal articles always have an argument; they are trying to convince you of something. *This does not mean it is biased!* Quality academic journals have a rigorous review process to ensure that articles are built on new, research-based information

Steps to Read the Article

- I. Look at the structure of the article (most scientific articles follow the same specific format)
 1. **Abstract** (summary of the whole article)
 2. **Introduction & Literature Review** (why they did the research & what related research has already been done. This lays the foundation –the broader academic dialogue- for the article's contribution)
 3. **Methodology** (how they did the research. Ex: surveys, experiments, textual analysis...)
 4. **Results** (what happened/what was observed)
 5. **Discussion** (what the results mean)
 6. **Conclusion** (what was learned)
 7. **References** (whose research they referenced & built upon)
- II. Read the abstract and conclusion **first** (these have the main points)
- III. Read through the other sections, focusing on the literature review and the discussions. (Don't worry at if you don't understand the terminology in statistical studies, and don't let them freak you out.)

How to Take Notes on the Article

- Pay attention to what each section is about. The Abstract, Discussion, and Conclusion sections usually have the most important information. (Skim the methods section; it's not critical to you right now.)
- Write summarizing notes for main points (in the margin, or on a separate piece of paper)
- Don't hesitate to look up words you don't know

Final Exam

To prove all those article summaries aren't just busy-work, you will use them. Not only will they be helpful to you for class discussions, but they will also be helpful to you for our final exam.

At its root, political communication is about participation. The Speaking Intensive component of this course emphasizes that, and it will be reinforced through a short-essay final exam.

For the exam, you will be presented with an NIF-inspired question (see the National Issues Forum speaking assignment later in this packet for more information). You will be asked to write a response to this question using information you have learned in class. To reduce the stress associated with Exams, your article summaries will be returned to you for use during the final exam as reference.

Surrogate Campaign Speech

Public speaking is the most fundamental communication practice in any campaign and speeches are the result of careful planning, research, and investments. Surrogate speakers are used when the candidate simply can't be in two places at once and so an appropriate, well-trained, speaker steps up instead.

For this assignment you will be a surrogate speaker for any presidential or vice-presidential candidate of your choosing. It does not have to be a candidate from one of the two major parties, but does need to be a candidate who will show up on the ballot somewhere in November. It does not even need to be a candidate you like, as long as you can construct a speech on his or her behalf.

Your grade will not be affected by your candidate choice. It is based only on your ability to present the candidate in an audience-appropriate way, as needed for a typical surrogate speech.

Your speech should be 5-6 minutes long. (You will be cut off after 7 minutes, so time your speech carefully!) To help you with this assignment, there is an additional reading offered on Moodle.

Surrogate Campaign Speech Grading Rubric.

Basics	
Speaker is prepared & has taken the assignment seriously	1 2 3 4 5 6
Verbal delivery shows rehearsal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Nonverbal delivery shows rehearsal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Surrogate's Functions	
Correctly identifies a worthwhile audience	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Makes effort to reduce audience resentment over candidate's absence	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Reminds the audience he/she is not the candidate	1 2 3 4 5 6
Personally connects to, or relates with, audience	1 2 3 4 5 6
Speech Format	
Gains attention	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Describes a problem	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Presents a solution	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Well organized	1 2 3 4 5 6
Content	
Information presented about the candidate is sound	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Info/arguments about the candidate's policies is accurate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Info about the candidate's policies is appropriate to the audience	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Language use demonstrates oral style	1 2 3 4 5 6

NIF Discussion

"For over 10 years, thousands of Americans have met each year through the National Issues Forums (NIF). These Forums have looked at important public issues. They have encouraged Americans to think about the hard choices we face on major questions like AIDS, racial inequality, and health care" (Patrick Scully, NIF Project Director).

In this class, we will use NIF publications and discussion questions to consider and reconsider the political system. "More and more people feel our politics does not work. They feel no one cares what they think. Many Americans feel that our system needs to be changed, But they do not know how to fix it" (Scully). We will talk about different actions we can take. "These are called 'choices.' Some of these choices have been suggested before. More than once choice could be right. All are presented fairly" (Scully). You will be asked to think through which choices are good or bad and to consider alternatives.

Purposes of this Assignment:

- Provide the opportunity to engage in actual political discourse
- Improve public speaking skills in a discipline-specific and "real-world" format
- Consider not only political concerns but also political remedies
- Demonstrate the potential of citizen involvement in the Political Process

The NIF discussion will coincide with our examination and consideration of the role of the media in American politics. Therefore, we are going use the NIF on "News Media and Society: How to Restore the Public Trust." This reading is available on Blackboard.

To prepare for discussions, read pages 2-29 in the NIF Discussion Guide on "News Media and Society," available on Moodle.

Consider the three approaches presented. What do you like/dislike, agree/disagree with? Can you think of alternatives that are not presented here? What solution(s) would you propose or support? Be prepared to state a position or pose a question during the "Town Hall" discussion in class. Be familiar enough with the information that you can even question, challenge, or defend the comments other people might make.

-Remain attentive, tuned in, and focused during the discussion = 4 pts
(texting, leaving, arriving late, doing work for other classes, surfing the Web, checking the weather or the sports scores are all examples of poor listening and rudeness)

-Make at least 1 contribution to the discussion, demonstrating familiarity w/ the readings = 6 pts
(come to class with some notes, thoughts, or opinions about the materials you read jotted down on a piece of paper or an index card.) *If you're really active in the discussion, you'll have a chance to earn extra credit.*

-Showing your fellow citizens (classmates) courtesy; paying attention to what they have to say, and respecting their opinions even if you disagree = 2 pts

-Thoughtful completion of NIF questionnaires administered after discussion = 3 pts

Original Satirical Presentation

In order to criticize something, we must know a lot about it. The quality of a piece of satire is in its details. I therefore encourage you to satirize something close to you, about which you feel strongly. For example, if you play sports or are in a fraternity/sorority you might want to satirize the school's perception of student athletes or Greek life. If you've lived in suburbia, you might channel that experience to satirize the suburban lifestyle. Look around for something that really ticks you off and then form a serious, rational argument about you can turn on its head. If you are having difficulty thinking of a topic, have a look through our readings and your notes, talk to a friend, talk to me, or just turn on *South Park*. Do not copy other satire, but there is no harm in learning from examples. For example, you might find that you can apply Stephen Colbert's methods to a different subject.

Purposes of this Assignment:

- Enhance your understanding of how satire works
- Learn more about an issue that interests you.
- Improve your public speaking and presentation skills in a discipline-specific format

Alone or with a group, you will compose and give a satirical presentation. It must take the form of traditional oral communication, such as: a speech, a skit, an ad, a news broadcast, an interview, a panel or roundtable discussion, a stand-up comedy routine, or even a take-off of Colbert's "The Word," for example.

Along with the satire itself, you will turn in a short paper that addresses the following:

- a) the target of your satire (What problem will you address?)
- b) the earnest argument you wanted to make (What is your real opinion on this issue?)
- c) the satirical argument you made (What satirical or humorous "mask" did you use?)
- d) the reason you chose a particular medium and how that shaped your arguments (website, cartoon, fiction, prose [e.g. newspaper editorial, magazine column, etc.], photography, film, audio recording [music and/or vocal]), etc. How will your choice of medium dictate your rhetorical strategies?)
- e) the authorial persona you used in your satire (For example, if you wrote a story, what was the narrator like? Or, if you wrote a newspaper editorial, what personality did the author have - a right-wing pundit like Colbert, or an absurd leftist perspective?)
- f) the intended audience of your satire (who would "get it" and who wouldn't?)
- g) the research you needed to do about the subject

Presentations should be approximately 10 minutes long.

Satire Grading Rubric:

Satire	Clarity/Unity	5 pts
	Ingenuity/Creativity	3 pts
	Presentation/Performance	5 pts
Explanatory Paper	Grammatically correct	2 pts
	Justified with course content/lessons learned	5 pts

Clarity/Unity: Your satire must target a specific problem/vice/corruption/etc. and address an identifiable audience.
Ingenuity/Creativity: How well you integrated your satirical critique.
Presentation: You should rehearse your presentation to the class and demonstrate all the characteristics of a good public address.

Information on the next page provides you with some common techniques of satire and comedy to help you with your project.

SATIRIC AND COMEDIC DEVICES-

1. **Mockery**--insulting or contemptuous action or speech
2. **Malapropism**--an act or habit of misusing words ridiculously, esp. by the confusion of words that are similar in sound. Ex. "that's just a Fig Newton of your imagination"
3. **Pun**--the humorous use of a word or phrase so as to emphasize or suggest its different meanings or applications, or the use of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning; Ex. "Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana." (Groucho Marx)
4. **Understatement**—1. A disclosure or statement that is less than complete. 2. Restraint or lack of emphasis in expression, as for rhetorical effect.
5. **Hyperbole**--Exaggeration--To represent as greater than is actually the case; to enlarge or increase to an abnormal degree
6. **Irony**--a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated.
 - a. an outcome of events contrary to what was, or might have been, expected.
 - b. an objectively sardonic style of speech or writing
 - c. an objectively or humorously sardonic utterance, disposition, quality, etc.Note: *Alanis Morissette's "Isn't it Ironic" is not ironic. She's really just singing about bad luck and coincidence.*
7. **Sarcasm**--A cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound; A form of wit that is marked by the use of sarcastic language and is intended to make its victim the butt of contempt or ridicule.
8. **Litote**--A kind of understatement, where the speaker uses negative of a word ironically to mean the opposite. Ex. *She's not the friendliest person I know.* (= she's an unfriendly person)
9. **Tautology**--Two near-synonyms are placed consecutively or very close together for effect. Ex. "Beseechingly, urgingly..."
10. **Slang**--An informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech
11. **Parody**—A performance or piece in which the style of another is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule
12. **Mondegreen**—Words that result from the mishearing or misinterpretation of a statement or song lyric. Ex. "Hold me closer Tony Danza" (from *Hold me closer tiny dancer* by Elton John); "I led the pigeons to the flag" (for "I pledge allegiance to the flag"); "the girl with colitis goes by" (for "the girl with kaleidoscope eyes," in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," by the Beatles).