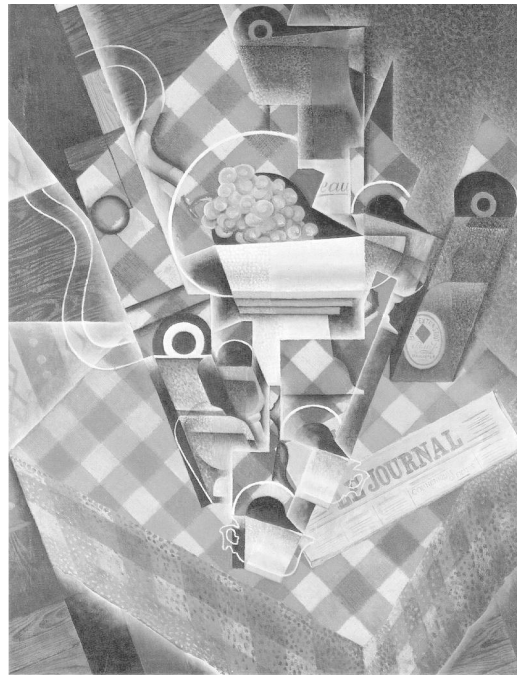


SEMIOTICS

SEMINARS & LECTURES



SPRING SEMESTER 1999

Center for Semiotics
UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

Juan Gris: *The open window*. 1921.

INTRODUCTION

by Per Aage Brandt

Semiotics, generally speaking, as semiotics likes to do, at least as much as any other discipline of the Humanities, is the study of **meaningfulness**: of what is meaningful, and why. **Why** is a particularly relevant question, since everything seems at least sometimes to be meaningful, so the list of meaningful things would be endless and chaotic. But nothing is in fact inherently meaningful as such, not even language, otherwise the best candidate by far; nothing makes sense, unless it is brought to do so by the presence of favorable conditions, of which some are cultural and others natural. The natural conditions normally present in human minds are automatic and cognitive—the neurally based phenomenology of our species, displayed in a world like ours—whereas the cultural conditions are conscious (non-automatic) and dependent on special knowledge available only to some minds; these minds acquire it from other minds by communication or from the world by experience. Language is a liminal case, since its meaningfulness is partly natural, in this sense, and partly cultural, also in this sense. Language is a particularly powerful conditioner in making other things meaningful, most probably **the** decisive conditioner which makes things around it **so** meaningful that they institute people around them as cultures—by making these people meaningful to each other. No wonder that language is often thought of as the main source of ‘meaning’ as such (namely by people thinking that ‘meaning’ (of life) is **to be** meaningful themselves). But it is not. Otherwise, linguistics would be ethnology or sociology, and grammar would be the study of society; but they are not. In order for language to do this (semiotize things), it has to be possible in itself, to be quasi-automatically meaningful in itself; and therefore it has to fulfil its natural conditions: its structures must respect humanly possible experience and follow some possible principles of such experiences. It cannot arise from communication alone. It has to be **about**

something, and this something cannot be communication only. We are not primarily talking about talking, even in politics. And even if that were the case, the talking we would be talking about would be naturally experienced talk, ‘cognized’ talking. Aboutness is called semantics. Language picks up semantic structure from our bodily doings, our sensory perceptions, the way we use our memory, or phantasize, the way the world around us organizes its events and co-organizes them, the way we think about the way the world does this. The way we think of ourselves also, and of what happens between us (including emotions and passions). The things that language picks up, in this sense, ends up as a structure in it. The things that language does not pick up are the things language is instead **about** (it is not about what is in it, even if it sometimes also happens to be in it), and that it expresses some thought of. Very often, language then is instead about some other things, namely signs—symbols, icons: diagrams, models, works of art...—and those are then, according to language, the things that are about what the thought is about, according to language. Sentences like: “This is red” or “That is circular”, are in fact rather rare, seldom heard; only affective predications are that direct: “This is cute!”. Most sentences call things something before presenting a predicate about them: “And this ignorant bore is a professor!”—thereby letting the last man’s gnomic properties include something to see him through or understand him by. Language is never autonomous; it leans on non-linguistic mental manipulations with things mostly (but by no means exclusively) outside the mind’s own domain. In order to work, language has to be surrounded and accompanied by other ‘meaning-makers’, which it then supports and reinforces emphatically or contradicts ironically (cf. **and** in the last example). The work of language includes in this sense its ‘aesthetics’: rhetorics, poetics, and speech-act dramaturgy (pragmatics) all belong to the study of its necessary resources. These resources are simply implicitly presupposed when its pure grammar is discussed. Linguistics is embedded in semiotics. Its semiotic accompaniment makes it meaningful. But even so, it then makes itself even more so—meaningful enough to be grammatically discussed, and in a meaningful way. **How** this comes about is one of the deeper problems of the human mind; it is the main reason for semiotics treating language as a privileged ‘sign system’, capable of educating itself, so to speak, as if it were its own child. It does not generate itself, though, even in ‘pure grammar’, since the constructions we find in this noble discipline, are still 1) more of an unordered list than of a generative calculus, and 2) always interpretable in terms of some presupposed forms of experience, with which they are more coherently apparented than with each other. The solution to this problem (of the ‘overdetermination’ of language by itself) seems, once more, to be of the semiotic kind: when we **present** it, we also **represent** it as presented, and present it as represented—it echoes itself in the speakers’ space, and the echo ‘educates’ the original, corrects and elaborates it, and the corrected version’s echo does the same to its source, and so on. It is, probably for this reason, inherently normative; it is spiritually unresting, and thereby reflexively and transitively yielding meaningfulness, in so far as we, its far from intellectually humble users, are never satisfied with it, and can never be, since it is always still half-chaotic, since it is rooted in cognitively semiotic things around it, outside it, ahead of it...

In the invitation to this year’s winter symposium (January 1999) on a semio-linguistic theme: **The Role of Lan-**

guage in Cognition and Culturalization, we wrote:

“The concept of Language and the project of Linguistics are no longer isolated concerns of ‘theorizing’; human cognition as currently studied offers a realistic basis of semantics 1) as experienced meaning of real events, acts, and states of things, 2) as structurally organized contents of expressive behaviors of different kinds, including language, and 3) as a neurally processed and designed, i.e. evolutionarily given condition for the formation of socio-cultural Communication, Institutions, and Persons.

Human imagination and imagery; iconicity and symbolization; aesthetics and psycho-phenomenology (attention, volition, emotion, empathy); and other immaterial occurrences grounded in perception, evaluation, and expression—from the most to the least embodied—all seem analyzable in terms of semantico-semiotic models that show principles of meaningfulness shared by a large variety of genres and phenomena.

Still, language might be specifyable in this broader context as a part of cognitive architecture, even if its particular internal structures—lexical and phonological, clausal and phrasal, morphological—are standing on ‘open’ semantic grounds (and are thus semio-linguistic); and as a part which may be of particular importance for culturalization, or cultural differentiation and specialization, since its ‘texts’ support the specialization of human symbolization more than other ‘media’ do. Language, in fact, seems to drive symbols out of embodied frames of meaning (and into ‘abstract’ frames), and also to drive things and other occurring figurative phenomena out of their immediate contexts and into symbolic, or at least intentional, frames of interpretation. In the last instance, it even drives itself into ‘meaning something else’ than what it immediately does, by offering us this both detailed and extensive reproductibility of its linear texts: unembodied speakers, ‘abstract enunciators’, thus letting institutions and traditions speak and think for us, interpret things autonomously, and transform cognizing individuals into their ‘channels’. Would it then be possible to elaborate a coherent theory of culture and cultures—of values, ‘differences’, identities, etc.—as a realistic alternative to the nominalistic styles of cultural studies currently practised in the Humanities?”

There are many more things to discover here, to invent, and to discuss; some of which will be thought about, presented and represented in this semester’s seminars, whose general outlines you will find on the following pages.

PAaB

SEMINAR ON GENERAL SEMIOTICS

by Per Aage Brandt. **Wednesdays, 14-17. Auditorium 221.**

THE SEMANTICS OF BLENDING

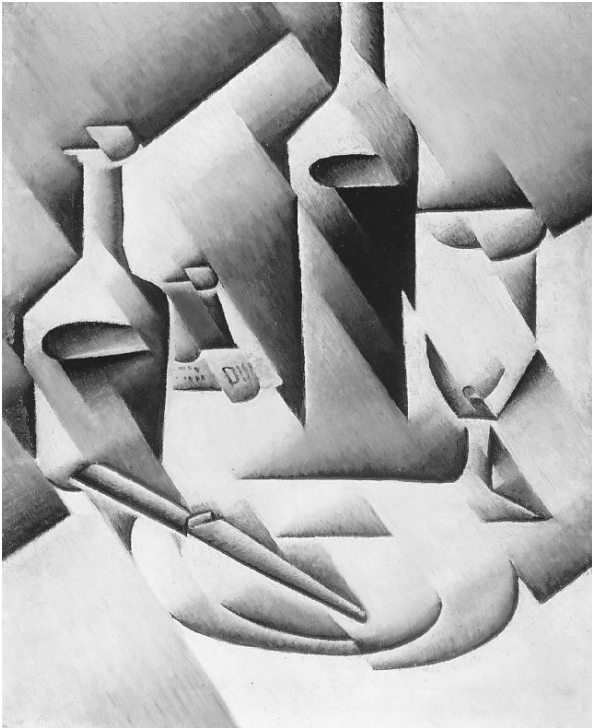
February 3	Mental spaces and blending: what is NOT a blend?
February 17	Blending in grammar and rhetoric (constructions, figures, tropes)
March 3	Blending in reasoning (conditionals, causation)
March 17	Narration is blending (diegesis, viewpoint, voice)
April 7	Blends, spaces, and the semantic domains (more on metaphor)
April 21	Blends and beauty (aesthetic composition, interpretation)
May 5	Blended phenomenology and psychic minds (affectivity)
May 19	Blending in cultural meaning (deities, values, and Humanity)

Consider the following clausal metaphor: **Homo homini lupus**. A man is a wolf to man. — It embraces an animal scenario, i.e. a mental space in which a wolf is seen as aggressing a prey; and a human scenario, i.e. a mental space in which a man is seen as interacting with another man. There is a mapping between the two spaces by which the wolf is linked to one of the men, and the prey to the other. Since the metaphoric sentence has a predicative structure (homo lupus [est]...), there is also a base space in which there is a speaker, a hearer, and a topic, which is either the subject or the predicate, either **man** (humanity) or **wolves** (brutality); here the first option is clearly the case, since there is no clausal context making the predicate topical. The metaphorical status of the predication is, of course, due to the **domain difference** of humanity and animality, i.e. Man (‘target’) and Wolf (‘source’). By contrast, the shared actantial structure of the inter-mapped spaces—representing ‘organic interaction’ in this case—constitutes a third, **generic** space, which controls the mapping in question.

But there is a forth space, the most important one. The Wolf space and the Man space are input spaces of a **blended** space that they feed into; but where, however, the wolf maps to both men, and the prey also maps to both men, so that they can be wolves to each other, and so that one man’s wolfiness can **trigger** the other’s virtual wolfiness. Note that wolves in the input Wolf space are **not** each others’ preys (they prefer, say, lambs); but in the blend, mutual or reciprocal wolfiness, inherited from reciprocal interactive behavior in the input Man space, is clearly practised. This ‘conditional wolfy mutuality’ is **emergent** meaning, typical of blended spaces. It is projected back into the network’s base space and constitutes precisely what the sentence insistently means: the knowingly non-evident emergent meaning is **the point** of the utterance.

Spaces like these have inherent structure, by which they sometimes map partly onto each other. But their integration in blends then often produces entirely distinct meanings that indicate the existence of autonomous integrative structure, as if the blending took place in a preorganized melting pot equipped with causal, conditional and other schemata that supply further intelligibility of the figurative result—such as the ‘triggering’ of our example.

This seminar will discuss the principles and a set of possible extensions of Mark Turner’s and Gilles Fauconnier’s theory of blending, or conceptual networks, and as the titles of the sessions show, relate this essentially semantic theory to current research in dynamic semiotics at large.



Juan Gris: *Bottles and knife*. 1911-12.

SEMINAR ON COGNITION AND SEMIOTICS

by Svend Østergaard and Peer F. Bundgård. **Wednesdays, 12-14. Auditorium 221.**

STRUCTURES OF MEANING IN NARRATION AND PAINTING

This seminar deals with the structures of meaning. We will examine three reoccurring phenomena that seem to determine our understanding of a form, independently of whether this form is a narrative or a picture. The first is our sense of dynamic coherence in a textual or visual form. In the case of a narrative, this means that the semantic coherence of the story is determined by how we connect the different scenes of the narrative by causal links. We therefore wish to examine: 1) What types of causal links do we encounter? 2) How does the narrative represent the “force” that causes a change from one state to another? 3) What are the types of critical points in narratives? One example of this could be that the protagonist has to choose between two alternatives.

The second element we wish to examine is that our understanding of a form seems to be dependent on the form's inherent symmetry properties. This has been shown by Mark Turner in relation to poetry. We wish to extend his observations to the visual field, but also to narratives, where it seems as if the motor of the narrative progression is the creation and destruction of symmetries. We intend to illustrate this by the fictions of Borges and Cortazar, and maybe also by the prose of Proust.

The last element is what is known as blending. One of the reasons why we immediately understand non-realistic, even fantastic, fictive universes is our ability to blend conceptual forms from different spaces to create new structures. For example, if we blend the idea of Borges as a young man with Borges as an old man, it is possible to create a (fictive) scene where the two meet each other—as in his short story *The Other*. The theory of blending and the manifestations of blends in paintings and fictions will be presented.

We will also touch upon more traditional theories of narration, such as the Greimasian, and the diegesis developed by Per Aage Brandt, and relate these theories to the questions mentioned above.

SEMINAR ON SEMIO-LINGUISTICS

by Lene Fogsgaard and Per Aage Brandt. **Thursdays, 12-14. Auditorium 221.**

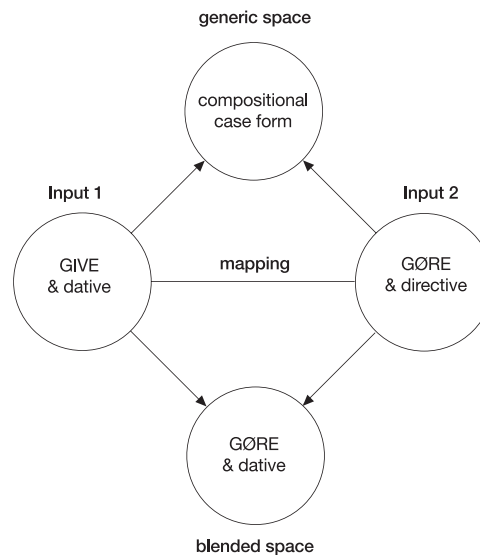
[February 4 · March 4 · April 8 · May 6]

We want to take a fresh look at the **verbs** and their constructional behavior in languages known to the audience. We also want to discuss the issue of **compositionality** versus blending in the resulting semio-syntactic evidence. Here is an example of what this is about.

One construction—**input 1**—as a semantically intentional ditransitivity (NOMINATIVE-DATIVE-ACCUSATIVE) implying human subjects exchanging empathy, affect, volition, evaluation; the prototypical verb is GIVE.

Another construction—**input 2**—has transitivity with additional, semantically wider directive complements, but takes ditransitive DATIVE instead in blends with the former construction; our examples include GØRE (do), SIGE (say), SKRIVE (write), LÅNE (borrow, → lend), LÆRE (learn, → teach), SPILLE (play), BLÆSE (blow), STIKKE (stick), STILLE (set, put), SÆTTE (set, seat).

The generic space contains the shared compositionality in the inputs, by which the DATIVE (of giving) maps onto the DIRECTIVE (of doing, etc.).



Dative blending in Danish:

Input 1	GIVE, as in:	Han gav hende en julegave (basic symbolic act) Han gav hende noget at spise (basic para-symbolic act) De gav hinanden alt (metaphor) De gav hinanden et løfte (referred speech act) De gav os tilladelse til at deltage (referred speech act) Hun gav ham en kurv (idiomatic: 'rejection') Hun gav ham noget at tænke over (idiomatic: 'criticism')
Input 2	GØRE, as in:	Han gjorde ikke noget for mig
Blend		Han gjorde mig ikke noget (idiomatic: 'harm')
Blend		Han gjorde hende en tjeneste
Input 2	SIGE, as in:	Hun siger ikke noget til mig
Blend		Hun siger mig ikke noget (idiomatic: 'charm')
Input 2	SKRIVE, as in:	Han skrev en afhandling for hende
Blend		Han skrev hende et brev (empathic)
Input 2	LÅNE, as in:	Han lånte tusinde kroner i banken til hende (borrow)
Blend		Han lånte hende tusinde kroner (lend)
Input 2	LÆRE, as in:	Han lærte at danse (learn)
Blend		Han lærte hende at danse (teach)
Input 2	SPILE, as in:	Han spillede en sonate for hende
Blend		Han spillede hende et puds (idiomatic)
Input 2	BLÆSE, as in:	Han blæste et stykke for hende (på trompeten)
Blend		Han blæste hende et stykke (idiomatic: 'contempt')
Input 2	STIKKE, as in:	Han stak kniven i grisen
Blend		Han stak hende en lussing (idiomatic: 'contempt', 'harm')
		Han stak hende en plade (idiomatic: 'lie')
Input 2	STILLE, as in:	Han stillede cyklen i gården
Blend		Han stillede hende en betingelse (speech act: 'condition')
		Hun stillede ham i udsigt, at... (speech act: 'promise')
Input 2	SÆTTE, as in:	Han satte bogen på plads
Blend		Han satte hende et mindesmærke (symbolic)
		Han satte hende stolen for døren (idiomatic: 'obstruction')
		Han satte hende kniven for struben (idiomatic: 'threaten')

In all these cases of constructional blending, one Input space is constant, and the other is variable; the GIVE input ends up as a sort of morpheme, whose form is the dative, and which has an, often idiomatic, affective meaning; this ‘morpheme’ is then the emergent effect in the blend. It might be possible to reanalyse morphemes and morphology in general as a family of emergent phenomena of the same kind.

Another idea related to this is the possibility of an analogous understanding of modality. Take MUST: there is an Input 1 showing a speech-act scenario (e.g. “You must do this, Jensen, I insist on it!”) and then a domain-distinct Input 2 showing a natural process (“Everyone must die”), an epistemic setting (“She must be home by now”) or a deontic situation (“I must get this paper in before 10 p.m.”); the dynamic meaning is then emergent in the blends.

The seminar will also develop earlier sketches of verb classification on similar grounds.



Juan Gris: *Still life on a chair*. 1917.

SEMINAR ON PSYCHO-SEMIOTICS

by Bent Rosenbaum and Per Aage Brandt. **Thursdays, 15-17. Auditorium 221.**

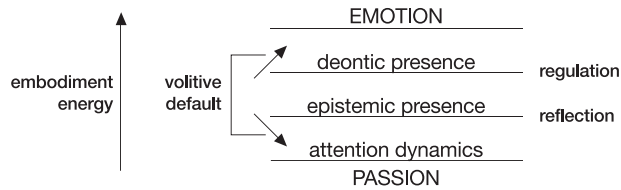
[February 4, March 4, April 8, May 6]

In this semester, we will continue previous work on the affects, and also compare affective structure to psychotic forms of mental life.

Here is a new theory. In the realm of affects, **passions** differ from **emotions** in that the former seem to let volition be guided mainly by strong attention payed to something or to some doing (cf. “Accuracy became a passion with him”; “He became a passionate advocate of socialism”), generally implying the idea of guiding or being guided by other persons; whereas the latter has volition determined by situations linked to retrospective or prospective events (cf. “The gods unleashed their **fury** on the offending **mortal**”) and directed towards persons, which they evaluate by interpreting them or their acts as their motive. Other persons appear differently in the two affective phenomena. In passions, the subject and the other mainly take part in a dynamic game of attentional control, as if the ‘beams’ of attention attracted each other, and one either had to follow or be followed by the other. This is the case in passionate love or hate, but also—dramatically—in schizophrenia. Cf. Louis A. Sass’ examples (in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 5, No. 5-6, 1998, p. 543): “I feel it is not me who is thinking”; “I have been programmed”; and the same patients, inversely: “My thoughts can influence things”; “This event happens because I think it”. Whether the subject’s attention is subdued or subduing, it is the dominating dimension of subjectivity in such a state. Passions are mainly socially oriented—political or erotic, or both, as in psychotic phantasies. The other, or the subject itself, is typically an **evil** controlling force, often vague and non-figurative; the life world is entirely agonistic, unbalanced, and confusing. By contrast, other persons are experienced as strictly local and figurative in emotional phenomenology. They ‘deserve’ the emotion and the emotional acts they provoke in the subject (“I am afraid of that man”); the emotional state weakens attention (and attention inversely weakens emotional behavior), but strengthens the feeling of equilibrium—strongly felt emotions correspond to and counterbalance important events past or to come.

In affective states, volition thus seems to deviate and bifurcate towards either attention or emotion—instead of staying nicely committed to ongoing ‘on-line’ reasoning about or simply maintaining and continuing the mental or motor routines of the subject’s interaction with some outer instance—and here again there is an opposition: the subject of **passion** gets involved with his own mental existence as a being in its own right, whereas the subject of **emotion** forgets about himself and abandons himself bodily to the ‘balancing’ programme. Non-deviating volition has a ‘stand-by’ representation of the volitive subject, as a sort of liminal circumstance of the things going on in its ‘base space’ of here-and-now experience, as a sort of mental (epistemic) ceiling and a bodily (deontic) floor of the goings-on in which the subject participates—as a musician playing in a band.

This contrast shows us that there is a hierarchy of subjectal levels of apparently energetic displays:



The pathologies of passion have low embodiment (and low proprioception), while those of emotion have high embodiment (and high proprioception); the pure intensities of intentional deliria in attentional disturbances should then be due to the deviant volitional irrigation of this level, as well as the volitive contribution to otherwise backgrounded emotional moods of the subject might be responsible for active emotional behaviors like sudden violence in outbursts of anger.

Aesthetical experiences are, on the other hand, based on pure, non-volitional attention.

The seminar will consider current contributions to this field of semio-cognitive research, such as the semantics of delusion, and the role of mental spaces in emotion and emotional ‘theatricality’ in the apparently blended scenes of ‘acting-out’...

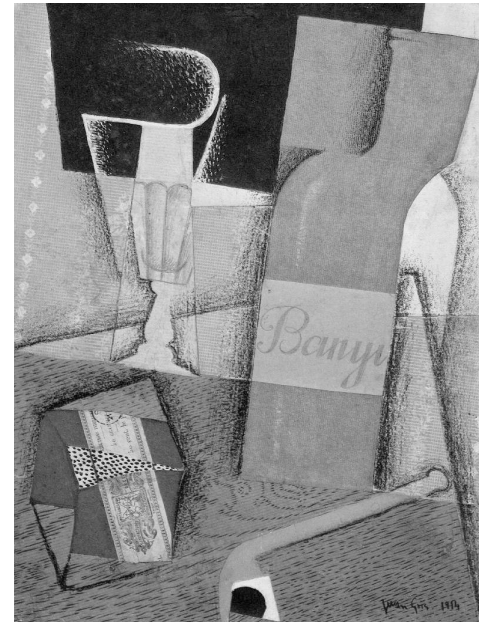


Juan Gris: *Pipe and newspaper (Fantomas)*. 1915.

SEMINAR ON CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

by Tim Rohrer. **Thursdays, 10-12. Auditorium 221.**

This term we will apply various contemporary theories of cognition and language such as conceptual blending and conceptual metaphor to differing phenomena. In particular, we will analyse the conceptual metaphors and blends used in fields such as psychiatric therapy, mathematics, linguistics, anthropology, the emotions, philosophy, psychology, politics, computer science and others. The focus of our course this term will be more pragmatic than theoretic, and each participant should have in mind a text they wish to which they would like to apply these theories. This course will be run like a laboratory meeting: we will discuss, in a workshop environment, the independent research each of us is performing outside of our semiweekly seminars. As necessary however, I will supply theoretic readings such as drafts from Lakoff and Nuñez's book on mathematics, Fauconnier and Turner's forthcoming book on blending, and Lakoff and Johnson's recently published *Philosophy in the Flesh*.



Juan Gris: *The bottle of Banyuls*. 1914.

SEMINAR: INTRODUCTION TO SEMANTIC DOMAINS

by Peter Hammer. **Wednesdays, 10-12. Conference Room.**

[February 17 · March 17 · April 21 · May 19]

The human consciousness and the role of language as a main access that consciousness has to itself, through cognitive and expressive interrelations with other minds, are based on different kinds of experiences that are conceptualised differently, as different semantic domains, wherein things, actions, and events are schematised by a neural system attuned to certain features that are highlighted. Meaning is cognitively grounded in such domains of experience that are also the semantic domains of discourse. The notion of semantic domains comes, in this form, originally from the American linguist Eve Sweetser. She distinguishes between three different phenomenological domains and defines meaning as that which circulates between the different domains and combines them. This idea has since been taken up by Per Aage Brandt. He suggests—contrary to Sweetser, who works with one basic domain, primarily related to the human body, and a metaphorical mapping to the other domains—a set of four basic domains that serves as basis for further domains. All four domains have independent and inherent formal properties and schematise differently. They are thus all equally basic and form a sort of non-hierarchical map. The purpose of the seminar is to introduce different conceptions of semantic domains as they are articulated in different theories. The main emphasis will be on cognitive linguistics and semiotics, but we may also involve theories in neurobiology when appropriate. The seminar will touch on themes such as categorisation, metaphors, blending, and other related themes.



Juan Gris: *Portrait of Josette Gris*. 1916.



GUEST PROFESSOR : **MARK TURNER**

Mark Turner will be visiting the Center for Semiotics in May. He will be giving lectures and conduct a seminar.

—and the best news concerns the end of the semester; we proudly present our guest for the second time in Aarhus, the great exponent of the cognitive turn in the Humanities:

Visiting Professor **MARK TURNER**, Dpt. of English Language and Literature, and the Doctoral Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science of the University of Maryland, USA. (www.wam.umd.edu/~mturn/).

Lectures and an intensive seminar, May 17-28, are being planned at the Center for Semiotic Research. Further information on this program will be available later (www.hum.aau.dk/semiotics).

S E M I N A R C A L E N D A R

February

Wednesday 3	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics	
Thursday 4	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 17	10-12: Introduction to Semantic Domains	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 18	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	13-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting	

March

Wednesday 3	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics	
Thursday 4	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 17	10-12: Introduction to Semantic Domains	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 18	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	13-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting	

April

Wednesday 7	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics	
Thursday 8	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 21	10-12: Introduction to Semantic Domains	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 22	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	13-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting	

May [MARK TURNER visits the Center May 17-28. Further details will be published.]

Wednesday 5	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics	
Thursday 6	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 19	10-12: Introduction to Semantic Domains	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 20	10-12: Conceptual Metaphor	13-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting	

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