

**FRE 4930 / FRE 6735 / LIN 4930: Introduction to Semiotics**

**Spring 2017**

Tues 3:00 – 4:55 AND 13, Thurs 4:05-4:55 AND 19

Dr. Theresa A. Antes

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Spring 2017 Office Hours: Tues 12-2 pm

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Thurs. 2-3 pm and by apt.

**Course description:** This course will provide a general introduction to Semiotics, the study of signs. We will focus primarily on a linguistic approach to semiotics, focusing on ways that language is used signify meaning. Through a close examination of symbols, indexes and icons that derive from language but appear in other media, such as advertising, art, clothing, literature, and film and television, we will discuss how cultural differences shape message transmission in different languages and in multilingual societies. We will explore myth and metaphor, and examine ways that language and thought are shaped by forms of expression that we use, both denotative and connotative.

**Course objectives:** At the end of the semester, students will be able to define, explain and identify the use of different types of signs in language and media that surround them: icons, indexes and symbols. They will understand a speaker's / writer's goal in using different types of signs, and will be able to analyze texts critically to determine the communicative force of the language in those texts. They will be able to link linguistic to visual/aural/kinesthetic signs, and to think critically about cultural differences that are present, often implicitly, in those signs.

**Required textbook.** There is one required textbook for this course:

- Danesi, Marcel. *Messages, Signs and Meaning: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication Theory*. (2006) 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Canadian Scholars' Press.

Additionally, several other readings will be required throughout the course of the semester, as listed on your syllabus. These readings are all available for consultation on Canvas. The day that these readings are discussed, students are asked to bring a copy of the article to class with them. This article may be electronic or hardcopy, but to facilitate discussion, all students must have a copy in front of them. Some readings are posted in both French and English. Students registered for FRE 4930 / 6735 are asked to read the French version, when available.

Students are expected to come to class having read all material listed for that class period, and prepared to discuss it in detail. Active participation in this discussion is an essential component of the course, and will therefore constitute a considerable portion of your final grade. Attendance will be taken daily; unexcused absences will result in a 0 for participation for the day. Weekly reading assignments will generally not exceed 60 pages.

**This syllabus may be adjusted at any time for pedagogical purposes.**

**Course assignments:**

Reflection / reaction papers: Students will be required to turn in three reflection / reaction papers throughout the semester, as noted on your syllabus. Specific topics and length will be specified in class and posted on Canvas. Papers should be typed (double-spaced, 1" margins and 12 point font). Students enrolled in FRE 4930 / 6735 will write at least one of these papers in French.

Exams: There will be three 50-minute exams in this course.

Final take-home exam (FRE / LIN 4930). The final exam will be a take-home exam, to be turned in electronically no later than April 25 at 5:00 pm. It will consist primarily of reflection / reaction questions covering the entire semester. Students should be prepared to define / apply terms on this exam as well, however.

Research paper (FRE 6735). In lieu of a final exam, students enrolled in FRE 6735 will write a 12-15 page research paper on a topic of their choice involving semiotics and language. The topic must be approved in advance. A presentation of the research (in progress) will be made to the class on the last day of classes.

Grading System: Grades for be assigned for all required work, according to the distribution below. Late work will not be accepted without appropriate documentation.

**FRE 4930 / LIN 4930**

Reaction papers: 30%

Exams: 30%

Take home exam: 20%

Participation 20%

**FRE 6735**

Reaction papers: 24%

Exams: 30%

Presentation 6%

Research paper 20%

Participation 20%

Final Letter Grade: A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89%; B=83-86%; B-=80-82; C+=77-79%; C=73-76%; C-=70-72; D+=67-69%; D=63-66%; D-=60-62; E=below 60%. S is equivalent to C or better. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences requires that students earn a final grade of C or better (or S) in order satisfy general education requirements. Note that a C- does not satisfy this requirement; students must earn a C or better in the course in order to move on to the next course and satisfy general education requirements.

According to university guidelines, letter grades will convert to GPA as follows: A = 4.0; A- = 3.67; B+ = 3.33; B= 3; B- = 2.67; C+ = 2.33; C = 2.0; C- = 1.67; D+ = 1.33; D = 1.0; D- = .67; E = 0; WF = 0; I = 0 NG = 0; S-U = 0 For more information about grade calculation and GPA, refer to the UF undergraduate catalog: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All work on reflection / reaction papers, exams, presentations, and the final take-home exam must consist of the student's own independent work, without help from others. Resources must be properly cited.

The University of Florida statement regarding academic honesty and more specifically "giving and/or receiving unauthorized aid on student's work" reads as follows:

- "Giving information includes, but is not limited to, allowing other students to use or copy work or answers to exam questions either while the exam is being given or after having taken the exam.
- Further, the taking of information includes, but is not limited to, copying from the answers provided in the book or ancillary materials, copying from another student's paper [...], using information already written in books, [...], or asking anyone, students or not to review and/or correct assignments.
- Students found in violation of this policy will be referred to the appropriate administration for appropriate action according to the student judicial process.

Students may view the entire UF honor code at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Florida policy related to accommodations for students with disabilities reads as follows:

"Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation."

Students who believe they may qualify for accommodations should contact the Dean of Students Office: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/current.php>

## RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students and faculty must cooperate to allow each person to observe the holy days of his or her faith. Following UF policy, a student must **inform** the faculty member of the religious observances of his or her faith that will **conflict** with class attendance, with tests or examinations, or with other class activities **prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity. No make-ups will be given after a holiday unless arrangements were made in advance with the instructor.**

## ELECTRONICS IN CLASS

Use of electronics for anything other than coursework is distracting to both you and those seated around you, and will not be tolerated. It is expected that you will silence all electronic equipment upon entering the classroom and that you will use your laptop only to take notes or

discuss a reading. (Emergency exceptions should be brought to the attention of your instructor.) Consultation of email, social media or text messages during class will result in loss of your participation points for the day.

## **COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> . Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

## **STUDENTS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY**

Should you find, at any point in the semester, that you are experiencing difficulty, please do not hesitate to come see me during office hours. Please note, too, that UF provides mental health counselors for students who would like to discuss personal issues that may be affecting course performance. You may request an appointment at [www.umatter.ufl.edu](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu).

## Weekly Calendar

Thursday, Jan. 6: Introduction. What is Semiotics?

Barthes: The Kitchen of Meaning / La Cuisine du sens (Canvas)

Tues. Jan. 9: Danesi Ch. 1: What is Semiotics? Sign Theory.

Saussure: Nature of Linguistic Sign; Linguistic Value / Nature du signe linguistique; la valeur linguistique (Canvas)

Thurs. Jan. 11: Danesi Ch. 2: Basic Sign Theory

Tues. Jan. 17: Sign Theory (cont) Johansen & Larsen Ch. 3 (Canvas)

Danesi Ch. 5: Language

Thurs. Jan. 19: Sound symbolism – Sadowski: “The Sound as an Echo to Sense” (Canvas)

Tues. Jan. 24: Written and non-written language – Arnfield: “Money. Armed. Quietly” (Canvas)

Zender “Advancing Icon Design” (Canvas)

Thurs. Jan. 26: **Exam 1**

Tues. Jan. 31: Danesi Ch. 6 Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson “Metaphors We Live By” pp 3-21, 46-51, 126-138 (Canvas)

Thurs. Feb. 2: Visual representation of metaphor (Canvas)

Tues. Feb. 7: Language of Death

Crespo Fernandez “Euphemistic conceptual metaphors in epitaphs from Highgate Cemetery” (Canvas)

Thurs. Feb. 9: Obituaries (Canvas)

**Reaction / reflection paper due**

Tues. Feb. 14: Danesi Ch. 14 Advertising

McIlwain: “Race, Pigskin and Politics” (Canvas)

Thurs. Feb. 16: **Exam 2**

Tues. Feb. 21: Oswald: The Structural Semiotics Paradigm for Marketing Research (Canvas)

Thurs. Feb. 23: Branding – “How brands (don’t) do things” (Canvas)

NY Times Opinion Piece – Cleveland Indians Logo (Canvas)

Tues. Feb. 28: Danesi Ch. 7 Myth (+ Reading TBD)

Thurs. Mar. 2: Barthes Mythologies (Photography and Electoral Appeal; The Brain of Einstein)

**Reaction / reflection paper due**

Tues. Mar. 7 – Thurs. Mar. 9: Spring break, No class

Tues. Mar. 14: Danesi Ch. 8: Art

Medfis & Arford: The Dilemmas of symbolic representation (Canvas)

Thurs. Mar. 16: Danesi Ch. 12: Architecture

Tues. Mar. 21: **Exam 3**

**Wed: Guest speaker on Versailles, details TBA**

Thurs. Mar. 23: McMurtrie – The Meaning of [exiting] (Canvas)

Tues. Mar. 28: Danesi Ch. 10: Food

Calefato et al. – Food-ography (Canvas)

Thurs. Mar. 30: Mehta: Culinary diasporas (Canvas) **or**

Cavanaugh: Il y a kébab et kébab (Canvas)

Tues. Apr. 4: Danesi Ch. 13: Television / Cinema

Gaines: “Narrative semiotics of the *Daily Show*” (Canvas)

Thurs. Apr. 6: Flores: “Coppola’s Marie Antoinette” (Canvas)

Tues. Apr. 11: Danesi Ch. 9: Clothing, Ch. 11 Objects

Gender differences in color naming (Canvas)

Thurs. Apr. 13: Barthes: Semantics of the Object (Canvas)

**Reaction / reflection paper due**

Tues. Apr. 18: Graduate student presentations; Conclusions

Take home exam (4930) / Final papers (6735) due: no later than Tues. Apr. 25, 5:00 pm. Early submissions gladly accepted.