**Moving Meanings, Moving Images:**

**Sociolinguistic Theory and the Analysis of Moving Images**

Instructor: Constantine V. Nakassis ([cnakassi@uchicago.edu](mailto:cnakassi@uchicago.edu))

University of Vienna, Department of Linguistics

Spring 2022

Course description: This course introduces students to innovations within sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological semiotic theory and discourse analysis as they are applicable to the ethnographic analysis of moving images, be they in narrative film, video animations, social media, and so on. Images are an increasingly prevalent mediator of social life, yet sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have largely not included the multimodal study of image-texts as a central part of their programme, even as we often do, indeed, work with images. How can we bring to bear analytic concepts such as *indexicality, metapragmatics, entextualization, voicing, enregisterment, performativity* to the study of moving images? And in so doing how might we begin to differently conceptualize the image itself, not in opposition to language (as is so common) but as operative *within*, that is, as the very *form* ofdiscourse? Drawing on key issues in film and visual studies, in this course, students will gain familiarity with basic concepts within linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics learn to apply them to the study of moving images; topics will include: filmic deixis and metapragmatic regimentation; textuality and the poetic structure of imagistic meaning; voicing, footing, and looking structures; performativity and the pragmatic “force” of images; rigid designation, identity, and celebrity; and enregisterment and visual style.

Medium of instruction: English

Aims, contents and method of the course: This course will involve 2 three-hour meetings a week for 3 weeks, with a final class at the end of the third week reserved for student presentations. Readings will be assigned as the basis for the lecture and/or seminar discussion. Students are expected to do the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the texts. In addition, students are encouraged to circulate and bring examples of moving image-texts as relate to the specific topics under discussion. Finally, students will have a final written assignment and associated presentation. Students will pick a short media-text and, using concepts from the course of their choosing, provide an analysis of their selected text. On the final class meeting, students will present their analysis for group discussion. By the end of the course, students should have facility with using the semiotic concepts from linguistic anthropology to analyse moving image-texts.

Assessment: Participation (30%), Media-object written analysis (35%) and presentation (35%).

Examination topics: N/A (no final examination)

Readings: All readings are available online. Required readings are \*\*double-asterisked; recommended readings are \*asterisked; and optional readings are marked with a +. They should be read if time permits, or if the student is familiar with the other readings.

*Day Date Time Location*

Tuesday 14.06. 09:45 - 12:45 Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG

Friday 17.06. 14:00 - 17:00 Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG

Tuesday 21.06. 09:45 - 12:45 Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG

Friday 24.06. 14:00 - 17:00 Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG

Tuesday 28.06. 09:45 - 12:45 Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG

Thursday 30.06. 10:30 - 13:30 Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG

Friday 01.07 TBD

Week I. *Indexicality and the Image-Text*

Class 1. Tuesday, June 14, 2022 (09:45 - 12:45, Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG)

From “Film Language” to Cinematic Semiosis

* \*\* **Mitchell**, W. J. T. 2015. “Four Fundamental Concepts of Image Science” (pp. 13–21), “Image X Text” (pp. 39–47). In *Image Science.* University of Chicago Press.
* \*\* **Metz**, Christian. [1967] 1974. “Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film” (pp. 108–46). In *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema.* Oxford University Press.
* \* **Bellour**, Raymond. 2000. “The Obvious and the Code” (1973) (pp. 69–76).[[1]](#footnote-1) In *Analysis of Film.* Indiana University Press.
* **\*\* Silverstein**, Michael. 1976. “Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description” (pp. 11–55). In *Meaning in Anthropology*, eds. K. Basso and H. Selby. University of New Mexico Press.
* \* **Hanks**, William. 1992. “Indexical Ground of Deictic Reference” (pp. 43–76). In A. Duranti and C. Goodwin, eds. *Rethinking Context.* Cambridge University Press.
* + **Benveniste**, Émile. 1971. “The Nature of Pronouns” (pp. 217–22), “Subjectivity in Language” (pp. 223–230), “Correlations of Tense in the French Verb” (pp. 205–15). *Problems in General Linguistics.* University of Miami Press.

Class 2. Friday, June 17, 2022 (14:00 - 17:00, Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG)

Image-texts, Entextualization, and Performativity

* \*\* **Jakobson**, Roman. 1958[1960]. “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics” (pp. 350–77). In T. Sebeok, ed. *Style in Language.* MIT Press.
* + **Silverstein**, Michael. 1993. “Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function” pp. 33–58). In J. Lucy, ed. *Reflexive Language*. Cambridge University Press.
* \*\* **Eisenstein**, Serge. 1943. “Word and Image” (pp. 13–37, 43–59 only). *The Film Sense.* Translated by Jay Leyda. Faber and Faber Limited.
* \*\* **Silverstein**, Michael and Greg **Urban**. 1996. “The Natural History of Discourse” (pp. 1–16). In M. Silverstein and G. Urban, eds. *Natural Histories of Discourse.* University of Chicago Press.
* + **Austin**, J. L. 1961. “Performative Utterances” (pp. 220–39). *Philosophical Papers.* Clarendon.
* \* **Galaty**, John. 1983. “Ceremony and Society: The Poetics of Maasai Ritual.” *Man* 18(2):361–82.
* + **Benveniste**, Émile. 1970 [2014]. “The Formal Apparatus of Enunciation” (pp. 141–45). In J. Angermuller, D. Maingueneau and R. Wodak, eds. *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis.* John Benjamins.

Week II. *Voicing and Looking Structures*

Class 3. Tuesday, June 21, 2022 (09:45 - 12:45, Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG)

What Is a Camera?

* \*\* **Vološinov**, Valentin. 1930 [1973]. “Exposition of the Problem of Reported Speech” (pp. 115–40). In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language.* Seminar Press.
* + **Goffman**, Erving. [1979] 1981. “Footing” (pp. 124–57). In *Forms of Talk.* University of Pennsylvania Press.
* \*\* **Casetti**, Francesco. 1995. “Face to Face” (pp. 118–39). In W. Buckland, ed. *The Film Spectator.* Amsterdam University Press.
* + **Metz**, Christian. 1995. “The Impersonal Enunciation, or the Site of Film” (pp. 140–63). In W. Buckland, ed. *The Film Spectator.* Amsterdam University Press.
* \*\* **Pasolini**, Pier Paolo. 1965[1988]. “Cinema of Poetry” (pp. 175–86 *only*). *Heretical Empiricism.* New Academic Publishing.
* \* **Branigan**, Edward. 1984. “The Point-of-View Shot” (pp. 102–19), “Character Reflection and Projection” (pp. 122–38). *Point of View in the Cinema.* Mouton.

Class 4. Friday, June 24, 2022 (14:00 - 17:00, Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG)

What Is a Perspective?

* \*\* **Gal**, Susan and Judith **Irvine**. 2019. “Ingredients: Signs, Conjectures, Perspectives” (pp. 87–111). *Signs of Difference.* Cambridge University Press.
* \*\* **Goodwin**, Charles. 1994. “Professional Vision.” *American Anthropologist* 96(3):606–33.
* \*\* **Berger**, John. 1972. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–11 *only*). In *Ways of Seeing.* BBC and Penguin Books.
* \*\* **Mulvey**, Laura. 1975. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen* 16(3):6–18.
* \* **Hansen**, Miriam. 1991. “A Cinema in Search of a Spectator: Film-Viewer Relations before Hollywood” (pp. 23–59), “Early Audiences: Myths and Models” (pp. 60–89). *Babel and Babylon*. Harvard University Press.
* **+ Ralph**, Laurence. 2019. “The Logic of the Slave Patrol: The Fantasy of Black Predatory Violence and the Use of Force by the Police.” *Palgrave Communications* 5:1–10.

Week III. *Enregistered Images*

Class 5. June 28, 2022 (09:45 - 12:45, Seminarraum 7 Sensengasse 3a 2.OG)

Enregisterment, Genre, Realism

* **\*\* Agha**, Asif. 2003. “The Social Life of Cultural Value.” *Language & Communication* 23(3–4):231–273.
* **\*\* Altman**, Rick. 1984[2007]. “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” (pp. 552–63). In L. Braudy and M. Cohen, ed. *Film Theory and Criticism,* 7th edition. Oxford University Press.
* **\*\* Bazin**, André. 1946[2006]. “Myth of Total Cinema” (pp. 17–22). In *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1. University of California Press.
* **\* Jakobson**, Roman. 1921[1961]. “On Realism in Art” (pp. 38–46). In L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, eds. *Readings in Russian Poetics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
* + **Ball**, Christopher. 2017. “Realisms and Indexicalities of Photographic Propositions.” *Signs and Society* 5(S1):S154–77.

Class 6. June 30, 2022 (10:30 - 13:30, Hörsaal 1 Sensengasse 3a 1.OG)

Rigid Designation, Auteurism, Celebrity

* \*\* **Kripke**, Saul. 1972. “Lecture I” (pp. 48–59 *only*), “Lecture II” (pp. 71–105). In *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press.
* + **Munn**, Nancy. 1986 [1992]. “The Conceptual Framework” (pp. 3–20), “Gawa in the 1970s” (pp. 24–29, pp. 44–45 *only*), “Fame” (pp. 105–18). In *The Fame of Gawa.* Duke University Press.
* \*\* **Lempert**, Michael. 2011. “Barack Obama, Being Sharp: Indexical Order in the Pragmatics of Precision-Grip Gesture.” *Gesture* 11(3):241–70.
* \*\* **Dyer**, Richard. 1979[2007]. “From *Stars*” (pp. 480–85).In L. Braudy and M. Cohen, ed. *Film Theory and Criticism,* 7th edition. Oxford University Press.
* + **Wollen**, Peter. 1972[2013]. “The Auteur Theory” (pp. 58–96). *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema.* BFI.
* **\*\* Bordwell**, David. 1979[2009]. “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice” (pp. 649–57). In L. Braudy and M. Cohen, ed. *Film Theory and Criticism,* 7th edition. Oxford University Press.

Class 7. Friday, July 1, 2022 TBD

Student final presentations.

1. For the film clip (from the 1946 film, *The Big Sleep*) Bellour discusses in “The Obvious and the Code,” see <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/ogaycken/clips/a-scene-from-the-big-sleep/view>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)