



Workshop *Ideologies of Communication: Practices, Scales, and Modes*

Invitation to two Public Lectures (Double Feature)

Creature Communications: Therapy Dogs and Ideologies of Mediation

E. Summerson Carr

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Wednesday, July 3, 2019 · 18.00 h · Sensengasse 3a · Hörsaal 1

It has long and widely been assumed that what distinguishes humans from other animals is the former's linguistic capacities, with language generally considered the most sophisticated means of communication. At the same time, many Americans—including American anthropologists—worry that language is ill-equipped to detect, mediate, and ameliorate human suffering. Indeed, the ascendance of animal-assisted therapy (AAT) in American hospices, cancer wards, veteran's programming and special education classrooms is grounded in the idea that animals can "speak to" the most intractable social problems and intense individual suffering in ways that humans (even those trained in the human services) cannot. This paper draws on preliminary research into the growing institution of animal-assisted therapy, focusing on the ideologies of communication that underlie it. I also raise questions about what it means when animals take up the labor of human service professionals, who are centrally charged with the tasks of communication and care.

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The Hero's Mass: Notes for a Linguistic Anthropology of Cinema

Constantine V. Nakassis

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Wednesday, July 3, 2019 · 19.00 h · Sensengasse 3a · Hörsaal 1

In this talk I explore the semiotics of the image in Tamil cinema. I focus on a particular scene from the 2011 film *Mankatha* in which the protagonist, played by the celebrity "mass hero" Ajith Kumar, is slapped by a character played by the actor Vaibhav Reddy. Entextualizing the screen image not simply as diegetic representation but as performative image-act, Ajith fans were enraged at Vaibhav. I show how multiple ontological and political claims on what an image is intersect in and manifest as this performative image, claims that ripple across the ambivalent surface of the scene and emanate outwards from it. Reflecting upon the complex semiotics of this performativity, I offer a series of suggestions as to what linguistic anthropology has to offer the study of film and, vice versa, how taking cinema as an object of analysis offers new possibilities for critically rethinking the terms of linguistic anthropological analysis and theory.