

**ENG 430: Cultural Studies**  
**Course Instructor: Ariful Islam**  
**Fall 2022**

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**The Work of Representation**  
**Stuart Hall**

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**Key Concept 1:**

**Concept of Representation:** Representation  $\neq$  Re + Presentation?

- **Meaning**
- **Language**
- **Culture**

**Connecting People:** “Representation connects meaning and language to culture.”

**Making Meaning:** “Representation means using language to say something meaningful [ $\neq$  an act of communication?] about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people.”

**Conceptualizing Things:** “Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture.”

Representation refers (a) “to describe or depict” something and (b) “to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for” something.

**Key Concept 2:**

**Theories and Approaches of Representation**

- **Reflective:** “Does language simply reflect [an already-shared] meaning?”
- **Intentional:** “Does language express only what the [author] wants to say?”
- **Constructionist:** “Is meaning constructed in and through language?”
  - Semiotic [Ref: Ferdinand de Saussure]
  - Discursive [Ref: Michel Foucault]

### Key Concept 3:

#### Systems of Representation

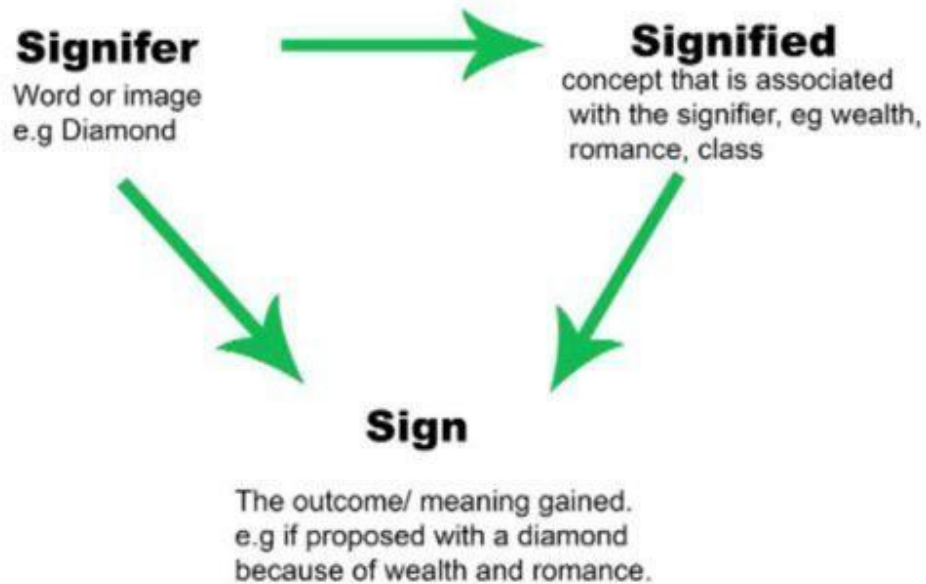
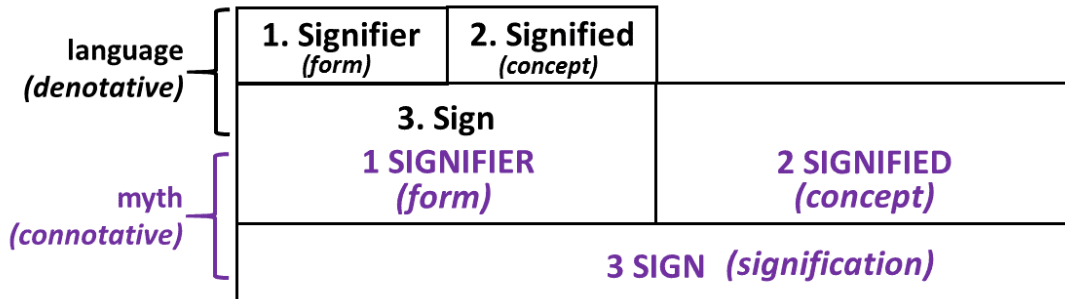
- **Mental Representation:** “all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts... meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts...enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads.” > it “is based on a distinction between flying/not flying”.
- **Conceptual Representation:** “how we might form concepts for things we can [as well as *cannot*] perceive”... for example, our concepts of war, or death, or friendship, or love [or God, or Satan, or angels, or Heaven, or Hell, or *jinn*, or *pori*]... That is why, ‘culture’ is sometimes defined in terms of ‘shared meanings or shared conceptual maps’” > it “is based on a distinction between natural/man-made”.

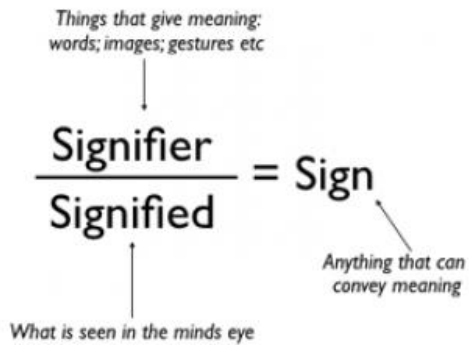
### Key Concept 4:

#### Visual Language of Representation

- **Concept:** what thought/image we carry in our mind
- **Arbitrariness:** the gap between word/expression and image/meaning:  
concept > sound > image > meaning > (mis)interpretation > (mis)communication > (mis)understanding
- **Sign: A Rose is both a rose and a not-rose, i.e., more-than-a-rose.**
  - Visual/Iconic Sign: when form, shape, colour, sound, and texture matter
  - Written-and/or-Spoken/Indexical Sign: when form, shape, colour, and texture matter
  - Sign = Signifier + Signified [Ref: Ferdinand de Saussure]
  - Myths [Ref: Roland Barthes]

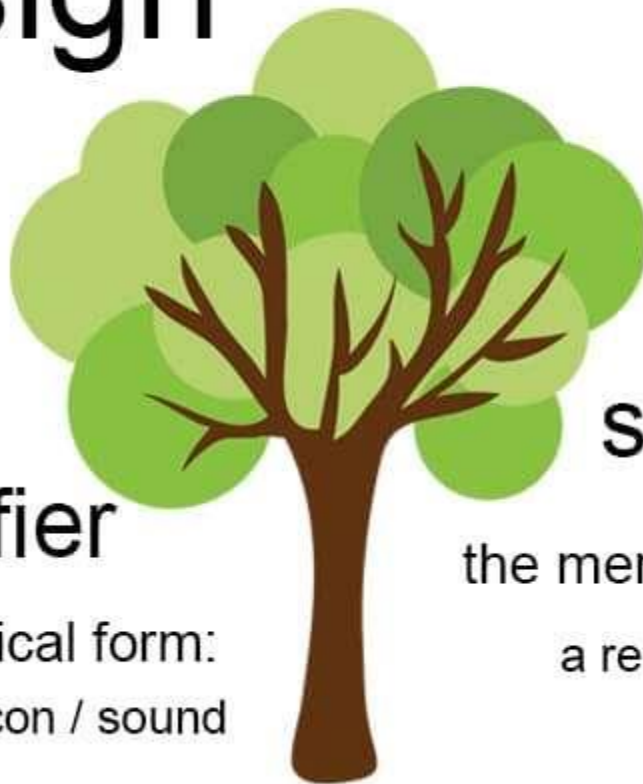
# The Second-Order Semiological System





Flower  
Pain  
Romance  
Love  
Rugby  
England  
Valentines  
Politics

sign



signifier

the physical form:  
letters / icon / sound

signified

the mental concept:  
a real-life tree

# Sign



## What is a Myth?

- In “Mythologies,” Barthes
  - Showed how, “all the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies are subject to systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be dehistoricized, ‘naturalized’, and converted into myth.” (Hebdige, p.9)
  - “Everything in everyday life is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations between men and the world.” (Barthes, p.9)
  - Myth is a figure of speech that provides the reader with hidden agendas or ideologies. It’s a system of communication; a message. Therefore speech is not only oral, but everything that creates communication and meaning; photography, cinema, shows, publicity etc.

## Key Concept 5:

**Codes in the Coded Language of Representation:** How one language is *enough* for a community and when cultural/contextual/conceptual translation matters

Culture is all about the “shared conceptual maps, shared language systems and the codes ... govern the relationships of translation between them.”

“Codes tell us which concepts are being referred to when we hear or read which signs.”

- **Conceptual System:** already-shared, i.e., existing thoughts, images, and interpretations (of texts) in our mind
- **Linguistic System:** the medium/tools of communication (e.g., letters, signs etc.)
- **Un/Translability:** when communication/connection matters (e.g., the language of traffic lights)