* **Levels: M2 : SÉMIOTIQUE ET THÉORIES DE LA REPRÉSENTATION**

**(Learning to Think and Analyse Semiotically)**

* **COURSE OBJECTIVES**
* To provide models used in semiotic metalanguaget (it speaks of “metalanguages”, where one sign-system denotes another sign-system ) to analyse objects representation and literary text.
* Capturing the essence of Semiotic theories

**INTRODUCTION**

* There is a certain amount of technical language involved with semiotic analysis that cannot be avoided.
* Semiotics is a form of applied linguistics: it is has been applied to everything from fashion to advertising.
* The most fundamental concept in semiotics is the sign; semiotic theorists posit human beings as sign-making and sign-interpreting animals. It is with signs that this discussion of semiotics and cultural criticism begins.
* Semiotics *examines the ways linguistic and nonlinguistic objects and behaviours operate symbolically to « tell » us something*.

**Chapter 1 : what is semiotics?**

* The term “semiotics” derived from the Greek word *sèmeion* denoting 'sign'.

**In the seventeenth century**, the philosopher John Locke referred to *semiotika*, which he defined as 'the Doctrine of Signs, [...]; the business whereof, is to consider the Nature of Signs, the Mind makes use of for the understanding of Things, or conveying its Knowledge to others'.

* Semiotics designates, on the one hand, a *cognitive faculty* and on the other, a discipline of knowledge.

**In modern usage** the concept, semiotics refers to a theory of signification.

* Semiotics *examines the ways linguistic and nonlinguistic objects and behaviours operate symbolically to « tell » us something*.
* There are different branches of semiotics under this heading:

The American branch influenced by C. S. Peirce. Much of Peirce's work is devoted to the development of sign categories such as making a distinction between icon, index and symbol. There was the **iconic**, where the sign somehow resembled what it stood for (a photograph of a person, for example); **the indexical** (smoke) ; **the symbolic**, where as with Saussure the sign is only arbitrarily or conventionally linked with its referent.

The European branch represented by the Paris School (Ecole *de* Paris) founded by A. J. Greimas.The Paris School is concerned primarily with the relationship between signs, and with the manner in which they produce meaning within a given text or discourse.

**Chapter 2 : Signs in Semiotics**

**-** We live in a world of signs, and of signs about signs. In terms of literary analysis, semiotics is interested in literary conventions and sign system.

A sign system is a linguistic or nonlinguistic object or behaviour that can be analysed as if it were a specialized language. For semioticians, anything can be a sign. The whole world of human culture is a « text » waiting to be « read ».

Each sign in the system has meaning only by virtue of its difference from others.

To Barthes, everything ends up being explained in words, thus, ultimately, it would be the theoretical system of linguistics, which explains the production of the meaning accomplished by the action of various signs, whatever their nature: images, symbols, objects, behaviors.

**Chapter 3: semiotician and contractedness of meaning**

There are four basic principles on which the semiotic analysis of texts is based:

Semiotics as discipline has the aim of explaining the process by which a given entity is identified through a number of concepts in force in a given society

* 1. **Code**

For this, we must turn to ***S/Z*** (1970) to analyse the “textual signifiers” in terms of five codes (pp25-27): We can understand by “code”, the registry, ordered by some explicit criterion decided by its author or compiler, of a given set of signs, described according to their possibilities of syntactic interrelation and to their possible semantic contents relating to a given social phenomenon.

to analyse these ‘textual signifiers’ in terms of five codes, as follows:

1 The hermeneutic code :This is really the ‘story-telling’ code, by means of which the narrative raises questions, creates suspense and mystery, before resolving these as it proceeds along its course. This code poses questions or enigmas which provide narrative suspense

2 **The code of semes or signifiers or the semic code**. This is also called the connotative code. This is a code of connotations which utilizes hints or ‘flickers of meaning’ This is a code of connotations which utilizes hints or ‘flickers of meaning’

3. **The symbolic code**. This code is linked to theme. This is the code of recognizable ‘groupings’ or configurations, regularly repeated in various modes and by various means in the text, which ultimately generates the dominant figure in the carpet.

1. **The ‘cultural’ code** (or ‘reference’ code) This code manifests itself as a ‘gnomic’, collective, anonymous and authoritative voice which speaks for and about what it aims to establish as ‘accepted’ knowledge or wisdom.
2. **The proairetic code** This is the code of ‘actions’ (p. 18). Derived from the concept of proairesis, ‘the ability rationally to determine the result of an action’, this code is also embodied in seq

**SEMIOTIQUE IS SEMIOSIS**

Semiosis is a given system (therefore virtual) of a given quality of sign (may be of any of the three kinds usually systematized: icons, indexes or symbols or others emerging from their combination), from which are being constructed the semiotic expressions (therefore existential) with which the members of a given community shape (visually, behaviorally or conceptually) their environment.

* 1. **Semiotic Object**

Is what is known about the object or phenomenon. “semiotic object” designates what we know about a given entity at a given moment because it comes constructed from a sign. The possible identification of the two objects of knowledge: the signsand the semiotic objects. In both cases we are in presence of signs, but they perform different semiotic functions, in a sense close to that of Louis Hjelmslev when he spoke of “semiotic function” and not of “sign” (1971/1966: 49). When we call them “*signs*”, we bear in mind their effectiveness to *produce* what we call *“semiotic objects”*;

- When we call them *“semiotic objects”* we bear in mind the *result* of their productive effectiveness, but, in both cases, it is about signs. That is why a *semiotic object can perform a function of sign* when it produces the identification of other semiotic objects; and *a sign can be considered as semiotic object* when we bear in mind the sign that has produced it.

Semiotization of object consists in grounding the explanation on the textuality of one or more given semiosis i.e., on the materiality of the discourses in force, not only verbal, but also visual, auditory (musical), gestural, behavioral, etc. in a given text.

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“Semiotic object” is what is known about the object or phenomenon.

**Sign**

The following statement deserves our scrutiny:“ **le signe signifie, mais devenu forme, il aspire à se signifier, il crée son nouveau sens, il se cherche un contenu, il lui donne une vie jeune par des associations, par des dislocations de moules verbaux »** ( Henri Focillon, *Vie des formes*, 1943, p.8)

Sign is the central term in the problems of semiotics. We will see timely its explicit definitions, either that of Saussure and those posed by Peirce, Morris and others.

1. Syntactically, we can say that the sign is an enclave in a context, from which is developed a set of given and normed relations (in an absolute way or with margins of variability), foreseen from a given system of possibilities, with the remaining enclaves of its own context.
2. .Semantically, we could say that the sign is the smaller part of a perceptual proposal that attributes signification to something different from itself in the world
3. Referentially, we would say that the sign is the most elementary concept that can be identified in another perceptual proposal.

* New classification of sign by ECO ( *Signe* paris, Editions Labor, (1980), 1988, p.48-53, 56) **Umberto Eco (** -2018)

ECO formulated an initial classification wherein he distinguishes artificial signs and natural signs.

*Artificial signs* are divided into two classes: (1) signs intentionally produced in order to signify; (2) signs intentionally produced as functions ( sign of first function, sign of second function and sign of twofold function/ double function)

Natural signs are divided into two classes: (1) signs identified with natural things or events; (2) signs unintentionally produced by a human agent ( joy, fever, etc).

Further Eco harps upon Morris findings to draw a complex but more detailed approach to sign as object or as behavior. Thus something can be an Object or a Behaviour

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| OBJECT | BEHAVIOUR |
| ( in some relation)  CONSIDERED AS REPRESENTATION  INDICATIVE | (In some relation)  CONSIDERED AS REPRESENTATION  DESIGNATIVE |
| (for something) IF THE REPRESENTATION IS INDICATIVE IT WILL BE  a (I) SIGNAL that is interpreted as:  1. ICON  2. INDEX  3. SYMBOL  NB: (to somebody) WHO INTERPRETS IT ATTRIBUTING TO IT THE QUALITY OF: | IF THE REPRESENTATION IS DESIGNATIVE IT WILL BE:  a (I) UNIQUE OBJECT that is interpreted as:   * 1. ICON   2. INDEX   3. 3. SYMBOL |
| Shall be an (II) INDICATION that is interpreted as:  1. ICON  2. INDEX  3. SYMBOL | Will be a (II)PROTOTYPE that is interpreted as:  1. ICON  2. INDEX  3. SYMBOL |

* 1. **Interpretation**

is the sum of the characteristics of substituted semiosis that can be identified in a given object, by virtue of the knowledge which refers to it. That is, by virtue of the set of discourses/semiosis that can be applied to it, or, what everyone knows (with the full range of differences which this implies) about an object.

* Meaning is not inherent in objects, objects do not signify by themselves. Meaning, rather, is constructed by what is known as a competent observer, i.e. by a subject capable of 'giving form' to objects.
* Semiotics views the text, any text, as an autonomous unit, that is, one that is internally coherent. Rather than starting with ideas/ meanings external to the text and showing how they are reflected within it, an approach that is still widely adopted in the academic world.
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