SYMBOLISM, ICONOGRAPHY, and WORLDVIEW
The Communication and Interpretation of Signs

http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b_files/ant393a.htm

Brian Stross ANT 393 Fall 2011

Unique # 31213 Wed 4-7 SAC 5.118

Syllabus
Office Hours W 12-3

Course Description:

Of the three kinds of signs (icon, index, symbol), the symbol most clearly separates humans from other animals, but other sign types are important in worldview, culture construction and communication. Through metaphor, symboling observational logic, cultural logic, and scientific logic we construct our social and natural worlds. How and why this construction process occurs is the overarching thematic question of the course, but it must be approached indirectly. This course intends to investigate more directly, and in seminar mode, the symbolic languages of the body (its parts, products, ornaments, clothes, gestures, and postures, and housing), as well as the languages of space, time, sound, and script). These topics will be discussed particularly as they are interwoven into the major related human concerns of cosmology, religion, and power. The language(s) of iconography, dealing with graphic representations of things and ideas by non-script means, will be dealt with as a parallel concern that can convey information of historical import and that augments and/or substitutes for the use of writing. Notions of relativism, universality, norming and context in the interpretation of signs and iconography will be interrogated through specific examples.

Requirements

1) Class preparation and appropriate class participation (including reading articles, chapters, and or books; and being class facilitator for 1 or more class assignment discussions, depending on the size of the class)

2) Three short papers based on projects assigned during the semester; deadlines to be found on the syllabus (7-10 pages each)

Textbooks - “packet” of readings to be distributed on Blackboard or elsewhere online
Recommended supplementary reading:
William Lessa and Evon Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion (3rd edition)
Raymond Firth, Symbols: Public and Private
Francis Huxley, The Way of the Sacred
A. Berger, Signs in Contemporary Culture

Week 1. 8/26 Introduction (semiotics; symbols, icons, and indexes - methods for investigating symbolism, iconography, worldview- what is worldview symbolism, metaphor, representation, iconography?)


Alice V. M. Samson and Bridget M. Waller, Not Growling but Smiling. *Current Anthropology* Volume 51, Number 3, June 2010


Constance Classen, *Inca Cosmology and the Human Body*

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**Weeks 2 & 3.** 8/31 & 9/7 *Body* Stature, Parts, Products, Physiology (basis for explaining and describing things and their operations that are body-external, & for manipulating such socially constructed things and operations as societal divisions, laws, warfare, planting, hunting, eating, etc.-- is there a body "language"?; what are the boundaries and boundary markers of the body? What about gender?) **seeing the other in body ritual**, Phenomenology of Embodiment.  **Observational logic.**


B. Stross, *The Armadillo Stool*


**Suggested Reading:**

Judith Hanna, *To Dance is Human.*

Alan and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language.*

Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places.*

Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider, *Cloth and Human Experience.*

Patricia Anawalt, *Indian Clothing Before Cortez.*

Paul Oliver, *Dwellings*

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**Weeks 4 & 5.** 9/14 & 9/21 *Body Augmentation*: Gesture, Posture, Clothing, Furniture, Housing) (types of gesture, kinds of meanings conveyed -- are gestures made actually part of the body, or are they simply meaning-conveying manipulations of the body.--is there a gestural "language"?, a "language" of clothes, a "language" of housing; what are the boundaries of gesture, posture, clothing, housing? -- What about gender?)

**Homework** –

Cunningham [packet], Kubler (Art and Architecture), Sahi (pp. 4O, 75-79, 126-133), Abbot (Flatland) TBA

**Suggested Reading:** E.T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension.*

Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*

Roxana Waterson, *The Living House.*

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1" paper due at end of 5th week’s class

**Week 6 & 7.** 9/28 & 10/5 *Space* (housing, town planning, geography, direction) -- Is there a "language" of space?; what are the boundaries of spatial divisions?; what are the major directions?; what are the major divisions/partitions of space? How do we name kinds of spaces (e.g. corners, middles, ends, etc.?; - What about gender?)

**Homework** - Leach, Edmund (1961) "Two essays concerning the symbolic representation of time, IN
Week 8.  10/12  **Time** (dating, calendars, cyclic activities, measurement of time, synchrony in interaction, age and aging - venerability, sacred time, dream time, waiting, time and relationships, evolution and time, symbols for the passage of time [e.g. river of time, thought and time] -- Is there a "language" of time? - how much is "time" dependant on "memory";- what are the boundaries of time? - what are the divisions of time? How do we name kinds of time?; what are the major directions of time?; - What about gender?)

**Homework**

B. Stross, Falsetto  [ packet]

**Suggested Reading:** Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds: Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression.*

Week 9.  1019  **Sound** (sound symbolism in language, sound and sentiment, sound and space [intervals], harmonics, scales], sound and time, the sound of music -- Is there a "language" of sound?; what are the boundaries of sounds?; what are the divisions of sounds?; how do we name kinds of sounds? - What about gender and sound?. Age? Infirmities?
Where does music fit in?

**Homework** - Alison Kennedy, Ecce Bufo: The Toad in Nature and in Olmec Iconography  *Current Anthropology*
Heyden [packet],
Earle [packet],
Stocker et al (crocodiles)

**Suggested Reading:** de Santillana & von Dechend, *Hamlet’s Mill.*
Peter Roe, *The Cosmic Zygote.*
Robert L. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul.*

Week 10.  10/26  **Cosmology** (the Sacred Landscape--plants, animals, geographic features, colors, sizes, time periods, divination, numbers, altars, idols, amulets, souls, witches, founding a town, supporters of the earth, (nature) deities - Is there a "language" of cosmology?--how do boundaries function in cosmology?; how do categories function in cosmology?; - What about gender? )

**Homework** Leach  *View from Bridge*  [packet],
B. Stross, Food, Foam & Fermentation  [packet].

**Suggested Reading:**

*Rethinking anthropology.* (google books w/ “two essays”)
M. Eliade The Sacred and The Profane: the Nature of Religion. (google books it w/ ‘time’)


**Suggested Reading:**
JW. Dunne, *An Experiment With Time*  
E.T. Hall, *The Dance of Life*
David Stuart, The Order of Days
A. Van Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage.
Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion.
J. Frazer, The Golden Bough
John Allegro, The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross
(Amulets...), Underhill, Neuman, Graves, Campbell (Masks:
Primitive; Mythic Image), Sejourne, E. Hunt, Didron, Ferguson,

2nd paper due at end of 10th week's class

Week 11. 11/2 Religion - Worship and Sacrifice: Birth, Initiation,
Marriage, Health, Death, Rebirth --- war, slavery, gathering,
hunting, planting, eating, "sports", "play", etc., -- Is there
a "language" of Religion?: what are the boundaries of religious
categories? ; - What about gender? Age?)
Homework - Alison Kennedy, Bufo
B. Stross, Maize and Fish [packet]
B. Stross, Zapotec Portal [packet]
R. Cherry, Magical Insects [ packet]
P. Furst, Fertility, vision quest…, [packet]
Joralemon Bloodletting [packet]
Suggested Reading:
L. Schele and M. Miller, The Blood of Kings
David Freidel and Linda Schele, Maya Cosmos,

Week 12&13 11/9 & 11/16 Power - (Leadership, Rank, Authority, War -- founders,
kinds, continuity of leadership -- Is there a "language" of
power?; how do boundaries function in the acquisition,
maintenance, exercise, and flaunting of power? - What about
gender? Age?)
Homework – TBA and
Basso in Exp. Ethnog. Spkg.
Suggested Reading:
Moran and Kelley,
Graves
M. McLuhan, Gutenberg Galaxy,
M. McLuhan, Understanding Media,
D. Diringer, The Alphabet.
Hans Jensen, Sign, Symbol, and Script

Week 14. 11/23 Writing - (symbol of a symbol of a symbol; Is writing
"language"?- What about gender? Age? )
Homework – Walter F. Morris (weaving and cosmology),
Guss (weaving and creation)
Suggested Reading

Week 15 11/30 Worldview and Ideology - (individual vs cultural vs scientific)

3rd paper due at end of week 15’s class

Bibliography
The following information comes from official UT policies

Please, read carefully

Academic Integrity
Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University Code of Academic Integrity. No plagiarized work will be accepted. Sources consulted from books, journals, or web pages should be acknowledged. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Papers bought online or otherwise plagiarized will receive a zero. You are encouraged to study together and to discuss concepts covered in lecture and sessions. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. [During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion, comparing notes, and copying from others are not permitted during examinations. Any such behavior will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.]

Accommodations for students with disabilities
In compliance with the UT Austin policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259-voice or 471-4641–TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See Web site below for more information:  http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php

University Electronic Mail Notification Policy
(Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)
All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in e-mail address. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html.

In this course e-mail will be used to communicate with students. You are responsible for
checking your e-mail regularly for class announcements.

**The University of Texas Honor Code**
The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Religious Holidays**
It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence.
The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus