

Course Syllabus

Course Information

ATCM 6395.001

ATC 2.101

4.00-6.45

Semiotics: The Why? Question

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ATEC Building

Office Hours: Wednesday 3.00-5.00 pm and by appointment

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Graduate class

Nothing is a sign unless interpreted as a sign. This suggests that everything that can substitute for something else is of semiotic interest. With semiotics, we are in the domain of meaning, and this is the subject matter of ATEC.

This graduate class was suggested by our own students. In particular, they wanted to know what semiotics is good for—the **Why?** question. Students will research semiotic aspects pertinent to their focus. This class is project-driven. The outcome: an original application that reflects YOUR area of research.

Presentations in class-- an example: “Define your semiotic identity”—should help make semiotic methodology part of your skill set. There is reading involved, and creative work is expected. To know is to make something with your knowledge.

By the way, a remark for the current context is Umberto Eco’s take on semiotics— “...everything that can be used in order to lie”—which resonates well beyond his intention. The class will address computation, machine learning/AI, semiotic engineering, but also culture, politics, society and, of course, education—the biggest semiotic enterprise. The semiotic identity of ATEC is one of our class projects!

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

1. Semiotic competence translates as the ability to perform in the meaning domain of human activity.
 2. Semiotics is foundational for those working in emerging media, games, design, or digital arts. It provides conceptual tools for defining goals, means and methods for achieving them, criteria for evaluation of the performance.
 3. In our class, semiotics is seen as the “mathematics” of art and design but also as the bridge between technology and your future field of creative work. More precisely, it provides a foundation for understanding the characteristics of interactive arts, for experimenting, for advancing innovation. Concretely, students will explore:
 - a) Knowledge of semiotics, as it shaped, and continues to shape, human activity in general, and in particular the emerging interactive forms of aesthetic expression
 - b) Semiotic skills, expressed in semiotic applications pertinent to your field of interest
 - c) Semiotic innovation in the age of interactive media and computational design
 4. Semiotic competence will reflect upon defining your goals (current projects, degree projects, innovative applications leading to new opportunities).
 5. The class will engage students in reading working on concrete projects (cf. assignments and calendar)
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Required Textbooks and Materials

Mihai Nadin, *The Civilization of Illiteracy*—available in the UTD store and on-line (www.nadin.ws or the Gutenberg Project site)

Mihai Nadin and Richard Zakia *Signs for Success. Creating Effective Advertising*. Consultant Press, 1994

Suggested Course Materials

Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners* ,

<http://visualmemory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>

Mihai Nadin—*Semiotics is Fundamental Science*, in *Knowledge Discovery, Transfer, and Management in the Information Age*, **Jennex, Murray E. – 2013**

<http://www.nadin.ws/archives/2242>

Russell Daylight, *The Difference Between Semiotics and Semiology*

<http://www.enl.auth.gr/gramma/gramma12/B.1.pdf>

A full list of publications on semiotic subjects will be made available in class. All publications authored by Mihai Nadin are accessible on www.nadin.ws (check under Semiotics)

Please prepare a website for your projects—and share the address with your peers. This is NOT a required project, rather a suggested platform for interaction.

YouTube available resources (between excellent and submediocre)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4SJ2z9I0jQ&list=PL-of4HBxbY3iAleHQEhu2bcOx4t6xiDVM&index=11>

Jake Rich: Semiotic and ideologic analysis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mA_LM-WMC1A&t=1s
Chris Arning: What is Semiotics? A short film by Creative Semiotics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZb7NFGbKhg>
an introduction to Semiotics, the types of signs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGYOHKCigAo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TM_11KnUI4
American Beauty semiotic Essay

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO9xl5n9aYI>
Introduction to semiotics--Yale

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEqxTKUP_WI
Yale-semiotics the study of signs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbO6E1Da4Ec>
Making Sense—semiotics of the visual

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeXjEUZNswY>
Aaron Marcus—principles of visual semiotics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov917TdHbBw>
From Australia

Assignments & Academic Calendar

(Topics, Reading Assignments, Due Dates, Exam Dates)

Tuesday, August 22nd

Semiotics in context

1. Semiotics in context

We live in the age of semiotic activity

First assignment: define your semiotic identity

We all carry a name, we have a birthdate; we are identified through categories such as gender (what about fluid gender?!), through a Social Security number (or some similar identifier for those who are not USA citizens), through what we wear, what we eat, what music we listen to, medical history (*anamnesis*), academic record, etc., etc.

How would you define your semiotic identity in a manner that makes it easy for others to relate to you, that represents you in a manner that allows for better communication,

that communicates your values, that says who you are and what you intend to accomplish?

Use whatever you know already about semiotics, or ignore semiotics altogether. Use whichever means you feel comfortable with, and test your semiotic identity with at least 3 persons,

- a. without disclosing what it is (you show them the semiotic representation) and ask for their interpretation
- b. telling what it is (this is ME semiotically represented)—and ask if it makes sense
- c. asking for suggestions that will help you improve your semiotic identity.

Presentation in class: September 5th

The presentation should integrate your semiotic identity, the feedback (i.e., the 3 test results from a, b, c), and how it impacted your work.

Read: Signs for Success. Creating Effective Advertising. This is an easy read with examples of semiotics applied.

Tuesday, August 29

2. Semiotic theories—an overview

Main subjects in contemporary semiotics

Tuesday, September 5

3. Presentation of semiotic identity project

An example of applied semiotics

Tuesday, September 12

4. The semiotic identity of ATEC

You are students in the ATEC School of the University of Texas at Dallas. How would you define the School's semiotic identity?

You will work on this project for 3 weeks (We will invite Sally Mendiola and Chad Phillips who are working on the same project for the presentation.) If you care for the school within which you are earning a future for yourself, you should be able to use your creative abilities and semiotic knowledge for making suggestions.

The roles:

- a) The ATEC School as the client, commissioned you, given your credentials and portfolio;
- b) You are the semiotic "engineer": designer, artist, whatever it takes to created a semiotic identity

Goal: convey the School's mission and functions as you see them. **(See below, Class 7, for details for the project.)**

Be ready to present during Class 7 (October 3)

Tuesday, September 19

5. Continuing the Apple project presentation and discussion of applied semiotics

Tuesday, September 26

6. Computers and semiotics—the semiotic machine?! Or maybe not.

Tuesday, October 3

7. Presentation of your ATEC semiotic identity project

Tuesday, October 10

8. Semester project:

Define the activity/the concrete endeavor/the subject of interest to you. Keep it close to your current research or to what you intend to approach in the degree project (capstone or dissertation). Define the project:

- a) What? Why? How?
- b) Apply semiotics to this project. It can be a game, an interactive media production, sound design, social media, or ... you name it.
- c) Define the goal
- d) Define criteria for evaluation

Share the project with the class in order to build your semiotic interaction.

Deadline: Class 15, November 21.

Tuesday, October 17

9. Written test in class: a subject from the literature list. It can be *The Civilization of Illiteracy*, or some other text. Summarize the content and explain the semiotic significance of the text you chose.

Computers and semiotics

Tuesday, October 24

10. Narration and story.

In addition: we shall discuss the outcome of the class test

Tuesday, October 31

11. Biosemiotics

Tuesday, November 7

12. Semiotics and Ontology engineering
How do we teach computers our language.

Tuesday, November 7

13. Semiotics and learning. Machine learning and deep learning

Tuesday, November 14

14. The semiotics of America today
Open forum. Feel free to invite colleagues who might have their say in the matter.

Tuesday, November 21

15. Presentation of semester project

Tuesday, November 28

16. Loose ends
The subject of semiotics is as open as infinite semiosis. Semiotic celebration (surprise me!)
Evaluation your semester activity.

Grading Policy

(including percentages for assignments, grade scale, etc.)

Reading, writing, independent research, timeliness of project presentation and class participation will be considered. The following is a breakdown of the variables considered in grading:

Attendance	10%
Class Participation and projects	45%
Final semester project	45%

Course & Instructor Policies

Class attendance and individual research at a level of a graduate seminar are **very** important.

Make sure you are on time and ready to learn!

All projects require that you acquire skills and knowledge for independent work.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change as the semester unfolds and student needs related to the class require such changes.