

Sociology
Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) 13
Sociology of Symbolism

Discipline Specific Elective-13 (DSE-13) : Sociology of Symbolism

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION, ELIGIBILITY AND PRE-REQUISITES OF THE COURSE

| Course title & Code | Credits | Credit distribution of the course | | | Eligibility criteria | Pre-requisite of the course (if any) |
|--|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | Lecture | Tutorial | Practical/ Practice | | |
| DSE - 13 Sociology of Symbolism | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 12th Class Pass | Nil |

Learning Objectives:

1. To introduce students to foundational concepts and theories of semiotics and their application to the study of signs and symbols.
2. To enable students to understand narrative and discursive structures through structuralist and post-structuralist frameworks.
3. To develop an understanding of the symbolic role of cultural practices and their representation in ethnographic contexts.
4. To apply semiotic analysis to social and cultural phenomena.
5. This course will enhance **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities** by fostering skills which enhance inclusivity

Learning outcomes:

By, the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Articulate key semiotic theories, including contributions from Saussure, Barthes, and Lacan.
2. Critically analyze narrative structures using the works of Propp, Lévi-Strauss, and Foucault.
3. Demonstrate interpretive skills by analysing symbols, metaphors, and narratives in cultural or social texts
4. Apply semiotic concepts to interpret social and cultural phenomena.

5. Demonstrate awareness of cultural meaning-making, diversity, and inclusive symbolic representation in social life in pursuit of **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities**.

SYLLABUS OF DSE:

Unit I. Semiotics and the Study of Signs (12 Hours)

This unit introduces semiotic theory, through a discussion on the structure of signs, symbols, and meaning-making.

- a. **Structure of Signs and Systems of Meaning**
- b. **Signification and the Unconscious**

Unit II. Narrative Structures and the study of Myth (11 Hours)

This unit examines the formal grammar of storytelling, mythic structures, and binary oppositions in narrative representation.

- a. **Grammar and Functions of Narrative Forms**
- b. **Mythic Logic and Binary Oppositions**

Unit III. Discourse Analysis and the Production of Meaning (11 Hours)

This unit examines how discourse constructs knowledge, power, and subjectivity through language and representation.

- a. **Discourse, Knowledge, and order**
- b. **Language, the Body, and Situated Meaning**

Unit IV. Symbolism, Metaphor and Cultural Representations (11 Hours)

This unit analyzes how metaphors, symbols, and ritual practices shape cultural meaning and embodied social experiences.

- a. **Rituals and the Work of Representation**
- b. **Metaphor, Abstraction, and Embodied Thought**

Practical Component: NIL

Essential/Recommended Readings:

Unit I. Semiotics and the Study of Signs

a. Structure of Signs and Systems of Meaning

Saussure, Ferdinand de. (2011). *Course in general linguistics* (W. Baskin, Trans.). Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1916). pp. 65–78, Part 1, Chapters I & II.

Barthes, Roland. (1968). Signifier and signified. In A. Lavers & C. Smith (Trans.), *Elements of Semiology* (pp. 35–57). Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1964), Chapter II.

b. Signification and the Unconscious

Lacan, Jacques. (2006). ‘The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud’. In B. Fink (Trans.), *Écrits: The first complete edition in English* (pp. 412–444). W.W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1957)

Unit II. Narrative Structures and the study of Myth

a. Grammar and Functions of Narrative Forms

Propp, Vladimir. (1968). *Morphology of the Folktale* (L. Scott, Trans., 2nd ed., pp. 19–65). University of Texas Press. (Original work published 1928, Chapters II and III)

b. Mythic Logic and Binary Oppositions

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. (1955). The Structural Study of Myth. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68(270), 428–444.

Unit III. Discourse Analysis and the Production of Meaning

a. Discourse, Knowledge and order

Foucault, Michel. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). Pantheon Books. (Part II, Chapters 1 – 5, Pp 21-63).

b. Language, Body, and Situated Meaning

Turner, Terence. (1995). Social Body and Embodied Subject: Bodiliness, Subjectivity, and Sociality among the Kayapo. *Cultural Anthropology*, 10(2), 143–170.

Unit IV. Symbolism, Metaphor and Cultural Representations

a. Symbols and the Work of Representation

Hall, S. (1997). 'The work of representation'. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (pp. 15–53). London: Sage Publications & Open University Press.

Rotman, Brian. (1988). 'Towards a Semiotics of Mathematics', *Semiotic*, 72(1-2):1-35.

b. Metaphor, Abstraction, and Embodied Thought

Uberoi, J.P.S., and Khalid Tyabji. (2019). 'Metaphysics of the Indian Modernity: The Theory of the Name', in Khalid Tyabji (ed.), *Mind and Society: From Indian Studies to General Sociology*. Delhi, Oxford Academic.

Lakoff, George., & Johnson, Mark. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 3–45.

Suggested Readings:

Gell, Alfred. (1982). 'The Market Wheel: Symbolic Aspects of an Indian Tribal Market'. *Man*, 17(3), 470–491.

Quinn, Malcolm. (1994). *The Swastika: Constructing the Symbol* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Bettelheim, Bruno. (1975) *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Vintage, pp. 3-19, 166-183.

Douglas, Mary. (1966). 'The Abominations of Leviticus'. In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (pp. 51–71). Routledge.

Sontag, Susan. (1978). *Illness as Metaphor* (selections). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Das, Veena. (1977). *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual*. Oxford University Press.

Mehta, Deepak. (1996). *Work, Ritual, Biography: A Muslim Community in North India*. Oxford University Press.

Note: Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, University of Delhi, from time to time.