

# **Cog468 "Cognitive Science Capstone Seminar" First Notes**

## **Assignment**

### **Pass 1**

#### **PRIMARY SOURCES**

##### **1. Signs and Meaning in the Cinema**

1. "The study of film must keep pace with and be responsive to changes and developments in the study of other media, other arts, other modes of communication and expression. For much too long film aesthetics and film criticism, in the Anglo-Saxon countries at least, have been privileged zones, private reserves in which thought has developed along its own lines, haphazardly, irrespective of what goes on in the larger realm of ideas. Writers about the cinema have felt free to talk about film language as if linguistics did not exist and to discuss Eisenstein's theory of montage in blissful ignorance of the Marxist concept of dialectic." (P. 17)

##### **2. Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema**

1. "One of the most important of the many problems in film theory is that of the impression of reality experienced by the spectator. Films give us the feeling that we are witnessing an almost real spectacle—to a much greater extent, as Albert Laffay has noted, than does a novel, a play, or a figurative painting.<sup>1</sup> \* Films release a mechanism of affective and perceptual participation in the spectator (one is almost never totally bored by a movie). They spontaneously appeal to his sense of belief—never, of course, entirely, but more intensely than do the other arts, and occasionally films are, even in the absolute, very convincing. They speak to us with the accents of true evidence, using the argument that "It is so." With ease they make the kind of statements a linguist would call fully assertive and which, moreover, are usually taken at face value." (P.4)

##### **3. The Symbolic Relationship Between Semiotics and Cinema**

1. "semiotic theory espouses the idea that there's no actual relationship between the signifier and the signified. This means that the word "dog," the signifier, doesn't actually have anything to do with your four-legged furry friend, the signified, it's just an interpretation we've come up with. When you read that word in quotations above, your mind interpreted the image of a dog because that is what you've been trained to do by language."

##### **4. The Imaginary Signifier**

1. "Nevertheless, this as it were numerical 'Superiority' disappears if the cinema is compared with the theatre, the opera and other spectacles of the same type. The latter too involve sight and hearing simultaneously, linguistic audition and non-linguistic audition, movement, real temporal progression. Their difference from the cinema lies elsewhere: they do not consist of images, the perceptions they offer to the eye and the ear are inscribed in a true space (not a photographed one),

the same one as that occupied by the public during the performance; everything the audience hear and see is actively produced in their presence.” (P. 43)

#### **5. Feeling and form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key**

1. “Yet, the more one reflects on the significance of art generally, the more the music theory appears as a lead. And the hypothesis certainly suggests itself that the oft-asserted fundamental unity of the arts lies not so much in parallels between their respective elements or analogies among their techniques, as in the singleness of their characteristic import, the meaning of “significance” with respect to any and each of them. “Significant Form” (which really has significance) is the essence of every art; it is what we mean by calling anything “artistic.” (P.24)

#### **6. Elements of Semiology**

1. “The institutional and the systematic aspect are of course connected: it is because a language is a system of contractual values (in part arbitrary, or, more exactly, unmotivated) that it resists the modification coming from a single unit, and is consequently a social institution.” (P.14)

#### **7. Cinema 1: The Movement-Image**

1. “The frame therefore forms a set which has a great number of parts, that is of elements, which themselves form subsets. It can be broken down... This is why Jakobson calls them object-signs, and Pasolini ‘cinemes’...(cinemes would be very like phonemes, and the shot would be like a moneme)” (P.12)

#### **8. Cinema 2: The Time-Image**

1. “Substituting an utterance for the image, he can and must apply to it certain determinations which do not belong exclusively to the language system [langue], but condition the utterances of a language [langage], even if this language is not verbal and operates independently of a language system.” (P.25)

## **SECONDARY SOURCES**

### **1. Semiotics**

1. “Peirce’s seminal work in the field was anchored in pragmatism and logic. He defined a sign as “something which stands to somebody for something,” and one of his major contributions to semiotics was the categorization of signs into three main types: (1) an icon, which resembles its referent (such as a road sign for falling rocks); (2) an index, which is associated with its referent (as smoke is a sign of fire); and (3) a symbol, which is related to its referent only by convention (as with words or traffic signals). Peirce also demonstrated that a sign can never have a definite meaning, for the meaning must be continuously qualified.”

### **2. Signs of Feeling: The American Journal of Semiotics**

1. “Starting at the beginning of her career with the problem of the ‘logic’ of signs and meanings, and passing, by way of a critique, indeed demolition, of semiotic logocentrism through the semiotics of art, ritual, and myth, Langer arrived at feeling as the heuristic key to mind or minding. The principal questions that Langer forces us to face, and which she tries to answer, are the following. What are we attending to when we attend to feeling? What does the foregrounding of

feeling bring to semiotics and to a semiotically relevant image of mind or minding?” (P.45)

### **3. Diegetic Sound and Non-Diegetic Sound**

1. “Diegetic sound is any sound that emanates from the story world of the film. The term comes from the word diegesis, which is the evolution of a Greek term that means narration or narrative... The source of diegetic sound doesn't necessarily need to be seen on screen, as long as the audience understands that it is coming from something within the film.”

### **4. Classics of Semiotics**

1. “The syntagmatic opposition, i.e. the value position which an element takes on within a linear sequence, is therefore especially characteristic for language as a sign system. A typical sign system in the semiology of communication such as a road sign system contains equally rudimentary linear syntagms (e.g. the sequence of pre-warning and warning signs). As a rule, however, nonlinguistic sign systems are based on spatial syntagmatics (for example adjacency on a surface).” (P.73)