

Introduction

- Semiotics
- Some key concepts and ideas
 - Signifier/signified/wider meanings
- Fashion/clothing
- Meanings
- Myth
- Binary oppositions
- Some debates about semiotics
- Learning outcome 3 – develop in-depth textual analysis and research skills
- Semiotics in films (6.14 mins)

What is a sign?

- Sign – anything which produces meaning
- Signs convey meaning
- But signs produce meaning
- Signs refer to things in the world

Q: What do these images refer to?





Semiotics

- Saussure
- Signs work like language
- With underlying codes and structure
- Semiotics – starting point
- Provides a framework
- Mode of address

Signifier

- When you hear a word e.g. Koala, Kangaroo
- You have a mental impression of the sound
- Which invokes the concept
- The mental impression of the sound is the signifier
- The concept invoked is the signified
- Your mental picture might be different from mine

SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED

- No natural link between signifier and signified
- It is arbitrary
- Certain signifiers often get used in connection with certain sets of signifieds



How a sign takes on meaning

- May depend on variety of factors
- e.g. Meanings which surround it
- A sign may get meanings from other signs - through what it is not
- Semiotics = system of differences
- A signifier can have more than one signified
- Accord to context E.g. herb/weed
- Signs in the news (2.58 mins)



Semiotics and culture

- Saussure – although obvious
- Not enough attention paid to the implications
- Ideologies are prevalent in particular cultures
- So receiving a message, or reading a text
- Is an active process of decoding
- A process that is culturally and socially conditioned



CODES

- The meaning a sign is given comes from the code within which it operates
- Codes are social constructions shared by a group
- Signs are not value free
- Everything in our social life has the potential to mean something
- What clothes we wear is a choice that signifies something
- Semiotics - study of signs (3.25 mins)



BINARY OPPOSITIONS

- Lévi-Strauss influenced semiotics
- Focus on binary oppositions
- Myth – is where the meaning identified seems to be the only natural meaning
- ([Signs, myths and Hashtags](#)) (7.49 mins)
- Hides the semiotic working of a text
- So that myth appear true
 - Denotation – denotes, describes, points to something
 - Connotation – signified, wider meaning

MAN VS WOMAN
WHITE (GOOD) VS BLACK (BAD)
YOUNG VS OLD
HERO VS VILLAIN
NICE VS EVIL



Steps to follow

- Signs – denotations – connotations and codes – myths – binary oppositions
- Commutation test
 - Does changing 1 element change the meaning?
- Wider meanings
- Use the terms – Signifier, signified, myth, binary oppositions

Assignment 1 Details

- Semiotic analysis
- Semiotics – image(s) included. URLs in appendix
- Define semiotics (3 academic sources to do this)
- [Look at the video by Dr Jill Terry/Dr Barbara Mitra to help you](#)
- More than description of what is there
- Think about ideology/myth
- Need introduction, conclusion and list of references.

Summary

- What is the signifier
 - The actual image or sound.
- What is the signified
 - The concept or concepts invoked by the image or sound
- What is meant by myth
 - The meaning that seems to be the natural meaning and appears to be true
- What are binary oppositions
 - Oppositions in myth systems and in language
- What are the criticisms of semiotics
 - Subjective, may be more than one dominant readings, environmental influences, hard to apply to moving images (e.g. films)
- Assignment 1 details – see handouts/example

References

- Branston, G. & Stafford, R. (2010) *The Media Student's Book*, Oxon
- Chandler, D. (2014) *Semiotics for Beginners*. [Online] <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem06.html> [Accessed 8th October 2015]
- Longhurst, B., Smith, G. , Bagnall, G., Crawford, G. & Ogborn, M. (2008) *Introducing Cultural Studies*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
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