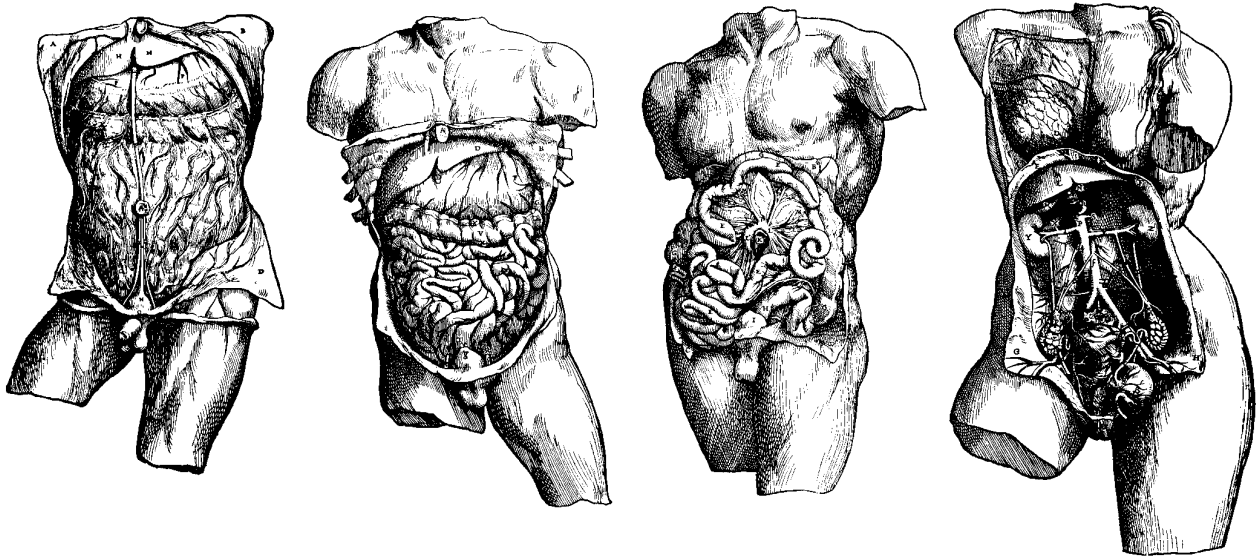


SEMIOTICS

S E M I N A R S



S P R I N G S E M E S T E R 2 0 0 0

Center for Semiotics
UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

INTRODUCTION

by Per Aage Brandt



Welcome to the semiotics of a new century. Signs are still there, we must admit. There is however a new way of understanding the notion of sign, this time with reference to intention rather than to experienced external events.

First, think of gestures that imitate a natural human gesture (of locomotion, of an instrumental doing, of speaking, of paying attention and showing affect...) on a reduced spatio-temporal scale and as isolated from the original context: such gestures are *icons*. They transport a formal event from one substance, or purport, to another; even if the substance is physically of the same kind, e.g. a human body, or of the same individual, e.g. my own body, it is still a different substance since bodies are intentional beings and since the intention has changed if we move from the original gesture to its icon. The iconic intention is to demonstrate (the genre, the particularity, or the optimum of...), or to reinforce, or to prepare the gesture which is its non-iconic, intentional origin. The original intention was to obtain something by that natural gesture, not to perform the gesture itself.

The sign here foregrounds what was or will be the form of the act, and backgrounds its substance.

Second, think of gestures that only release a part of a larger gestural whole consisting of many parts (e.g. interrupted sentences or acts); such signs are *indices* of a global meaning. We can only understand them that way (such as: 'what I was going to...' and still mean to...). They are involuntarily laconic expressions, unintentional abbreviations of intended acts that are still 'meant' by the agent; their meaning is what they still or already substantially mean; substance is foregrounded, while form is truncated, deformed.

Third, think of a gesture which is the imitation of a truncated gesture—an icon of an index: this is a *symbol*. Both form and substance are changed, so this sign type seems arbitrary. The art of systematizing icons of indices is surely a conventional and habitual practice in cultures. It establishes institutions and authorities. The authority of a symbolic gesture is given by its reference to an implied intention in the embedded index; since this embedded intention is clearly distinct from the symbolic performer's intention, the latter 'represents' the former in the symbolic act. Authority—hence what we call power in general (whether social or other)—thus springs from semiotic embedding, inversely interpreted as delegation and representation.

The structuralists claimed that intentions were irrelevant to meanings, because we 'produce' meaning without intending to do so. This is an accurate account of meaning in symbolic acts, in the sense that we literally 'pro-duce' the intention we represent as agents of symbolic acts (cf. the speech acts, such as 'I hereby declare...'). But it is a false view of meaning related to signs altogether, if 'producing' means creating or manufacturing. We certainly do not create or manufacture meaning in social acts. Social subjectivity is not a sort of modernized divine creativity.

What we do do is to transform individual intentions by turning them into impersonal, institutional intentions, i. e. meanings-without-a-'meander'. We de-individualize intentions and get meanings.

The structuralists intended to remove intentions from the intellectual agenda. The self-contradiction of this attitude is now obvious to many intellectuals. It invalidated hermeneutic doings—acts of explaining, events of understanding, informative communication, knowledge, epistemic reasoning, scientific research, including structural analysis—universally. How could a 'production' of meaning in fact understand another 'production' of meaning? They were both just creative inventions; one was not 'about' the other. This is the so-called post-structuralist implication of structuralism itself. Don't be a structuralist, unless you want to become a deconstructionist; this will happen only a number of days or hours later.

But the notion of intention is obscure, isn't it? Not entirely. As used above, it corresponds to volition: mental preparation for some act to perform, or for reacting to something, or both, or for refraining from acting, or for having others act in our place, or having others refrain from acting, and so on. We imitate and interrupt each other in any dialogue or interhuman exchange (intercourse). Therefore, volitive contents incessantly become meanings. Remove all mutual interruptions and imitations from interhuman behaviors, and you will get no signs—a meaningless, non-semiotic, 'authentic' and ecstatic, existentialist world. But then again no, please, don't do that. People have tried, and it triggered lethal ethnic passions.

We know little about consciousness as such, but its capacity to intend seems to be fundamental. Human cognition therefore cannot assume that in the evolution of our species meaning and intention arose from the observation of causation in nature and that they were then imported by analogy into culture where they became obscure, abstract, and metaphysical. Intention and causation are instead originally interwoven in any embodied experience. Important parts of our experiential and experimental interaction with the processes of the physical world are of the same nature as intersubjective interactions: we interrupt and imitate. This is also what propositional affirmation and negation mean: yes (go on, repeat, imitate, connect, participate), no (stop, interrupt, disconnect). The strongest expression of reality is the emotional expression of sorrow or regret, as in: 'Sorry, but you are wrong...', or 'I regret that I cannot help you'. Here emotional participation iconizes the indexically present denied intention of the other, so this is symbolization proper. Yes, we have no bananas...

Symbolization is our strongest, or perhaps our only, way to signify the reality of things. When the feeling of reality weakens, so does symbolization; the latter may cause the former, or vice versa, or it might work both ways (psychosis). Cognition has to be semiotic from the start. Our 'stop and go' interactions are *dynamic* events, interventions, by which intentions count as much as the forces of the natural elements they meet 'out there' (winds blowing, solids falling, rivers running...). Dynamic phenomenology is the only phenomenology which is deeper than the semiotics of meaning: it explains its genesis.

PAaB

SEMINAR ON GENERAL SEMIOTICS

Per Aage Brandt.

Wednesdays in seminar weeks, 2:15 - 5:00 p.m. Auditorium 221.

- 1 Signs: the Dynamic Genesis of Meaning in a Processual World
- 2 Narratives : Disasters, Wonders, and the Logic of the World
- 3 Aesthetics: Notes, Colors, Words, and the Notion of Binding
- 4 Money and Sex: the Origin of Value in a non-Freudian View
- 5 Language, Religion, and other Drugs: Credo quia Absurdum
- 6 Love, Gender, and Identity: the Self and its Perpetual Crisis
- 7 Techno-semiotics again: Machines and Causal Meaning
- 8 Minds and Brains: Descartes today. Intentionality

Contemporary semiotics builds on dynamic modelling, cognitive and structural semantics, phenomenology, current linguistic theory, and more. It has a general humanistic scope: its aim or “scientific vocation”, as A.-J. Greimas used to say, is to analyse the human world, the world of Meaning, as a whole by integrating insights from as many sources as possible into the simplest possible notional frame. The challenge is considerable, nay immense, given the variety of ‘methods’ and approaches practised in the Humanities at large (including anthropology, theology, psychology, psychiatry, and neuro-science), and especially the almost unbreakable chains linking each style of inquiry to its ‘own’ objects of inquiry in a symbiotic enclosure, a so-called problematic (French: *problématique*). Furthermore, the justification of such a huge frame is not the positive claim that there is a coherent, plausible, and available Theory about human commonalities, but mainly the negative claim that there is no real knowledge unless the object of understanding is made independent of these forms of methodological ‘ownership’. Semiotics—dynamic and cognitive—however appears to be able to import insights from the multiple fields where aspects of meaning are being studied: luckily, methods of research do not entirely constitute their objects, only certain types of access to them; and the varieties of Meaning are never entirely dependent on their specific and historically developed signifiers which may be stationary, bound to specified fields, but are in many respects free and mobile phenomena (*pollakos legomena*, “multiply expressed”, as Aristotle said about being) which can therefore be thought of as Cartesian entities, species of a *res cogNitans*, we might say, that multiply expresses itself in highly diverging contexts.

The seminar will demonstrate this principle by discussing issues relevant to multiply embodied human beings and viewing them as ‘olympically’ as possible.

SEMINAR ON COGNITION AND SEMIOTICS

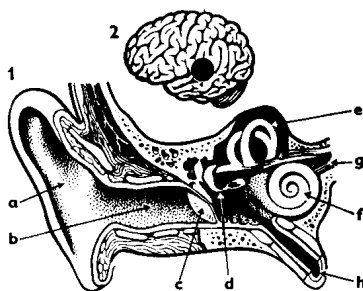
Svend Østergaard.

Wednesdays in seminar weeks, 12:15 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Auditorium 221.

This seminar will further develop the topics presented in the fall. We will examine how the cognitive principles introduced in the fall semester work in narrative texts. In that respect we will touch upon the following topics: a) *temporal structures*, especially how events and the aspectual forms of time are presented in the narrative course; b) *spatial structures* and how qualitative change is conceptualized as motion in space in view of how this is presented on the narrative level, as opposed to the sentence level; c) *causal schemes* and how they make it possible to integrate series of single events into a narrative whole, and d) *viewpoint structures* in relation to mental space theory.

In addition we will encounter new principles such as how the identification of a unit is maintained throughout a narrative course (for example Kafka's in *The metamorphosis* : the reader easily accepts the idea that the personal identity of Gregor Samsa is the same despite physical change), how part-whole relations are used for narrative purposes, and how the scope of a narrative text is construed, and so forth. The literature relevant for the above considerations will be M. Turner: *The Literary Mind*, L. Talmy: *A Cognitive Framework for Narrative Structure*, and G. Genette: *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*.

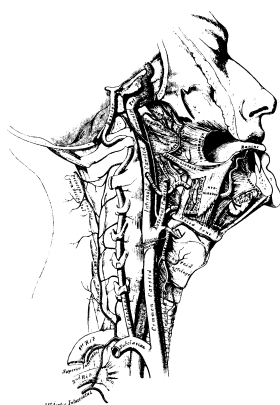
We will briefly touch upon traditional diegetic models in view of the theory of mental spaces and conceptual integration networks. Models for the communicative situation will also be presented. These models capture the logic of misunderstanding such as when the participants in a dialogue continue communicating although they are speaking about different topics. These are cases in which the semantics of the utterance of the speaker *blends* with some prejudice of the hearer to yield a new, third meaning, that is neither intended by the speaker nor expected by the hearer.



SEMINAR ON SEMIO-LINGUISTICS

Lene Fogsgaard and Per Aage Brandt.

Thursdays (see calendar), 12:15 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Auditorium 221.



Languages integrate linguistic signs of increasing extension: from morphemes to utterances, and finally to entire acts of communication, through the levels of words, phrases, and sentences. They do this in various ways, but apparently always follow the same order of semantic steps: *schematic* meanings are contents of morphemes; *categorical* meanings are contents of words (lexemes); *scenarios* are contents of phrases; *ideational* wholes are contents of sentences; and meanings related to the semantic structure called *enunciation* (from the French: l'énonciation; and the Danish: udsigelsen) are contents of utterances, whose semiotic contexts are the communicative, pragmatic acts. Enunciation is the utterance's reference to itself and to the persons involved in its being an utterance.

This semester, the seminar will discuss the enunciative phenomena and the tricky models by which they are and have been rendered.

We have access to the semantics of enunciation by studying the use of *morphemes*—closed-class forms—such as the personal pronouns, the deictics, the core adverbs, the modal verbs, and the aspect markers. Also, many *words*—open-class forms— including the performative verbs, the modal adjectives, the metalinguistic nouns and verbs (speak, talk, question, dialogue, monologue...) seem to categorize it. Certain idiomatic *phrases* (for God's sake) are operators of enunciation; and so are the speech-act formulae (I hereby declare...), on the level of *sentence* structure.

The theory of semantic *domains* has bearings on the study of linguistic signs in general, since the latter seem to be grounded in the former in interestingly specific ways. Enunciation is directly related to and grounded in one of the basic domains, D4 (face-to-face contact, empathy, expressive gestures). Since it also appears in the semantics of other domains—cf. anaphora and deixis in discourse—there has to be an important metaphorical, inter-domainial extension of it, probably founded on the symbolic embedding of intention (cf. the Introduction to this Semester Program). People can address gods, and countries can address each other; apostrophes and vocatives can address any thinkable entity in the universe...

Enunciational meaning builds mental spaces of *presentation* besides or above the *representational* spaces and networks of ideation, but still to be distinguished from the pragmatic base spaces (present situations) beyond the scope of the utterance. It supplies information that specifies the intentional value of syntactically given contents and thus determines how these contents are presented and present in ongoing communication. It does this by presenting

the contents as embedded in structured states of interlocutors, including expected attitude of the 'enuntee' (l'énun-
ciataire), intended status role of the 'enunciator' (l'énonciateur), *voice* (affective temperature, emotional style) and
view (perspective, viewpoint, scale, scope, focus) of ongoing ideation. In narratives, it embraces all narratorial func-
tions. But notice that it is a linguistic phenomenon, before rhetorics takes it to discourse; enunciation is what
makes language inherently literary (or poetic), as M. Turner has pointed out, before any special technique is
applied to it.

According to E. Benveniste (*Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 1966), the meaning of Enunciation is to inscribe
Man or subjectivity in Language (l'homme dans la langue, ...la subjectivité dans le langage). What is 'man' doing
there? That is the question. Is this already-inscribed subjectivity in fact a built-in aesthetic dimension of linguistic
behavior, and a pre-condition of all pragmatic 'uses' of language?

SEMINAR ON PSYCHO-SEMIOTICS

Svend Østergaard and Per Aage Brandt.

Thursdays (see calendar), 3:15 - 5:00 p.m. Auditorium 221.

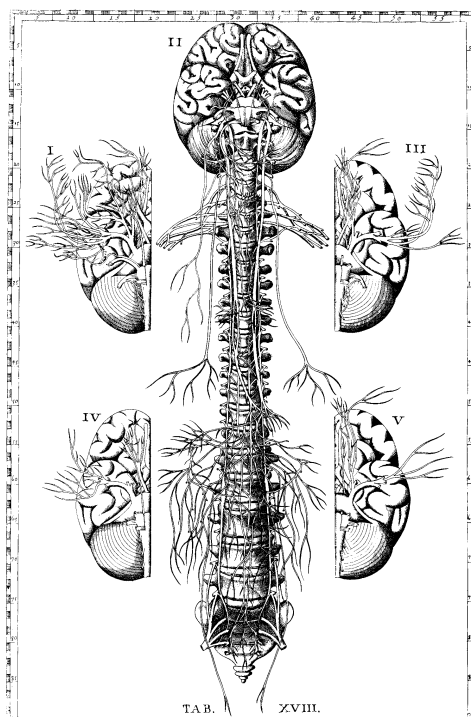
The term psycho-semiotics refers to the study of 'subjectivity', psychological aspects of meaning, such as time con-
sciousness, affectivity (moods, emotions, passions), self-hood, mind and brain, subjectivity in language, gender,
empathy, theory of mind.

In this semester we will focus on *intersubjective relations* as they appear in real communication, as well as in fic-
tive representations. For instance, we wish to examine the different factors that determine the structure of a dia-
logue. Suppose two persons S1 and S2 communicate; S1 says something to S2. For the communication to be suc-
cessful, the first condition is that S2 recognizes that S1 intends that S2 understand the utterance. The second con-
dition is that S2 recognizes the semantics of the utterance. Recognizing the utterance semantics is not sufficient to
recognize S1's intention; this is only achieved by *blending* this semantics with some background knowledge which
S2 believes that S1 believes is shared. *Misunderstandings* appear if background knowledge is not shared; in this case
the dialogue stops; or if some other factor blends with the utterance instead of the background knowledge; in this
case the dialogue will continue. This last thing happens if S2 has a preconceived understanding of the content of
the utterance. In other words, S2 has some knowledge of the subject matter which blends with the semantics of
the sentence to yield a third meaning not intended by S1. Similarly, if S2 has prejudices regarding S1, these might

blend with the utterance to yield a meaning that violates the background knowledge. A last factor is the set of speech-related gestures. Gestures are part of a broader category which concerns embodied signifiers such as intonation, voice, posture etc. The relation between these embodied signifiers and the intended meaning can easily be shown by video recordings of theater performances etc.

The above factors (and others) will be examined empirically by means of examples of dialogues, and they will be analysed theoretically by means of the theories of mental spaces and conceptual integration networks. Our theoretical models will partly deal with the problem of understanding how these factors are integrated into each other and function within the temporal structure of the dialogue: modelling has to include the dynamic dialectics of S2's response, S1's reaction to S2's response and so forth.

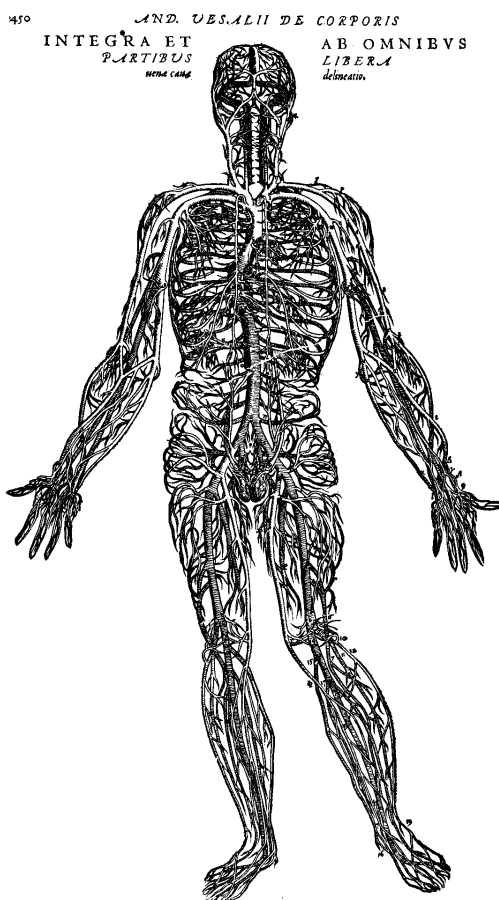
Cognitive models seldom refer to intersubjective processes in semiosis; this aspect of embodied meaning was traditionally confined to 'pragmatics'; but we intend to show that—however complicated it may be—it is a genuine part of cognitive semantics.



SEMINAR ON PHILOSOPHICAL SEMIOTICS

Peer F. Bundgaard.

Thursdays (see calendar), 12:15 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Auditorium 221.



Structure and form—

Four lectures on Ernst Cassirer.

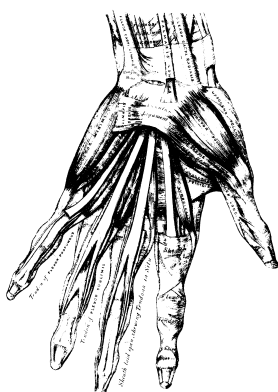
In these lectures, I will introduce to Ernst Cassirer's attempt to establish the concepts of structure and form as the fundamental categories of human sciences in general and semiotics in particular. The following four texts will be discussed:

1. "Structuralism in Modern Linguistics" ("Strukturalismen i den moderne lingvistik", *Almen Semiotik*, 13). Both texts are available at the Center.
2. "Formproblem und Kausalproblem" ("Formproblemet og Kausalproblemet", in *Om kulturvidenskabernes logik*, available at the Center).
3. Chapt. "Language" in *An Essay on Man*, 1944 ("Sprog", *Et essay om mennesket*, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1999 – a copy of the Danish translation will be distributed).
4. Chapt. "Symbolische Prägnanz" in *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen III* ("Symbolsk prægnans", *De symbolske formers filosofi – udvalgte tekster*, Gyldendal, 1999, available at the Center).

INTRODUCTION TO SEMIOTICS

Peter Hammer.

Thursdays in seminar weeks, 10:15 - 12:00 a.m. Auditorium 221.



This seminar is an introduction to some of the theories and models used at the Center for Semiotics and is intended to be a supplement to all the other activities going on at the Center.

The seminar is a continuation of the introductory course offered in the fall semester and we will take another look at some of the themes from last semester, especially *blending*, *mental spaces*, and *domain theory*.

This semester we will also look at some of the classic semiotic theories—such as the theories of Hjeltmslev, Peirce, and Greimas—and we will focus especially on *sign* theories and the relation of language to the world of meaning. Some of the basic ideas in Eco's semiotics will be briefly presented as well.

SEMINAR ON THE SEMIOTICS OF UMBERTO ECO

Finn Frandsen et alii

Mostly Wednesdays in seminar weeks, 10:15 - 12:00 a.m. Auditorium 221.

Since the end of the 1960s the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco (today also well-known as the world-famous author of a series of novels and humoristic essays) has established himself as one of the leading contributors to modern semiotics. This seminar is an introduction to his semiotics. We will discuss the central concepts and models of his theories, follow his sources of inspiration (from Pareyson to Peirce and beyond) and retrace the development of his work and thought over a period of more than thirty years.

The seminar is divided into two parts. In the first part we will examine the development of the semiotics of Umberto Eco from his early writings (*The Open Work*) to the semiotic treatises published in the 1970s and the 1980s (*La struttura assente*, *A Theory of Semiotics* and *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*) and from his books on text pragmatics and the semiotics of reception (*Lector in fabula* and *The Limits of Interpretation*) to the

collection of philosophical essays which Eco published in 1997 with the intriguing title *Kant and the Platypus*. The key concept in this first part will be the concept of interpretation.

In the second part of the seminar we will concentrate more specifically on a number of aspects within or closely connected with the semiotics of Umberto Eco, in particular his contribution to the ongoing discussion about iconism, his novels (*The Name of the Rose*, *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Island of the Day Before*), his essays (from *Apocalypse Postponed* to *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays*) and the relationship between Umberto Eco and other important schools within modern semiotics.

THE SEMIOTICS OF UMBERTO ECO : SCHEDULE

February 2

Finn Frandsen: "Umberto Eco and the Possibilities of Interpretation—from Italian Aesthetics to the Open Work".

February 16

Finn Frandsen: "Critique of the Pure Semiotics and the Practical Semiotics—a General Theory of Codes and Sign Production and the Debate with French Structuralism".

March 1

Finn Frandsen: "Umberto Eco and the Limits of Interpretation—Text Pragmatics, Semiotics of Reception and the Debate with American Deconstructionism and Pragmatism".

March 28

Finn Frandsen: "Kant and the Platypus—Towards a New Theory of Cognitive Semantics".

March 29

Göran Sonesson: "Eco and the Icon—A Critique".

April 5

Birgit Eriksson: "A Novel Look at Semiotics. About Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*".

April 26

Mads Storgaard Jensen: "Kant and Eco—Philosophy in the Flush".

May 10

Per Aage Brandt: "Eco's Journey from Hermeneutics to Cognition".

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

February

Wednesday 2	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 3	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 16	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 17	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Philosophical Semiotics	14-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting

March

Wednesday 1	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 2	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
Wednesday 15		12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 16	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Philosophical Semiotics	14-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting
Tuesday 28	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco NB!		
Wednesday 29	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 30	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics

April

Wednesday 5*	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 6*	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Philosophical Semiotics	14-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting
Wednesday 26	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 27	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Semiolinguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics

May

Wednesday 10	10-12: Seminar on Umberto Eco	12-14: Cognition and Semiotics	14-17: General Semiotics
Thursday 11	10-12: Introduction to Semiotics	12-14: Philosophical Semiotics	14-18: Semiotic Research Group Meeting

*Please notice that the seminar will take place in this week due to our participation at the Mind Seminar in Urbino.

Center for Semiotics

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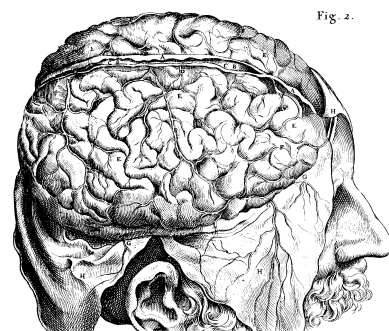


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