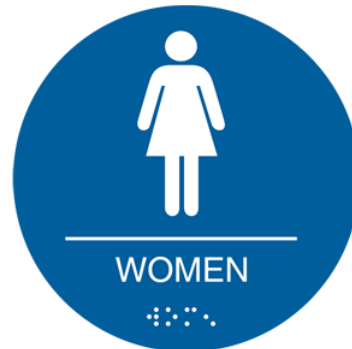


# CORE 101—Symbols and Conceptual Systems

## **Instructor**

Professor Anthony Kemp, Department of English  
THH 443      213 740-3730      kemp@usc.edu  
Office hours: tba

Lecture	TTh	12:30-1:50	THH 116
Discussion	F	10	THH 217
Discussion	F	11	WPH 207
Lab	Th	5-8	THH 201



## **Discussion Leader**

Mary Traester      traester@usc.edu

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A symbol is a token of identity. It is a concrete object, or a verbal description of such an object, that stands for a concept that cannot be represented or described, except abstractly, at great length, with great difficulty and obscurity, or with transgression. A symbol is a substitute for what is symbolized, because the symbolized is in various ways unutterable, inconceivable, sublime, holy, dangerous, or repulsive. What is that dark thing that the symbol represents? The answer depends on the conceptual system within which the symbol operates, and human conceptual systems have been many, and are generally each at war with all of the others. Each conceptual system claims exclusively to be the correct description of the ultimate nature of the world in which humanity finds itself.

So, this course is to be a study of a number of conceptual systems and the ways in which symbols operate within them. I have chosen those conceptual systems that have had the greatest influence on how you conceive of yourselves and the world. The goals of the course are to make your own conceptual system conscious to yourself, and to allow you to recognize its constituent elements, the ideas and assumptions you have taken from others. You will also, perhaps, gain some knowledge of systems utterly foreign to you; you may develop some sympathy for these, or you may be appalled by them. You may also find that elements of your own system lead to conclusions you do not wish to reach. You may be shaken in your allegiance to your own conceptual system, or confirmed in it. You will, I hope, understand it, perhaps for the first time.

## **Introduction: How Do Symbols Work?**

January 10-19

Readings: Homer, Odyssey: Aeolus' island and Polyphemus episodes (course reader).  
Vico, The New Science (course reader).  
John's Gospel, the Samaritan woman at the well episode (course reader).  
Bede, Ecclesiastical History, the sparrow in the mead hall (course reader).  
Freud, Leonardo (course reader).

**UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY**  
**Monday, January 16, 2012**  
**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

**1. Two Religious Conceptual Systems: A God Comes to Visit**

January 24-February 2

Readings: Euripides, The Bacchae.  
 John's Gospel.

**2. Materialism**

February 7-21

Readings: Bacon (handout).  
 Condillac, Logique (handout).  
 Holbach, System of Nature (handout).  
 Sade, Juliette (course reader).

**UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY**  
**Monday, February 20, 2012**  
**Presidents' Day**

**FIRST PAPER DUE: Tuesday, February 21, 2012**

**MIDTERM EXAM: Thursday, February 23, 2012**

**3. Romanticism**

February 28-March 8

Readings: Rousseau, Essay on Inequality.  
 Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" (course reader).  
 Shelley, "Ozymandius" (course reader).  
 Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (course reader).  
 James, The Beast in the Jungle.  
 Yeats, "The Second Coming" (course reader).

**SPRING RECESS**  
**March 12-17, 2012**



#### 4. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud

March 20-29

Readings: Marx (course reader).  
 Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals.  
 Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist.  
 Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents.  
 Freud, Dora.

#### 5. Decadence

April 3-17

Readings: Rimbaud, Letter (course reader).  
 Huysmans, Against Nature.  
 Djuna Barnes, Nightwood.  
 Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (course reader).

**Last day to drop class with mark of "W": Friday, April 6, 2012**

#### Conclusions: The Difficult World

April 19-26

Reading: C. S. Lewis, Till We Have Faces.

**SECOND PAPER DUE: Thursday, April 26, 2012**

**FINAL EXAMINATION  
 Wednesday, May 9, 2012, 2 – 4 pm**

### **Required Booklist**

Euripides. The Bacchae in Euripides V. Eds. David Grene and Richard Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Gospel of John. (Handout).

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Discourse on Inequality. Trans. Maurice Cranston. New York: Penguin, 1985.

James, Henry. The Beast in the Jungle in The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Fiction. New York: Random House, 1981.

Nietzsche. The Genealogy of Morals. Trans. Francis Golffing. New York: Random House, 1956.

———. Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.

———. Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria. Ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

Huysmans, Joris Karl. Against Nature. New York: Penguin, 2004.

Barnes, Djuna. Nightwood. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

Lewis, C. S. Till We Have Faces. San Diego: Harcourt Trade, 1980.

### **Course Mechanics**

There will be two papers, a midterm and a final exam. Each will count for one quarter of the grade. Papers will be a minimum of five pages in length and are to comply with my written instructions, which will be provided to each student.