

- Genesis 1:14 "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as **signs** to mark sacred times, and days and years...'"
- Genesis 1:27 "So God created mankind in his own **image**, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."
- Sura 17:1 "Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose environs We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our **signs**. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing."

This course sets out to introduce students to twentieth-century theories of signs and images. What is a sign? What is semiotics? Is a sign always also an image? Are signs and images natural or social, or does this distinction even make sense? How do signs and images *work*? What is the correlation between signs, images and what we tend now to call "markers" of things like race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and so on? How and why are signs and images so hotly contested in lived religion? These are some of the questions I intend to take up and explore with you. As always, I also expect you to bring and persist in raising your own sets of questions.

Each week students need to submit a response to the class. This response must be short, no more than 300 words, and the content of these responses will rotate among three tasks: (a) capturing a critical summary of the **argument** of one primary text, (b) explicating and assessing **key terms** in one primary text, or (c) crafting **critical and substantial questions**. The questions will be presented at the start of seminar. The key terms will be handed out to seminar participants for discussion, and the argument of one text by one student will be presented after break (all other argument papers will be handed in for my comment). These responses will encompass 50% of the seminar grade.

In addition, I expect each student to compose a critical summary on at least one secondary text (either on the syllabus or decided on in consultation with me) and present it to the seminar. (10% of seminar grade) Finally, the seminar requires a final paper, but the type and length and orientation of this paper depends on your seniority in the department and on your particular intellectual goals. Therefore, I ask students to meet with me sometime during the first-second week of the semester so that we can begin a conversation about the kind of final paper most pertinent for you at this time. (40% of the seminar grade)

Final word. You will note that many of the weeks have an inordinate number of readings. The reason lies in the many directions this seminar can go. Since I expect the enrollment to be fairly low in this seminar, it seems best that we make decisions as we go along.

PART I. Sign, Semeiosis, Semiotics

- I. January 21:
 - a. Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith and the Film today";
 - b. *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics* (6, 7, 9);
 - c. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, chapter 1

- II. January 28: Peirce (Buchler) and Saussure (CGL)
 - a. Peirce, "The Principles of Phenomenology," "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" (Buchler 6, 7, 16); "On a New List of Categories"
 - b. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, selections
 - c. Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics* (3-53)
 - d. Culler's *Ferdinand de Saussure* (15-26, 85-94, 134-150)
 - e. Michael Leja, "Peirce, Visuality and Art", *representations* 72 (2000): 97-122

- III. February 4: Walter Benjamin
 - a. "On Language as Such and the Language of Man"
 - b. "The Task of the Translator"
 - c. "On the Mimetic Faculty"
 - d. Sigrid Weigel, "Between Creation and Last Judgement [sic], the Creaturely and the Holy: Benjamin and Secularization" *Paragraph* 32:3 (2009), 359-381.

- IV. February 11: In and Around *Tel Quel*
 - a. Barthes "Myth Today" 1957 (*Mythologies*)
 - b. Barthes, "The Death of the Author" 1968 (*Image music text*)
 - c. Foucault, "What is an Author?" 1969 (*Language, Countermemory, Practice*)

- V. February 18: Foucault
 - a. Foucault, "Las Meninas" 1966
 - b. Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" 1970 (*Archaeology of Knowledge*)
 - c. Tim Murphy, "Elements of a Semiotic Theory of Religion", *MTSR* 15: 1 (2003), 48-67.

- VI. February 25: The Shift to Culture
 - a. Raymond Williams, "Culture," and "Language" from *Marxism and Literature* 1977
 - b. Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding" 1977
 - c. Baudrillard, "The Precession to Simulacrum," *Simulacra and Simulation* 1981
 - d. [Recommended: Homi Bhabha, "The Beginning of their Real Renunciation: Stuart Hall and the Work of Culture," *Critical Inquiry* Autumn 2015.]

- VII. March 3: Deleuze
 - a. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4-5. 1990
 - b. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*
 - c. Eve K. Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*

- VIII. March 10: Interruption
 - a. Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body* (selections + Afterword by Butler) 1981
 - b. Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 1983 (*Tales of Love*)
 - c. Butler, "On Linguistic Vulnerability," *Excitable Speech* 1997

- IX. **March 17: Spring Break**

PART II. Image and Visual Culture

- X. March 24: Frankfurt School
 - a. Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
 - b. Azoulay, *Death's Showcase*, Introduction and chapters 1-3 (2001)
 - c. Gold, "'Another Nature which Speaks to the Camera': Film and Translation in the Writings of Walter Benjamin" *MLN* 122:3 (2007): 602-22
 - d. Griselda Pollock, "The Dangers of Proximity: The Spaces of Sexuality and Surveillance in Word and Image", *Discourse* 16:2 (1993-4): 3-50.

- XI. March 31: Frankfurt School
 - a. Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"
 - b. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* 1977

- XII. April 7: Changing patterns of sight
 - a. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" 1945
 - b. McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (selections) 1964
 - c. Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 1980
 - d. [Recommended: Martin Jay, "The Camera as Memento Mori: Barthes, Metz and the Cahiers du Cinéma," chapter 8 of *Downcast Eyes*.]

- XIII. April 14: Structures of the Popular
 - a. Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"
 - b. Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture and Liberal Democracy* (selections). 2007
 - c. Ghosh, *Global Icons, Apertures to the Popular*. Introduction and Chapter 1. 2011

- XIV. April 21: Affect and Haptic Visuality
 - a. Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time Image* (selections).
 - b. Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, Intro and Chapter 1.
 - c. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. (selections) 2003.
 - d. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* Vol. 22:2 (2004), 117-139.

- XV. April 28: The new It-It relation (this one is still under construction)
 - a. Marks, Intro to *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensuous Media* (2002)
 - b. Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. 2004 (selections)
 - c. Marks, Intro to *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media* (2010)
 - d. Alexander Galloway, *The Exploit* (2007) and *The Interface Effect* (2012) (selections)
 - e. Adi Kuntsman, Introduction to her edited volume, *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion: feelings, affect and technological change*. Palgrave, 2012
 - f. Mark Hansen, *Feed Forward: On the Future of 21st century Media*. Chicago, 2015.