ENGL 306F
Winter 1997
M. A. Gerhardstein

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ENGL 306F COURSE SYLLABUS

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"My good Adso," my master said, "during our whole journey I have been teaching you to recognize the evidence through which the world speaks to us like a great book. . . .
But the universe is even more talkative. . . , and it speaks not only of the ultimate things . . . but also of closer things, and then it speaks quite clearly."
--Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose

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"From a drop of water," said the writer, "a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. . . ."
--Arthur Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet

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§I. COURSE TEXTS

Eco, Umberto. The Name of the Rose [including "Postscript"] (Harcourt Brace) 0-15-600131-4
Doyle, Arthur Conan. The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries (Signet) 0-451-52431-4
Innis, Robert E., ed. Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology (Indiana) 0-253-20344-9
W97 ENGL 306F Readings in Semiotics (UW Bookstore)
W97 ENGL 306F Course Notes (UW Bookstore)

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Σημειωτική

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§II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

a) Purpose of the Course. As Arthur Berger says in Signs in Contemporary Culture (see §V of the syllabus for bibliographic citation), 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, although it deals with a substantial range of topics, does not comprehend all of the potential topics of semiotics but instead is focused upon and directed toward those areas most relevant to the discipline of English—in other words, toward communication, language, texts, and culture.

With this aim of an exploration of the semiotic dimensions of communication, language, texts, and culture, ENGL 306F combines a foundation in what is called the General Theory of Signs with an examination of applications of sign theory in text semiotics and in the semiotics of popular culture. The first of the two parts of the course, entitled SIGN, SEMIOSIS, COMMUNICATION, provides an inquiry into the nature of semiotics and an overview of basic sign-theoretical concepts. Some of these foundational concepts are derived inferentially, through examination of the opening of Umberto Eco's novel The Name of the Rose and of several of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Other aspects of the foundational basis are covered through the work of contemporary semioticians and through examination of the contributions of Peirce and other founders of modern semiotic theory. From this preparatory basis, the second part of the course, entitled SIGN, TEXT, CULTURE, explores two areas of the semiotic field which develop out of, and are applications of, the fundamental theoretical concepts of semiotics: text semiotics and culture/popular culture. These topics are considered both through a number of theoretical works on these applied areas, as well as through various literary and cultural texts including Eco's The Name of the Rose and some of the short commentaries from Barthes's Mythologies. Of the 25 course periods during the term, 12 are given to Part 1 (including the Part 1 test) and 13 are given to Part 2 (not including the Part 2 test).

b) Operational Details. 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, 3:30-4:20), the one and one-half period session in ENGL 306F will normally be seventy-five minutes long (that is, 3:30-4:45).
Each lecture of the course will be supported and accompanied by a number of overhead transparencies. The transparencies will include such materials as lecture outlines, select bibliographies, relevant quotations and other pertinent illustrations, and so on. Period by period, photocopies 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 Period 11 (Test 1 of the course), each course session 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 specific content of the lecture which it heads; each, however, will involve sufficiently significant theoretical implications to warrant being noted and remembered.

On two occasions (Period 10 and Period 25), the Daily Feature space will be preempted by test review information. See the next section of the syllabus.
§III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

a. Reading and Participation. The specific reading assignments of the course are listed, period by period, in §IV of this syllabus. Students are expected to read the assigned works in advance of the periods for which they are scheduled and to contribute to class discussions of the readings. (You are also advised to take prudent note of the length of the Eco novel, The Name of the Rose, and to plan your reading of that work accordingly.)

b. Written Work: Types, Scheduling, Weighting. The written work requirements of W97 ENGL 306F include two papers and two tests. Paper #1 (20%, about 1500 words), focusing on aspects of the topics of Part 1 of the course, is due early in the term; Paper #2 (25%, 2000-2500 words), focusing on applications of the theoretical topics of the course, is due late in the term. Dates of assignment of paper topics and paper due dates are shown in the schedule below. The midterm test (20%, 75 minutes) will cover the materials of Part 1 of the course; the final examination (35%, 3 hours) will give main emphasis to the materials of Part 2 of the course but will cover the course as a whole. A preparation handout, intended to help you with your review and study for the test, will be provided in advance of each examination. The scheduling of preparation handouts and examinations is listed below.

Schedule and Weights of Written Requirements:

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5 February 1997</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Preparation handout</td>
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<td>Paper #2</td>
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<td>Assigned</td>
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<td>Topic choices due</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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c. Note on Standards and Expectations Regarding Preparation and Submission of Written Work. Papers should normally be word-processed (or typed) and, in matters of citation style and bibliography style, should conform to one of the approved format guidelines (for example, MLA, Chicago, et cetera). Proofread your work carefully before submitting it.

Paper-lengths for this course are expressed in terms of words rather than in terms of pages because formatting and type-size will have an effect on page-length. The word-lengths as given are meant as approximations; but the papers themselves must not be either
markedly shorter or markedly longer than the stated approximations.

As examinations in this course cover both lecture content and reading assignment content, good test preparation in ENGL 306F depends both on regular attendance (strongly recommended) at course lectures and on fulfillment of the reading assignments. For productive exam review and study, you will also need the exam preparation handouts.

All written work requirements of ENGL 306F (papers and exams) are to be the product of your own independent thought and of your own independent effort. Instances of plagiarism or of other violations of the University's scholarly and academic code will be dealt with under the terms of University of Waterloo Policy #71 and will result in significant penalties. Specific information on the avoidance of plagiarism will accompany the Paper #1 assignment.

§IV. COURSE SCHEDULE

**PART 1 * SIGN, SEMIOSIS, COMMUNICATION * January 6-February 12**

* W97 ENGL 306F Course Notes, pp. 5-59

Period 1: Monday, January 6 * Preliminaries: Sign and Semiotics

Period 2: Wednesday, January 8 * The Sign: Preliminaries: Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (pp. 11-25 only); Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (pp. 66-90) [Paper #1 assigned]

Period 3: Monday, January 13 * Sign and Semiosis, Message and Code: Killingsworth and Gilbertson, "A General Theory of Signs" (Readings #1); Sebeok, "The Doctrine of Signs" (Readings #2)

Period 4: Wednesday, January 15 * The Sign and Its Theorists: Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" (Innis, pp. 1-23); Saussure, "The Linguistic Sign" (Innis, pp. 24-46); Morris, "Signs and the Act" (Innis, pp. 176-189)

Period 5: Monday, January 20 * The Sign and Its Theorists: Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" (Innis, pp. 1-23); Saussure, "The Linguistic Sign" (Innis, pp. 24-46); Morris, "Signs and the Act" (Innis, pp. 176-189)

Period 6: Wednesday, January 22 * Sign, Semiosis, Abduction: Jeha, "Fearing the
Nonexistent" (Readings #3); Harrowitz, "The Body of the Detective Model" (Readings #4)

Period 7: Monday, January 27 * Thinking Like a Semiotician: Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (pp. 66-90); "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (pp. 111-130); "The Greek Interpreter" (pp. 220-238); "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" (pp. 314-337); "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (pp. 338-362)

Period 8: Wednesday, January 29 * Thinking Like a Semiotician: Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (pp. 66-90); "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (pp. 111-130); "The Greek Interpreter" (pp. 220-238); "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" (pp. 314-337); "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (pp. 338-362)

Period 9: Monday, February 3 * Semiosis and Communication: Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (Innis, pp. 145-175); Sebeok, "The Zoosemiotic Components of Human Communication" (Innis, pp. 292-324); Sebeok, "Communication" (Readings #5); Sebeok, "The Semiotic Self Revisited" (Readings #6)

Period 10: Wednesday, February 5 * Semiosis and Communication: Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (Innis, pp. 145-175); Sebeok, "The Zoosemiotic Components of Human Communication" (Innis, pp. 292-324); Sebeok, "Communication" (Readings #5); Sebeok, "The Semiotic Self Revisited" (Readings #6)

[Paper #1 due]
[Preparation handout: Midterm Examination]

Period 11: Monday, February 10 * Semiosis and Communication: Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (Innis, pp. 145-175); Sebeok, "The Zoosemiotic Components of Human Communication" (Innis, pp. 292-324); Sebeok, "Communication" (Readings #5); Sebeok, "The Semiotic Self Revisited" (Readings #6)

[Paper #2 assigned]

Period 12: Wednesday, February 12 * Midterm Examination

PART 2 * SIGN, TEXT, CULTURE * February 24-April 7

Part 2a * Text and Text Semiotics * February 24-March 5

* W97 ENGL 306F Course Notes, pp. 60-81

Period 13: Monday, February 24 * Text and Text Semiotics: Sample Texts (included in Course Notes); Colomb, "The Semiotic Study of Literary Works" (Readings #7)

[Paper #2 topic choices due]

Period 14: Wednesday, February 26 * Text and Text Semiotics: De Beaugrand and
Dressler, "Basic Notions" (Readings #8); Pratt, "The Linguistics of Use" (Readings #9)

Period 15: Monday, March 3 * Text and Text Semiotics: Eco, "The Role of the Reader" (Readings #10)

Period 16: Wednesday, March 5 * Text and Text Semiotics: Eco, "Small Worlds" (Readings #11); Eco, "Interpreting Serials" (Readings #12)

Part 2b * Text Semiotics: The Name of the Rose * March 10-March 24

- W97 ENGL 306F Course Notes, pp. 82-101

Period 17: Monday, March 10 * Eco, The Name of the Rose, preliminary materials (title page-p. 18); First Day (pp. 19-97); "Postscript" (pp. 503-536)

Period 18: Wednesday, March 12 * Eco, The Name of the Rose, Second Day (pp. 99-178); "Postscript" (pp. 503-536)

Period 19: Monday, March 17 * Eco, The Name of the Rose, Third Day (pp. 179-256); Fourth Day (pp. 257-332); "Postscript" (pp. 503-536)

Period 20: Wednesday, March 19 * Eco, The Name of the Rose, Fifth Day (pp. 333-407); "Postscript" (pp. 503-536)

Period 21: Monday, March 24 * Eco, The Name of the Rose, Sixth Day (pp. 409-460); Seventh Day (pp. 461-493); Last Page (pp. 495-502); "Postscript" (pp. 503-536)

Part 2c * Sign, Text, Culture: Other Applications * March 26-April 7

- W97 ENGL 306F Course Notes, pp. 102-112

Period 22: Wednesday, March 26 * Text Semiotics: Other Applications: Winner, "The Semiotics of Culture" (Readings #13); Berger, "Formulas in the Popular Arts" (Readings #14); Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (Innis, pp. 190-205)

Period 23: Monday, March 31 * Text Semiotics: Other Applications: Barthes, four commentaries from Mythologies (Readings #15); Nöth, "Objects" (Readings #16); Nöth, "Advertising" (Readings #17)

Period 24: Wednesday, April 2 * Text Semiotics: Other Applications: Nöth, "Advertising" (Readings #17); Nöth, "Comics" (Readings #18)
[Paper #2 due]

Period 25: Monday, April 7 * Text Semiotics: Other Applications: Nöth, "Comics" (Readings #18)
[Preparation handout: Final Examination]
§V. WORKS ON RESERVE

The Works on Reserve for ENGL 306F (all available on an Overnight basis) are intended to provide additional information on semiotics and on the topics of the course for students interested in making the exploration. The period-by-period Bibliography Pages of the overhead transparencies will often point to Reserve items which are relevant to particular course topics. While some of the Paper #2 topics will require research in some of the Reserve works, the Reserve works are not otherwise required for completion of the course.

The Reserve works include almost all of the sources of the readings in the course readings package (journal issues are excluded); these works are identified by stars (*) in the listing below. Other Reserve works include valuable discussions of semiotics from a variety of perspectives. The incomparable Nöth Handbook is very highly recommended to you.


Note: The Nöth Handbook (see §V above for bibliographic details) provides the source of the two antique alphabets (the Celtic Ogham and the Germanic futhork) which appear in this syllabus. Both are illustrated on p. 257 of the Handbook.