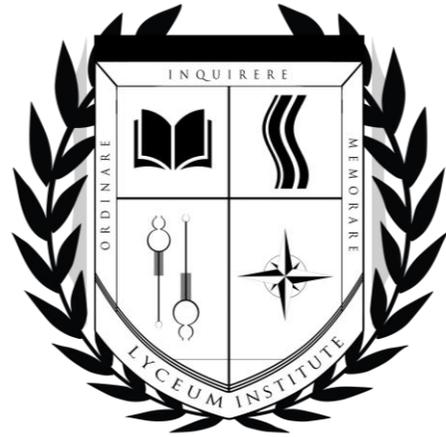


SEMIOTICS: CULTURAL WORLD OF THE SIGN

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[WINTER 2022]

« »

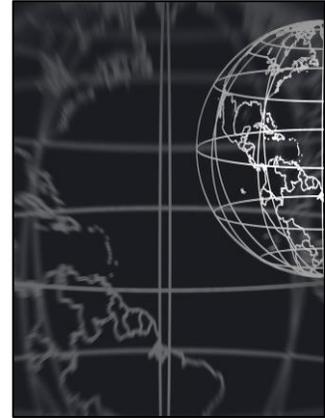


DESCRIPTION

What is reality? As a noun and as its adjectival derivative, we recognize its importance—we say that something is *not* real, and thereby lessen it, or say that something *is* real, and thereby magnify it. But do we know what it means? We may say the tree outside is real, as is the dog sniffing it; the houses in which we live are real; we say our emotions are real. But is that emotional reality the same as that had by the tree, the dog, or the house?

We see this struggle exhibited most profoundly, though perhaps least conscientiously, at the level of culture: in the existence of institutions, laws, communities, in the questions concerning words and ideas. Where does the work of art exist? Is a tradition a mere patterned performance of actions, or does it consist in something more? In this seminar, we will undertake to understand the nature of these cultural realities: for although they are existentially relative and cognition-dependent, cultural beings nonetheless are **real**, and have an importance—psychological, moral, even spiritual—founded upon but irreducible to natural and existentially substantial cognition-independent entities.

This study will therefore focus on the contributions of semioticians—especially Yuri Lotman and John Deely—in establishing and understanding the importance of cultural reality. We will therefore undertake to understand the *Umwelt* and *Lebenswelt*, the *Bildendwelt*, the influence of the future on the past, diachrony and synchrony, textuality, codes, and the relation between self and culture.



METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading of semiotics, primarily but not exclusively in the work of John Deely. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. This is an **advanced** seminar and one *cannot* participate well without a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis, and will be challenged to do so directly.

READING

The primary texts for this seminar are John Deely 1994: *The Human Use of Signs, or, Elements of Anthroposemiosis* and Yuri Lotman 1990: *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. There will be many other required readings, however, as well as some recommended readings, all of which will be provided as PDF files, drawing on both the Peircean semiotic and Saussurian semiological traditions. Participants (especially those looking to **complete** and not merely **audit** the seminar—see below) are expected to read beyond the required assignments. **Readings are subject to change.**

LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 10:00-11:00am ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

AUDITS OR COMPLETES

Beginning in 2022, all Lyceum Institute seminar participants will be able to either **audit** the seminar or **complete** the seminar. To **complete** the seminar, the participant **must** submit an essay of 2000+ words pertaining to the subject. This essay may be evaluated for publication in *Reality* and will be included in each Lyceum Institute member's profile, along with the mark of auditing or completing.

SESSION SCHEDULE

<p>January 15</p>	<p>The Meaning of World</p> <p>Lecture: The Patterning of Relations.</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "Definition of Umwelt", <i>What Distinguishes Human Understanding?</i> 126-43. • Lotman, "Semiotic Space" "The Notion of Boundary", <i>Universe of the Mind</i> 123-42. <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kemple, "The phenomenology of Being-in-the-world" <i>The Intersection of Semiotics and Phenomenology</i>, 86-95.
<p>January 22</p>	<p>Language and the Cultural World</p> <p>Lecture: Linguistically Constituted Patterns.</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lotman, "Preface", "Three functions of the text" and "Autocommunication: 'I' and 'Other' as addressees" <i>Universe of the Mind</i> 1-35. <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunç, "Transformative Communication as Semiotic Scaffolding of Cognitive Development" in <i>The American Journal of Semiotics</i>, 35.1-2: 117-54. • Semenenko, "<i>Homo polyglottus</i>: Semiosphere as a model of human cognition" in <i>Sign Systems Studies</i> 44.4: 494-510.
<p>January 29</p>	<p>The Cultural World and the Natural Sign</p> <p>Lecture: Logos and the Word.</p> <p>Required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritain, "Language and the Theory of Sign" in <i>Frontiers in Semiotics</i>, 51-62. • Deely, "Ferdinand de Saussure and Semiotics" in <i>Semiotics</i> 1995, 71-83. • Winner, "Semiotics of Culture" in <i>Frontiers in Semiotics</i>, 181-84.
<p>February 5</p>	<p>Fundamental Nature of Signification</p> <p>Lecture: Universe of Semiotic Reality.</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "Preliminaries" and "Part I. Signification" in <i>The Human Use of Signs</i>, 1-51. <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houser, "Thinking at the Edges" in <i>The American Journal of Semiotics</i>, 36.1-2: 95-116. • Randviir and Kull, "Bridging Sebeok and the Tartu circle" in <i>Chinese Semiotic Studies</i>, 17.4: 575-86.
<p>February 12</p>	<p>BREAK</p>
<p>February 19</p>	<p>Signification and the Constitution of World</p> <p>Lecture: Temporality and Semiosis.</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "The Sign – Arbitrariness or Historicity" in <i>Purely Objective Reality</i>. <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peirce, "What is a Sign?" in <i>The Essential Peirce</i>, 2: 4-11. • Peirce, "Nomenclature and Division of Triadic Relations" in <i>The Essential Peirce</i>, 2: 289-99.

<p>February 26</p>	<p>Semiotic Textuality Lecture: Codification and Meaning. Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "Part II. Textuality" in <i>The Human Use of Signs</i>, 53-82. • Ibid, glosses 4, 14, and 15.
<p>March 5</p>	<p>Semiotic World-Awareness Lecture: Conscious Control and the Development of Meaning. Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "Part III. Critick" in <i>The Human Use of Signs</i>, 83-119. <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peirce, "Pragmatism" [Variant 1] in <i>The Essential Peirce</i>, 2: 398-421.
<p>March 12</p>	<p>Complexification of the Real Lecture: Nature, Culture, and Coherence. Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deely, "Part IV. Otherness" in <i>The Human Use of Signs</i>, 121-133. • Kemple, "Signs and Reality" in <i>Reality</i> 1.1.