**ENGL 306F  INTRODUCTION TO SEMIOTICS**  
**Winter 1995**  
**Class Time:**  
Monday 7:00 - 10:00 pm.  
Hagey Hall 139

Prof. G. Stillar  
x.5366  
gstillar@watarts.uwaterloo.ca  
Office Hours:  
Tuesday and Thursday 10:30 - 12:30  
Hagey Hall 254

"Gaussure's Heads"  
By the end of the course, we should have a lot to say about these. Critically.

**Course Description**

From the calendar: "A study of systems of signs, codes, and signification in language, culture, and literature."

Extended description and course rationale: Semiotics provides us with principled ways of understanding and speaking about something we do everyday quite unconsciously—participating in the life of signs. Semiotic analysis is particularly powerful in accounting for the way meanings are made and transmitted in every form of social communication: in verbal and non-verbal 'text'. However wide the applications of semiotics are, it is important to understand from the start its basic theoretical principles. Throughout the course, we will learn these by reading, critiquing, and applying seminal semiotic models.

**Texts Required**


Reserve texts lists and further reading lists will be distributed in class as necessary. Nöth (1990) contains extensive bibliographies for many topics in semiotics.

**Reading Requirements**

Everyone is expected to have readings completed before the class time in which they will be discussed. Be sure to note any problems, questions, or comments you have about the readings and bring these to class. Many of the assigned readings are difficult. Please be patient. Read carefully. Don't panic. Ask questions!

**Lecture Structure**

1. Basics  
2. Extensions  
3. Applications

We will follow this basic structure in almost all of our class meeting times. Normally, we will begin with a short lecture on the topics of the readings. This will be followed by a discussion of extensions of the topic (e.g. other theorists; other concepts, etc.). Finally, we will spend time discussing and attempting applications of the topics for each particular week.
### Written Requirements

1. January 30th - In class test - 1 hour - 15%
2. February 27th - Midterm - 2 hours - 30%
3. March 20th - In class test - 1 hour - 15%
4. April 10th - Essay due - 2000 wds. - 40%

- In class tests: Short answer tests covering basic theoretical principles of semiotics.
- Midterm Exam: Short and long essay questions covering first half of course.
- Essay: An application of semiotic theory to a chosen semiotic phenomenon.

### Date | Topic | Readings
---|---|---
January 9 | Introduction | Purchase texts
January 16 | Peirce | - Nöth 39-47 ('Peirce')
| | | - Innis 1-23 (Peirce)
January 23 | Saussure | - Nöth 56-63 ('Saussure')
| | | - Innis 28-46 ('Saussure')
January 30 | Review | In class test (1 hour)
February 6 | Jakobson | - Nöth 74-76 ('Jakobson'); 354-360 ('Poetry and Poeticness')
| | | - Fiske 35-37; 39-63
| | | - Innis 145-175 (Jakobson)
February 13 | Information and Communication | - Nöth 134-143 ('Information'); 168-180 ('Communication and Semiosis')
| | | - Fiske 1-38
| | | - Innis 129-141 (Bateson)
February 20 | No class | Reading week
February 27 | Midterm (2 hours) | |
March 6 | Code | - Nöth 192-220 ('Structure', 'System', 'Code')
| | | - Fiske 64-84
March 13 | Non-Verbal Communication | - Nöth 387-418
| | | - Innis 292-318 (Sebook)
| | | - Re-read Fiske 67-70
March 20 | Review | In class test (1 hour)
| | | |
| | | - Fiske 101-114; 164-188
| | | - Innis 190-205 (Barthes)
April 3 (Lectures End) | Text Semiotics | |
April 10 | Essays due (no extensions) | |