

*This is the syllabus from the last time Dr. McIntosh taught this class—it WILL be somewhat different once it is revised for the Spring 2008 class, but the basic framework and some of the literature are in here.*

Anthropology Department  
Brandeis University  
Spring 2003

ANTHROPOLOGY 26a  
Communication and Media  
**Janet McIntosh**

Class: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 1:10-2:00. Golding 110.  
Instructor: Dr. Janet McIntosh  
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00-12:00, or by appt.  
TAs:

**Course Description:**

This introductory-level course offers an anthropological exploration of the human communicative capacity, starting with the communicative modalities of language and the body and culminating in the study of communication through mass media. We begin by comparing and contrasting human language with animal signaling systems in dolphins, monkeys, and apes, using a semiotic toolkit that will be useful throughout the course. In our exploration of language, we examine how the verbal medium communicates not only semantic content but also information about social hierarchies and power. Next we turn to the semiotics of non-verbal forms of communication, including self-adornment, clothing, and other visual images. We then examine some implications of mass media technologies, exploring advertisements and relationships between media and political persuasion. Relatedly, we consider the production and the consumption of mediated information and images in times of war. Finally, we devote the remaining weeks to a theoretical and empirical exploration of global media, exploring varied local uses of media technologies and the ways in which media messages can alter as they traverse cultures. Throughout the course we will move back and forth between minute aspects of signs and signaling, and broader questions about the construction of culture, power, and hierarchy.

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) Class attendance in both the lecture and your section, and participation. Given the large size of the class, participation in your small section will be weighted more heavily, but speaking in lecture will certainly help you!
- 2) Three short written assignments, due in section meetings.

- 3) Midterm examination in class on February 27<sup>th</sup>.
- 4) Final examination.

**Grading:**

- 1) Attendance and participation: 15%
- 2) Written assignments: 10% each (total of 30%)
- 3) Midterm exam: 25%
- 4) Final exam: 30%

**Policy on attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory and will be factored into your grade (see above). Each student is permitted no more than two excused absences. Absences beyond this must be accompanied by evidence of significant duress.

**Required readings:**

There are no books to purchase for this course. All course materials on the syllabus will appear on electronic reserve as the term proceeds. To access them, go to the website for LOUIS and click on “Reserves,” then on “Electronic Reserves,” then follow directions. The password for this class is: signs

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Monday January 13—Introduction**

Introduction to class materials

**UNIT 1: Communication and Species**

- Do non-human animals have language? How do they communicate?
- What are some differences and similarities between animal and human communication?
- What is “semiotics,” and how can it help us study communication of all kinds?

**Wednesday January 15—Introduction to Animal Communication**

Hockett, Charles D. “The Origin of Speech” *Scientific American*, September 1960. Pp. 2-10.

**Thursday January 16—Dolphin Communication**

Shane, Susan. “Smarts: Notes on Dolphin Brain Power, Communication Skills, and Social Style” *Sea Frontiers*. March/April 1991. Pp. 40-43.

Janik, Vincent M. and Peter J. B. Slater. “Context-specific use suggests that bottlenose dolphin signature whistles are cohesion calls.” *Animal Behavior* vol. 56, 1998: 829-838. Located at:

<http://www.idealibrary.com/links/doi/10.1006/anbe.1998.0881/pdf>

**Monday January 20—NO CLASS; MLK day**

**Wednesday January 22—Communication in Monkeys**

Cheney, Dorothy L. and Robert M. Seyfarth. Excerpt from “Vocal Communication,” in *How Monkeys See the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1990. Pp. 98-124

**Thursday January 23—Introducing Semiotics**

Hayakawa, S. I. Excerpt from Chapter 2, “Symbols,” in *Language in Thought and Action*, fifth edition. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1990. Pp. 13-19

Hawkes, Terence. Excerpt from Chapter 4 “A Science of Signs,” in *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1977. Pp. 123-131.

**Monday January 27—The Ape Language Experiments and the Evolution of Human Language**

Savage-Rumbaugh, E. Sue, D. M. Rumbaugh, S. T. Smith, and J. Lawson. “Reference: The Linguistic Essential.” *Science*, Vol. 210, 21, November 1980: 922-925.

Burling, Robbins. “Primate Calls, Human Language, and Nonverbal Communication” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 34, No. 1. 1993. 25-37.

**Wednesday January 29**

TBA

**Thursday January 30**

SECTION MEETINGS—Written assignment #1 due in section.

**UNIT 2: Language and Social Hierarchy, or: The Message in the Medium**

*-Do men and women speak differently? If so, how and why? How does the relationship between gender and language vary across cultures?*

*-How are social hierarchies created, sustained, and contested through the verbal medium? How can semiotics help us understand these processes?*

*-Are different languages just interchangeable codes?*

**Monday February 3—Language and gender in the English-speaking world**

Bonvillian, Nancy. Chapter 7, “Language and Gender: English and English Speakers” in *Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 1997. Pp. 166-193.

### **Wednesday February 5—Language and gender across cultures**

Bonvillain, Nancy. Chapter 8, “Cross-Cultural Studies of Language and Gender” in *Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 1997. Pp. 194-216.

### **Thursday February 6—Language, caste, class, and race**

Bonvillain, Nancy. Chapter 6, “Social Segmentation and Linguistic Variation: Class and Race” in *Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 1997. Pp. 130-165.

### **Monday February 10—Accents and stereotypes**

In-class: Film, “American Tongues.” (Please come to class a few minutes early, if at all possible; the film is slightly longer than 50 minutes.)

### **Wednesday February 12—Code switching: What does it signify?**

Wardhaugh, Ronald. “Codes.” In *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, fourth edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. Pp. 87-115.

### **Thursday February 13**

SECTION MEETINGS—Written assignment #2 due in section

#### **UNIT 3: Images and Advertisements**

-Everyone knows visual symbols have meaning. How can semiotic tools help us analyze their meaning with greater precision?

-What kinds of things do people communicate through their clothes? Their hair? Their tattoos?

-How do advertisements work, semiotically speaking? What kinds of influence might advertisements have on viewers?

### **Monday February 17—Interpreting visual signs: The American Flag**

Lester, Paul Martin and Susan Ross (eds.). “Visual Symbolism and Stereotypes in the Wake of 9-11,” in *Images that Injure, Second Edition*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers. 2002

Link: <http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/lester/writings/visualsymbolism.html>

Also read the short letters at:

<http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=11559>

### **Wednesday February 19—Signs in clothing**

Bogatyrev, Petr. "Costume as a Sign" in L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik, *Semiotics of Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1976.

Rucker, Margaret, Elizabeth Anderson, and April Kangas. "Clothing, Power, and the Workplace." In *Appearance and Power*. Eds. Kim. K. P. Johnson and Sharron J. Lennon. Oxford: Berg. 1999. 59-77.

Sandborg, Kirsten. "Malay Dress Symbolism" in Vigdis Broch-Due, Ingrid Rudie, and Tone Bleie, eds. *Carved Flesh, Cast Selves: Gendered Symbols and Social Practices*. Oxford: Berg. 195-206.

### **Thursday February 20--Self-adornment and the Female Body in the USA**

Jenkins, Emily. "Decorating," in *Tongue First: Adventures in Physical Culture*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc. 1998. Pp. 50-90.

Bordo, Susan. "Reading the Slender Body," in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1993. 185-212.

### **Monday February 24—Advertising I**

Leiss, William, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally. Chapters 1 and 2, "Criticisms of Advertising" and "Defenses of Advertising" in *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being*. New York: Routledge. 1990. Pp. 15-33, 34-46.

### **Wednesday February 26—Advertising II**

Leiss, William, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally. Chapters 8 and 9, "Two Approaches to the Study of Advertisements" and "The Structure of Advertisements" in *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being*. New York: Routledge. 1990. Pp. 197-224, 225-284.

### **Thursday February 27—MIDTERM EXAMINATION, IN CLASS**

### **Monday-Friday March 3-7: NO CLASSES; Midterm recess**

### **UNIT 4: Mass Media, Politics, and War**

- What are some relationships between politicians and television?
- What roles can mass media play to shape our understanding of war?
- What does it mean to call journalism "objective"?
- How is media important to the way different societies understand (and misunderstand) one another?

### **Monday March 10— Media, Persuasion, and Politics**

Dayan, Daniel and Elihu Katz. "Political Ceremony and Instant History." In *Television: An International History*. Ed. Anthony Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1995. pp. 169-188.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. "Dramatizing and Storytelling" in *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1988. Pp. 118-164.

### **Wednesday March 12— Mass Media in Wartime I: Notions of "Objectivity"**

Pedelty, Mark. Excerpts from *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*. New York: Routledge. 1995. Pp. 15-25, 41-59, 169-195, and 9-12.

### **Thursday March 13— Mass Media in Wartime II: Narrating the Gulf War**

Stam, Robert. "Mobilizing Fictions: The Gulf War, The Media, and the Recruitment of the Spectator." *Public Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 2: Spring 1992. Pp. 101-126.

Gerbner, George. "Persian Gulf War: The Movie," in *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf—A Global Perspective*. Eds. Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner, and Herbert I. Schiller. Boulder: Westview Press. 1992. Pp. 243-265.

### **Monday March 17— Mass Media in Wartime III: Constructing the Enemy**

Keen, Sam. Excerpt from *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*. San Francisco: Harper. 1988. Pp. 16-49.

In-class: Film, "The Red Files"

### **Wednesday March 19—Movies and Masculinity after Vietnam**

Gibson, James. "Introduction: Post Vietnam Blues," "Old Warriors, New Warriors," and "Birth of a Warrior" in *Warrior Dreams*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 1994. Pp. 3-14, 17-32, 33-50.

In-class: excerpts from various films

### **Thursday March 20**

SECTION MEETINGS—Written assignment #3 due in section

### **Monday March 24—Mass Media and the Cultural Other**

Lutz, Catherine A. and Jane L. Collins. "Becoming America's Lens on the World: *National Geographic* in the Twentieth Century," "A World Brightly Different:

Photographic Conventions, 1950-1986,” “The Color of Sex: Postwar Photographic Histories of Race and Gender,” in *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. Pp. 15-46, 87-118, 155-186.

### **UNIT 5: Technological Transformations across the Globe**

*-Does the global spread of media technologies mean that Western values can freely colonize the world through cultural imperialism? Or is the globalization of media more complicated than that?*

*-How have some non-Westerners apprehended media technologies and appropriated them for their own uses?*

#### **Wednesday March 26— Theories of Mass Media Influence**

Gitlin, Todd. “Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment.” In *Television: The Critical View*, fifth edition. Ed. Horace Newcomb. New York: Oxford. 1994. Pp. 516-536.

Newcomb, Horace and Paul M. Hirsch. “Television as a Cultural Forum.” In *Television: The Critical View*, fifth edition. Ed. Horace Newcomb. New York: Oxford. 1994. Pp. 503-515.

#### **Thursday March 27— Theories of Global Imperialism and Cultural Relativity**

Lull, James. “Meaning in Motion,” and “Globalization and Cultural Territory”. In *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. Second Edition. New York: Columbia University Press. 2000. Pp. 189-223, 224-263.

#### **Monday March 31—Media and Cultural Identities I**

Spitulnik, Debra. “Mediated Modernities: Encounters with the Electronic in Zambia.” *Visual Anthropology Review*. Vol. 14 No. 2, Fall-Winter 1998.

#### **Wednesday April 2— Media and Cultural Identities II**

Berwanger, Dietrich. “The Third World” in *Television: An International History*. Ed. Anthony Smith. New York: Oxford University Press. 1995.

Felicia Hughes-Freeland. “From Temple to Television: The Balinese Case” in *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media, and Identity*. London: Routledge. 1998. 44-67.

#### **Thursday April 3—Media and Cultural Identities III**

In-class: Film, “Serial for Breakfast” (on global satellite television in India)

#### **Monday April 7—Media and Cultural Identities IV**

Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. "Mass Media and Transnational Subjectivity in Shanghai: Notes on (Re)Cosmopolitanism in a Chinese Metropolis," in Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, eds. *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge. 1997. Pp. 287-319.

Mandel, Ruth. "A Marshall Plan of the Mind: The Political Economy of a Kazakh Soap Opera," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Eds. Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002. Pp. 211-228.

### **Wednesday April 9—Media, Minority Groups, and Cultural Activism**

Ginsburg, Faye D. "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Eds. Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002. Pp. 39-57.

Turner, Terence. "Representation, Politics, and Cultural Imagination in Indigenous Video: General Points and Kayapo Examples" in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Eds. Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002. Pp. 75-89.

### **Thursday April 10**

In-class: Film, "Satellite Dreaming" (about Australian Aboriginal uses of television to preserve their culture)

### **Monday April 14**

TBA

### **Wednesday April 16—NO CLASS; Friday-Friday schedule**

**Thursday - Thursday April 17 - April 24: NO CLASSES; Passover and spring recess**

### **Monday April 28**

Evaluations

### **Wednesday April 30**

TBA

**(May 1-8: Final Examination Period)**