ENGL 306F * INTRODUCTION TO SEMIOTICS
Winter 1994
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SYLLABUS

§ I. TEXTS

• Bookstore Texts

Innis, Robert E., ed. Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology (Indiana) 0-253-20344-9
Deely, John, et al., eds. Frontiers in Semiotics (Indiana) 0-253-20371-6
Doyle, Arthur Conan. The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries (Signet) 0-451-52431-4
Barthes, Roland. Elements of Semiology (Noonday) 0-374-52146-8
Eco, Umberto. The Role of the Reader (Indiana) 0-253-20318-X
Eco, Umberto. The Name of the Rose (Warner) 0-446-35720-0

• Kinko’s Package (Bin #72)

Jakobson, "A Glance at the Development of Semiotics" (from The Framework of Language, pp. 1-29)
Sebeok, "Introduction: I Think I Am a Verb" (from I Think I Am a Verb, pp. 1-9)
Pratt, "The Linguistics of Use" (from Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse, pp. 79-99)
Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (from Image/Music/Text, pp. 79-124)
Eco, "Small Worlds" (from The Limits of Interpretation, pp. 64-82)
Eco, "Interpreting Serials" (from The Limits of Interpretation, pp. 83-100)
De Beaugrande and Dressier, "Basic Notions" (from Introduction to Text Linguistics, pp. 1-13)
Berger, "Formulas in the Public Arts" (from Signs in Contemporary Culture, pp. 85-88)
Barthes, five commentaries from Mythologies (pp. 15-26, 40-42, 45-47, 65-68, 98-100.)
§ II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Epigraphs

- **John Locke**, 1690: "All that can fall within the compass of human understanding being either, first, the nature of things, . . . or, secondly, that which Man himself ought to do, . . . or, thirdly, the ways and means whereby the knowledge of both the one and the other of these are attained and communicated, I think Science may be divided properly into these three sorts . . . The third branch may be called σημεωτική, or the Doctrine of Signs, the most usual whereof being words. . . .; the business whereof is to consider the nature of signs the mind makes of for the understanding of things or conveying its knowledge to others. . . ."

- **Charles S. Peirce**, 1868: "We think only in signs. . . . There is no element whatever of man's consciousness that has not something corresponding to it in the word; and the reason is obvious. It is that the word or sign that man uses is the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign. . . . Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man in the thought."

- **Charles W. Morris**, 1938: "Human civilization is dependent upon signs and systems of signs, and the human mind is inseparable from the functioning of signs. . . ."

- **Umberto Eco**, 1973: "I am speaking to you. You are understanding me, because I am following the rules of a precise code (the English language). . . . You understand me because there exists a code (a sort of inner competence shared by you and me) and there exist possible messages, performed as concrete utterances and interpretable as a set of propositions. I am using signs. The code . . . couples a sign-vehicle . . . with something called its meaning or its sense. . . . As a semiotic entity the sign is—according to Peirce—'something which stands to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity'. . . . In [the] continuous movement [from sign to sign] semiosis transforms into signs everything it encounters. To communicate is to use the entire world as a semiotic apparatus. I believe that culture is that, and nothing else."

- **Nature, Purpose, and Content of the Course**

  As Arthur Berger says in **Signs in Contemporary Culture**, semiotics is "the 'science of signs' and of the codes used to understand them" (p. ix), and "The key to finding meaning in things is to realize that we live in a world that is full of signs--a sign being something that stands for or represents something else. Semiotics teaches us how to read or interpret signs . . ." (p. viii). Semiotics is also a vast field, touching potentially on every aspect of the human
experience, of the human intellect, and of the human and the non-human environment. Charles S. Peirce, one of the founders of modern semiotics, once wrote that "the entire universe... all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed entirely of signs" (1906). In a world that is full of signs, in a universe perfused with signs, the signs formulate and identify contexts, relations, and networks of relationships; from the semiotic perspective, all meaning or knowledge constitutes, in the phrase of Thomas A. Sebeok, a "semiotic web."

The pervasiveness of signs means that semiotics as a field of study has relevance and applicability to a wide variety of disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences, the fine and performing arts, and even in the natural and physical sciences and mathematics. The Introduction to Semiotics with which we are involved in ENGL 306F, though it will deal with a generous range of topics, will not comprehend all of the potential topics of semiotics but instead will be focused upon and directed toward those areas most relevant to the discipline of English—in other words, toward language, texts, and culture.

With this goal of an exploration of the semiotic dimensions of language, texts, and culture, ENGL 306F moves through three parts intended to illuminate various aspects of these dimensions. Part I of the course, titled The Subject of Semiotics/Foundations, moves from a consideration of the nature of semiotics and of the crucial concepts of semiosis and sign to an examination of the contributions of Peirce and other founders of modern semiotic theory. Part I also presents a segment titled "Thinking Like a Semiotician," which in is intended to illustrate aspects of semiotic patterns of thought. From The Subject of Semiotics/Foundations, the course moves to Part II—Aspects of the General Theory of Signs—which considers four crucial aspects of semiotic theory (sign and meaning, semiosis and code, language, and structuralism). Finally, Part III of the course—Theoretical Applications—explores two areas of the semiotic field which develop out of the fundamental semiotic theories: text semiotics and culture/popular culture.

• Format and Mechanics of the Course

The course meets twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays, for one and one-half periods per course session. As the normal undergraduate course period in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo is fifty minutes long (that is, for example, 2:30-3:20), the one and one-half period session in ENGL 306F will normally be seventy-five minutes long (that is, 2:30-3:45).

Each lecture of the course will be supported and accompanied by one or (usually) more overhead transparencies. The transparencies will include such materials as lecture outlines, select bibliographies, relevant quotations and other pertinent illustrations, and so on. Lecture by lecture, xeroxes of the transparency materials and other course materials will be transferred to a Course Notebook which will be kept in the English Department Reading Room so that students may refer to it as they wish.
With the exception of the two periods devoted to term tests (Periods 9 and 16), each lecture session of the course will open with what will be called a Daily Feature on the Life of Signs in This World. Berger notes that we are all semioticians by nature (p. x); this element of the course is in part intended to sharpen your capacities as natural semiotician. The Daily Feature will characteristically illustrate something of the semiotics of public and private conduct and behavior, of social and institutional forms, and so on. The Daily Feature will be displayed at the opening of the class period; it may or may not have anything to do with the the specific content of the lecture which it heads; each, however, will involve sufficiently significant theoretical implications to warrant being noted and remembered.

§ III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Reading requirements**: Required reading assignments of the course are detailed in the next section of the course syllabus. These required reading assignments are drawn from the texts listed within §I of the syllabus. Under the heading Bookstore Texts, the Eco novel *The Name of the Rose* is required in its entirety; from each of the other texts within this category, several articles or essays are assigned. Under the heading Kinko's Package, all items are included within the assigned reading.

The reading requirements of the course include all works listed within the next
section (§ IV) of this syllabus. All readings should be completed before they are scheduled to be discussed in class. (To avoid later difficulties, you should start your reading of The Name of the Rose well in advance of its appearance on the schedule.)

**Written requirements:** Written work of the course includes two papers and three tests. The first paper, the Theoretical Paper, will be a 10-12 page essay (2500-3000 words) on topics arising from Parts I and II of the course. The second paper, on The Name of the Rose, will be a 3-4 page paper (1000-1200 words). Each of the three Parts of the course will be concluded by a test covering the material of the Part. The first two tests (80 minutes each) will be held during regular class periods; the third test (3 hours) will be scheduled during the April Examination Period.

In the weighting of the written requirements, the first two Parts of the course will account for 60% of the whole; Part III, 40% of the whole.

**Weighting of Written Requirements:**

- Test 1 (The Subject of Semiotics/Foundation) 15%
- Test 2 (Aspects of the General Theory of Signs) 15%
- Theoretical Paper 30%
- Name of the Rose Paper 15%
- Test 3 (Theoretical Applications) 25%

**Schedule of Written Requirements:**

- January 24: Theoretical Paper assigned
- February 2: Test 1
- March 7: Test 2
- March 14: Name of the Rose Paper assigned
- March 16: Theoretical Paper due
- April 4: Name of the Rose Paper due
- April ?: Test 3

All written work requirements of the course are to be based on the student’s own thought and effort.Instances of plagiarism or other infractions of the University’s scholarly code will be dealt with under the terms of UW Policy #71 and will result in significant penalties.

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§ IV. COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: THE SUBJECT OF SEMIOTICS/FOUNDATIONS -- Periods 1-9 (J5-F2)

Period 1 -- January 5: Preliminaries and Definitions

[Period Overheads; Course Schedule; Course Syllabus; Daily Feature 1]

Period 2 -- January 10: The Nature of Semiotics/Backgrounds and Contexts

Daily Feature 2; Course Syllabus; Locke, "Coining the Name" (in Deely, pp. 3-4); Innis, "Introduction" (pp. vii-xv); Sebeok, "The Doctrine of Signs" (in Deely, pp. 35-42); Jakobson, "A Glance at the Development of Semiotics" (in Kinko's materials); Deely, Editors' Preface ("Pars Pro Toto," pp. vii-xvii); Sebeok, "Semiotics' and Its Congeners" (in Deely, pp. 255-263)

Period 3 -- January 12: The Nature of Semiotics/Backgrounds and Contexts; Peirce and the Theory of Signs

Daily Feature 3; Assignments as for Period 2; Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" (in Innis, pp. 1-23)

Period 4 -- January 17: Peirce and the Theory of Signs

Daily Feature 4; Peirce assignment from Period 3; Theoretical Summary of Peirce

Period 5 -- January 19: Thinking Like a Semiotician: Sherlock Holmes

Daily Feature 5; Doyle, "The Red-Headed League" (pp. 42-65); "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (pp. 66-90); "The Five Orange Pips" (pp. 91-109); "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" (pp. 314-337); "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (pp. 338-362); "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" (pp. 383-404)

Period 6 -- January 24: Other Seminal Statements: Saussure, Morris, Jakobson

Daily Feature 6; Saussure, "The Linguistic Sign" (in Innis, pp. 24-46); Morris, "Signs and the Act" (in Innis, pp. 176-189); Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (in Innis, pp. 145-175); Theoretical Summary of Saussure; Theoretical Summary of Contrasts Between Peirce and Saussure

Period 7 -- January 26: Other Seminal Statements: Saussure, Morris, Jakobson

Daily Feature 7; Reading assignments as for Period 6

Period 8 -- January 31: Other Seminal Statements: Saussure, Morris, Jakobson

Daily Feature 8; Reading assignments as for Period 6
Period 9 -- February 2: Test 1 (The Subject of Semiotics/Foundations)

Part II: ASPECTS OF THE GENERAL THEORY OF SIGNS -- Periods 10-16 (F7-M7)

Period 10 -- February 7: Sign and Meaning

Daily Feature 10; Theoretical Summaries of Peirce and Saussure (previously presented); previously assigned readings from Peirce, Saussure, and Morris (in Innis, pp. 1-23, 24-46, 176-189); previously assigned reading from Sebeok (in Deely, pp. 35-42); Sebeok, "Introduction: I Think I Am a Verb" (in Kinko’s materials); Thom, “From the Icon to the Symbol” (in Innis, pp. 272-291); Eco, "The Semantics of Metaphor" (in Innis, pp. 247-271)

Period 11 -- February 9: Sign and Meaning/Semiosis and Code

Daily Feature 11; Reading assignments as for Period 10; Sebeok, "Zoosemiotic Components of Human Communication" (in Innis, pp. 292-324); Sebeok, "The Notion of Zoosemiotics" (in Deely, pp. 74-75); Sebeok, "Talking with Animals": Zoosemiotics Explained" (in Deely, pp. 76-82); supplied materials on codes

Period 12 -- February 14: Semiosis and Code

Daily Feature 12; Reading assignments on Semiosis and Code from Period 11

Period 13 -- February 16: Language

Daily Feature 13; previously assigned readings from Saussure, Jakobson, and Eco (in Innis, pp. 24-46, 145-175, 247-271); Bühler, "The Key Principle: The Sign Character of Language" (in Innis, pp. 66-66); Berweniste, "The Semiology of Language" (in Innis, pp. 226-246); Barthes, Elements, pp. 9-57; Pratt, "The Linguistics of Use" (in Kinko’s materials)

Period 14 -- February 28: Language/Structuralism

Daily Feature 14; Reading assignments as for Period 13; Theoretical Summary of Saussure (previously presented); previously assigned readings from Saussure and Jakobson (in Innis, pp. 24-46, 145-175); Barthes, Elements, pp. 58-94; Merrell, "Structuralism and Beyond: A Critique of Presuppositions" (in Deely, pp. 120-138); Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (in Innis, pp. 190-205)

Period 15 -- March 2: Structuralism

Daily Feature 15; Readings assignments on Structuralism from Period 14

Period 16 -- March 7: Test 2 (Aspects of the General Theory of Signs)
Part III: THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS -- Periods 17-24 (M9-A4)

Period 17 -- March 9: Text Semiotics: Theory

Daily Feature 17; Commentary on Text Semiotics; Eco, selected essays from The Role of the Reader ("Introduction: The Role of the Reader," pp. 3-43; "Peirce and the Semiotic Foundations of Openness: Signs as Texts and Texts as Signs," pp. 175-199; "Lector in Fabula: Strategy in a Metanarrative Text," pp. 200-260); Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (in Kinko's materials); Eco, "Small Worlds" and "Interpreting Serials" (both in Kinko's materials); Pratt, "The Linguistics of Use" (previously assigned); De Beaugrande and Dressler, "Basic Notions" (in Kinko's materials)

Period 18 -- March 14: Text Semiotics: Theory

Daily Feature 18; Reading assignments as for Period 17

Period 19 -- March 16: Text Semiotics: Theory/Text Semiotics: The Name of the Rose

Daily Feature 19; Reading assignments as for Period 17; Eco, The Name of the Rose

Period 20 -- March 21: Text Semiotics: The Name of the Rose

Daily Feature 20; Reading assignments as for Period 19

Period 21 -- March 23: Text Semiotics: The Name of the Rose

Daily Feature 21; Reading assignments as for Period 19

Period 22 -- March 28: Popular Culture

Daily Feature 22; Winner, "Semiotics of Culture" (in Deely, pp. 181-184); Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (previously assigned); Eco, "Interpreting Serials" (previously assigned); Eco, "The Myth of Superman" (in Rle, pp. 107-124); Berger, "Formulas in the Public Arts" (in Kinko's materials); Barthes, selected commentaries from Mythologies (all in Kinko's materials: "The World of Wrestling," "Operation Margarine," "Soap-powders and Detergents," "Wine and Milk," "Photography and Electoral Appeal"); Barthes, Elements (previously assigned); other items TBA

Period 23 -- March 30: Popular Culture

Daily Feature 23; Reading assignments as for Period 22

Period 24 -- April 4: Popular Culture

Daily Feature 24; Reading assignments as for Period 22

April Examination Period -- Test 3 (Theoretical Applications)
§ V. WORKS ON RESERVE

**Note:** Works on Reserve for the course are listed below. (The status of each is Overnight Reserve.) Three of these works are very strongly recommended to you. These are Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*; Krampen, *Classics of Semiotics*; and Hervey, *Semiotic Perspectives*. The Nöth work has valuable chapters on all of our topics; both of the Krampen and Hervey works have chapters on several of the topics. The Nöth work is especially recommended to you as a supplement to the course lectures and to the assigned readings.


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PN 98.S7C8 1975b

P 99.D398 1990


PR 4624.S53 1983

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