

Signifier.

Thin<sup>100</sup> *Thin Italic*<sup>100</sup> Extralight<sup>200</sup>  
*Extralight Italic*<sup>200</sup> Light<sup>300</sup> *Light Italic*<sup>300</sup>  
Regular<sup>400</sup> *Regular Italic*<sup>400</sup> Medium<sup>500</sup>  
*Medium Italic*<sup>500</sup> Bold<sup>700</sup> *Bold Italic*<sup>700</sup>  
Black<sup>800</sup> *Black Italic*<sup>800</sup>

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Structuralism

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Classification

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*Frameworks*

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The concept of signs has been around for a long time, having been studied by many philosophers who include Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and others from the medieval period such as William of Ockham.

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The term “semiotics” “comes from the Greek root, seme, as in semeiotikos, an interpreter of signs”.

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It wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, that Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce brought the term into awareness.

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It was Saussure who created the terms signifier and signified in order to break down what a sign was.

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Fancy ligatures

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Succeeding these founders were numerous philosophers & linguists who defined themselves as semioticians.

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**These semioticians have each brought their own concerns to the study of signs.**

**Umberto Eco (1976),  
a distinguished Italian  
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*In other words, how the signified becomes  
more important than the signifier.*



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*Without Saussure's breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, however, these semioticians would not have had anything to base their concepts on.*

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*The idea that both the signifier  
& the signified are inseparable is  
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which shows how both components  
coincide to create the sign.*

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THE TERMS SIGNIFIED AND SIGNIFIER are most commonly related to semiotics, which is defined by Oxford Dictionaries Online as “the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation”. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, was one of the two founders of semiotics. His book, *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, “is considered to be one of the most influential books published in the twentieth century”. Saussure explained that a sign was not only a sound-image but also a concept. Thus he divided the sign into two components: the signifier (or “sound-image”) and the signified (or “concept”). For Saussure, the signified and signifier were purely psychological; they were form rather than substance. Today, following Hjelmslev, the signifier is interpreted as the material form (something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted) and the signified as the mental concept. The concept of signs has been around for a long time, having been studied by many philosophers who include Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and others from the medieval period such as William of Ockham. The term “semiotics” “comes from the Greek root, seme, as in semeiotikos, an interpreter of signs”. It wasn’t until the 20th century, however, that Saussure and American philosopher

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ing depends on its relation to other words within the system” (for example, to understand an individual word such as “tree”, one must also understand the word “bush” and how the two relate to each other). It is this difference from other signs that allows the possibility of a speech community. However we need to remember that signifiers and their significance change all the time, becoming “dated”. It is in this way that we are all “practicing semioticians who pay a great deal of attention to signs... even though we may never have heard them before.” And while words are the most familiar form signs take, they stand for many things within life, such as advertisement, objects, body language, music, and so on. Therefore, the use of signs, and the two components that make up a sign, can be and are—whether consciously or not—applied to everyday life. One of his translators, Roy Harris, summarized Saussure’s contribution to linguistics and the study of “the whole range of human sciences. It is particularly marked in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology.” Although they have undergone extension and critique over time, the dimensions of organization introduced by Saussure continue to inform contemporary approaches to the phenomenon of language. Prague school linguist Jan Mukařovský writes that Saussure’s “discovery of the internal structure of the linguistic sign differentiated the sign both from mere acoustic ‘things’... and from mental processes”, and that in this development “new roads were thereby opened not only for linguistics, but also, in the future, for the theory of literature”. Ruqaiya Hasan argued that “the impact of Saussure’s theory of the linguistic sign has been such that modern linguists and their theories have since been positioned by reference to him: they are known as pre-Saussurean, Saussurean, anti-Saussurean, post-Saussurean, or non-Saus-

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SAUSSURE WAS BORN IN GENEVA in 1857. His father was Henri Louis Frédéric de Saussure, a mineralogist, entomologist, and taxonomist. Saussure showed signs of considerable talent and intellectual ability as early as the age of fourteen. In the autumn of 1870, he began attending the Institution Martine (previously the Institution Lecoultré until 1969), in Geneva. There he lived with the family of a classmate, Elie David. Graduating at the top of class, Saussure expected to continue his studies at the Gymnase de Genève, but his father decided he was not mature enough at fourteen and a half, and sent him to the Collège de Genève instead. Saussure was not pleased, as he complained: “I entered the Collège de Genève, to waste a year there as completely as a year can be wasted.” After a year of studying Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit and taking a variety of courses at the University of Geneva, he commenced graduate work at the University of Leipzig in 1876. Two years later, at 21, Saussure published a book entitled *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (Dissertation on the Primitive Vowel System in Indo-European Languages). After this he studied for a year at the University of Berlin under the Privatdozenten Heinrich Zimmer, with whom he studied Celtic, and Hermann Oldenberg with whom he continued his studies of Sanskrit. He returned to Leipzig to defend his doctoral dissertation *De l’emploi du génitif absolu en Sanscrit*, and was awarded his doctorate in February 1880. Soon, he relocated to the University of Paris, where he lectured on Sanskrit, Gothic and Old High German and occasionally other subjects. Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the world’s most quoted linguists, which is remarkable as he himself hardly published anything during his lifetime. Even his few scientific articles are

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not unproblematic. Thus, for example, his publication on Lithuanian phonetics is grosso modo taken from studies by the Lithuanian researcher Friedrich Kurschat, with whom Saussure traveled through Lithuania in August 1880 for two weeks, and whose (German) books Saussure had read. Saussure, who had studied some basic grammar of Lithuanian in Leipzig for one semester but was unable to speak the language, was thus dependent on Kurschat. It is also questionable to what extent the Cours itself can be traced back to Saussure (alone). Studies have shown that at least the current version and its content are more likely to have the so-called editors Charles Bally and Albert Sèchéhay as their source than Saussure himself. Saussure taught at the École pratique des hautes études for eleven years during which he was named Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honor). When offered a professorship in Geneva in 1892, he returned to Switzerland. Saussure lectured on Sanskrit and Indo-European at the University of Geneva for the remainder of his life. It was not until 1907 that Saussure began teaching the Course of General Linguistics, which he would offer three times, ending in the summer of 1911. He died in 1913 in Vufflens-le-Château, Vaud, Switzerland. His brothers were the linguist and Esperantist René de Saussure, and scholar of ancient Chinese astronomy, Léopold de Saussure. In turn, his son was the psychoanalyst Raymond de Saussure. Saussure attempted, at various times in the 1880s and 1890s, to write a book on general linguistic matters. His lectures about important principles of language description in Geneva between 1907 and 1911 were collected and published by his pupils posthumously in the famous Cours de linguistique générale in 1916. Some of his manuscripts, including an unfinished essay discov-

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SAUSSURE'S THEORETICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS of the Proto-Indo-European language vocalic system and particularly his theory of laryngeals, otherwise unattested at the time, bore fruit and found confirmation after the decipherment of Hittite in the work of later generations of linguists such as Émile Benveniste and Walter Couvreur, who both drew direct inspiration from their reading of the 1878 *Mémoire*. Saussure had a major impact on the development of linguistic theory in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His two currents of thought emerged independently of each other, one in Europe, the other in America. The results of each incorporated the basic notions of Saussure's thought in forming the central tenets of structural linguistics. According to him, linguistic entities are parts of a system and are defined by their relations to one another within said system. The thinker used the game of chess for his analogy, citing that the game is not defined by the physical attributes of the chess pieces but the relation of each piece to the other pieces. Saussure's status in contemporary theoretical linguistics, however, is much diminished, with many key positions now dated or subject to challenge, but post-structuralist 21st-century reception remains more open to Saussure's influence. His main contribution to structuralism was his theory of a two-tiered reality about language. The first is the *langue*, the abstract and invisible layer, while the second, the *parole*, refers to the actual speech that we hear in real life. This framework was later adopted by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who used the two-tiered model to determine the reality of myths. His idea was that all myths have an underlying pattern, which form the structure that makes them myths. These established the structuralist framework to literary criticism. In Europe, the most important work

in that period of influence was done by the Prague school. Most notably, Nikolay Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson headed the efforts of the Prague School in setting the course of phonological theory in the decades from 1940. Jakobson's universalizing structural-functional theory of phonology, based on a markedness hierarchy of distinctive features, was the first successful solution of a plane of linguistic analysis according to the Saussurean hypotheses. Elsewhere, Louis Hjelmslev and the Copenhagen School proposed new interpretations of linguistics from structuralist theoretical frameworks. In America, Saussure's ideas informed the distributionalism of Leonard Bloomfield and the post-Bloomfieldian structuralism of such scholars as Eugene Nida, Bernard Bloch, George L. Trager, Rulon S. Wells III, Charles Hockett and, through Zellig Harris, the young Noam Chomsky. In addition to Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar, other contemporary developments of structuralism included Kenneth Pike's theory of tagmemics, Sidney Lamb's theory of stratificational grammar, and Michael Silverstein's work. Systemic functional linguistics is a theory considered to be based firmly on the Saussurean principles of the sign, albeit with some modifications. Ruqaiya Hasan describes systemic functional linguistics as a 'post-Saussurean' linguistic theory. Michael Halliday argues: Saussure took the sign as the organizing concept for linguistic structure, using it to express the conventional nature of language in the phrase "*l'arbitraire du signe*". This has the effect of highlighting what is, in fact, the one point of arbitrariness in the system, namely the phonological shape of words, and hence allows the non-arbitrariness of the rest to emerge with greater clarity. An example of something that is distinctly non-arbitrary is the

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SAUSSURE'S MOST INFLUENTIAL WORK, *Course in General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*), was published posthumously in 1916 by former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, on the basis of notes taken from Saussure's lectures in Geneva. The *Course* became one of the seminal linguistics works of the 20th century not primarily for the content (many of the ideas had been anticipated in the works of other 20th century linguists) but for the innovative approach that Saussure applied in discussing linguistic phenomena. Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements, apart from the messy dialectics of real-time production and comprehension. Examples of these elements include his notion of the linguistic sign, which is composed of the signifier and the signified. Though the sign may also have a referent, Saussure took that to lie beyond the linguist's purview. Throughout the book, he stated that a linguist can develop a diachronic analysis of a text or theory of language but must learn just as much or more about the language/text as it exists at any moment in time (i.e. "synchronically"): "Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas". A science that studies the life of signs within society and is a part of social and general psychology. Saussure believed that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign, he called it semiology. While a student, Saussure published an important work in Indo-European philology that proposed the existence of ghosts in Proto-Indo-European called sonant coefficients. The Scandinavian scholar Hermann Möller suggested that they might actually be laryngeal consonants, leading to what is now known as the laryngeal theory. It has been argued that the problem that Saus-

sure encountered, trying to explain how he was able to make systematic and predictive hypotheses from known linguistic data to unknown linguistic data, stimulated his development of structuralism. His predictions about the existence of primate coefficients/laryngeals and their evolution proved a success when Hittite texts were discovered and deciphered, some 50 years later. The neutrality of this subsection is disputed. Relevant discussion may be found on the talk page. Please do not remove this message until conditions to do so are met. (January 2018) (Learn how and when to remove this template message) The closing sentence of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* has been challenged in many [weasel words] academic disciplines and subdisciplines with its contention that "linguistics has as its unique and true object the language envisioned in itself and for itself". By the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of Saussure's ideas were under heavy criticism. Saussure's linguistic ideas are still considered important for their time but have since suffered considerably under rhetorical developments aimed at showing how linguistics had changed or was changing with the times. As a consequence, Saussure's ideas are now often presented by professional linguists as outdated and as superseded by developments such as cognitive linguistics and generative grammar or have been so modified in their basic tenets as to make their use in their original formulations difficult without risking distortion, as in systemic linguistics. That development is occasionally overstated, however; Jan Koster states, "Saussure, considered the most important linguist of the century in Europe until the 1950s, hardly plays a role in current theoretical thinking about language," Over-reactions can also be seen in com-

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SUCCESSING THESE FOUNDERS were numerous philosophers and linguists who defined themselves as semioticians. These semioticians have each brought their own concerns to the study of signs. Umberto Eco (1976), a distinguished Italian semiotician, came to the conclusion that “if signs can be used to tell the truth, they can also be used to lie”. Postmodernist social theorist Jean Baudrillard spoke of hyperreality, which referred to a copy becoming more real than reality. In other words, how the signified becomes more important than the signifier. Then French semiotician Roland Barthes used signs to explain the concept of connotation—cultural meanings attached to words—and denotation—literal or explicit meanings of words. Without Saussure’s breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, however, these semioticians would not have had anything to base their concepts on. Today, “contemporary commentators tend to describe the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers”. The relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary relationship. In other words, “there is no logical connection” between them. This differs from a symbol, which is “never wholly arbitrary”. The idea that both the signifier and the signified are inseparable is explained by Saussure’s diagram, which shows how both components coincide to create the sign. So the question is, how do signifiers create meaning and how do we know what that meaning is? In order to understand how the signifier and signified relate to each other, one must be able to interpret signs. “The only reason that the signifier does entail the signified is because there is a conventional relationship at play”. That is, a sign can only be understood when the relationship between the two components that make up the sign are agreed upon. Saussure argued that a sign’s “meaning depends on its relation to other words within the system” (for example, to understand an individual word such as “tree”, one must also understand the word “bush” and how the two relate to each other). It is this difference from other signs that allows the possibility of a speech community. However we need to remember that signifiers and their significance change all the time, becoming “dated”. It

is in this way that we are all “practicing semioticians who pay a great deal of attention to signs... even though we may never have heard them before.” And while words are the most familiar form signs take, they stand for many things within life, such as advertisement, objects, body language, music, and so on. Therefore, the use of signs, and the two components that make up a sign, can be and are—whether consciously or not—applied to everyday life. One of his translators, Roy Harris, summarized Saussure’s contribution to linguistics and the study of “the whole range of human sciences. It is particularly marked in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology.” Although they have undergone extension and critique over time, the dimensions of organization introduced by Saussure continue to inform contemporary approaches to the phenomenon of language. Prague school linguist Jan Mukařovský writes that Saussure’s “discovery of the internal structure of the linguistic sign differentiated the sign both from mere acoustic ‘things’... and from mental processes”, and that in this development “new roads were thereby opened not only for linguistics, but also, in the future, for the theory of literature”. Ruqaiya Hasan argued that “the impact of Saussure’s theory of the linguistic sign has been such that modern linguists and their theories have since been positioned by reference to him: they are known as pre-Saussurean, Saussurean, anti-Saussurean, post-Saussurean, or non-Saussure”. The Course became one of the seminal linguistics works of the 20th century not primarily for the content (many of the ideas had been anticipated in the works of other 20th century linguists) but for the innovative approach that Saussure applied in discussing linguistic phenomena. Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements, apart from the messy dialectics of real-time production and comprehension. Examples of these elements include his notion of the linguistic sign, which is composed of the signifier and the signified. Though the sign may also have a referent, Saussure took that to lie beyond the linguist’s purview. Throughout the book, he stated that a linguist can develop a diachronic analysis of a text or theo-

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Old-style numerals, Smallcaps

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SAUSSURE WAS BORN IN GENEVA in 1857. His father was Henri Louis Frédéric de Saussure, a mineralogist, entomologist, and taxonomist. Saussure showed signs of considerable talent and intellectual ability as early as the age of fourteen. In the autumn of 1870, he began attending the Institution Martine (previously the Institution Lecoultrre until 1969), in Geneva. There he lived with the family of a classmate, Elié David. Graduating at the top of class, Saussure expected to continue his studies at the Gymnase de Genève, but his father decided he was not mature enough at fourteen and a half, and sent him to the Collège de Genève instead. Saussure was not pleased, as he complained: “I entered the Collège de Genève, to waste a year there as completely as a year can be wasted.” After a year of studying Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit and taking a variety of courses at the University of Geneva, he commenced graduate work at the University of Leipzig in 1876. Two years later, at 21, Saussure published a book entitled *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (Dissertation on the Primitive Vowel System in Indo-European Languages). After this he studied for a year at the University of Berlin under the Privatdozenten Heinrich Zimmer, with whom he studied Celtic, and Hermann Oldenberg with whom he continued his studies of Sanskrit. He returned to Leipzig to defend his doctoral dissertation *De l’emploi du génitif absolu en Sanscrit*, and was awarded his doctorate in February 1880. Soon, he relocated to the University of Paris, where he lectured on Sanskrit, Gothic and Old High German and occasionally other subjects. Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the world’s most quoted linguists, which is remarkable as he himself hardly published anything during his lifetime. Even his few scientific articles are not unproblematic. Thus, for example, his publication on Lithuanian phonetics is grosso modo taken from studies by the Lithuanian researcher Friedrich Kurschat, with whom Saussure traveled through Lithuania in August 1880 for two weeks, and whose (German) books Saussure

had read. Saussure, who had studied some basic grammar of Lithuanian in Leipzig for one semester but was unable to speak the language, was thus dependent on Kurschat. It is also questionable to what extent the Cours itself can be traced back to Saussure (alone). Studies have shown that at least the current version and its content are more likely to have the so-called editors Charles Bally and Albert Sèchébave as their source than Saussure himself. Saussure taught at the École pratique des hautes études for eleven years during which he was named Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honor). When offered a professorship in Geneva in 1892, he returned to Switzerland. Saussure lectured on Sanskrit and Indo-European at the University of Geneva for the remainder of his life. It was not until 1907 that Saussure began teaching the Course of General Linguistics, which he would offer three times, ending in the summer of 1911. He died in 1913 in Vuillens-le-Château, Vaud, Switzerland. His brothers were the linguist and Esperantist René de Saussure, and scholar of ancient Chinese astronomy, Léopold de Saussure. In turn, his son was the psychoanalyst Raymond de Saussure. Saussure attempted, at various times in the 1880s and 1890s, to write a book on general linguistic matters. His lectures about important principles of language description in Geneva between 1907 and 1911 were collected and published by his pupils posthumously in the famous *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1916. Some of his manuscripts, including an unfinished essay discovered in 1996, were published in *Writings in General Linguistics*, but most of the material in it had already been published in Engler’s critical edition of the Course, in 1967 and 1974. The Course became one of the seminal linguistics works of the 20th century not primarily for the content (many of the ideas had been anticipated in the works of other 20th century linguists) but for the innovative approach that Saussure applied in discussing linguistic phenomena. Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements, apart from the messy dia-

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SAUSSURE'S THEORETICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS of the Proto-Indo-European language vocalic system and particularly his theory of laryngeals, otherwise unattested at the time, bore fruit and found confirmation after the decipherment of Hittite in the work of later generations of linguists such as Émile Benveniste and Walter Cowey, who both drew direct inspiration from their reading of the 1878 *Mémoire*. Saussure had a major impact on the development of linguistic theory in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His two currents of thought emerged independently of each other, one in Europe, the other in America. The results of each incorporated the basic notions of Saussure's thought in forming the central tenets of structural linguistics. According to him, linguistic entities are parts of a system and are defined by their relations to one another within said system. The thinker used the game of chess for his analogy, citing that the game is not defined by the physical attributes of the chess pieces but the relation of each piece to the other pieces. Saussure's status in contemporary theoretical linguistics, however, is much diminished, with many key positions now dated or subject to challenge, but post-structuralist 21st-century reception remains more open to Saussure's influence. His main contribution to structuralism was his theory of a two-tiered reality about language. The first is the *langue*, the abstract and invisible layer, while the second, the *parole*, refers to the actual speech that we hear in real life. This framework was later adopted by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who used the two-tiered model to determine the reality of myths. His idea was that all myths have an underlying pattern, which form the structure that makes them myths. These established the structuralist framework to literary criticism. In Europe, the most important work in that period of influence was done by the Prague school. Most notably, Nikolay Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson headed the efforts of the Prague School in setting the course of phonological theory in the decades from 1940. Jakobson's

universalizing structural-functional theory of phonology, based on a markedness hierarchy of distinctive features, was the first successful solution of a plane of linguistic analysis according to the Saussurean hypotheses. Elsewhere, Louis Hjelmslev and the Copenhagen School proposed new interpretations of linguistics from structuralist theoretical frameworks. In America, Saussure's ideas informed the distributionalism of Leonard Bloomfield and the post-Bloomfieldian structuralism of such scholars as Eugene Nida, Bernard Bloch, George L. Trager, Rulon S. Wells III, Charles Hockett and, through Zellig Harris, the young Noam Chomsky. In addition to Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar, other contemporary developments of structuralism included Kenneth Pike's theory of tagmemics, Sidney Lamb's theory of stratificational grammar, and Michael Silverstein's work. Systemic functional linguistics is a theory considered to be based firmly on the Saussurean principles of the sign, albeit with some modifications. Ruqaiya Hasan describes systemic functional linguistics as a 'post-Saussurean' linguistic theory. Michael Halliday argues: Saussure took the sign as the organizing concept for linguistic structure, using it to express the conventional nature of language in the phrase "*l'arbitraire du signe*". This has the effect of highlighting what is, in fact, the one point of arbitrariness in the system, namely the phonological shape of words, and hence allows the non-arbitrariness of the rest to emerge with greater clarity. The *Course* became one of the seminal linguistics works of the 20th century not primarily for the content (many of the ideas had been anticipated in the works of other 20th century linguists) but for the innovative approach that Saussure applied in discussing linguistic phenomena. Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements, apart from the messy dialectics of real-time production and comprehension. Examples of these elements include his notion of the linguistic sign, which is composed of the signifier and the signi-

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SAUSSURE'S MOST INFLUENTIAL WORK, *Course in General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*), was published posthumously in 1916 by former students Charles Bally and Albert Sebechaye, on the basis of notes taken from Saussure's lectures in Geneva. The *Course* became one of the seminal linguistics works of the 20th century not primarily for the content (many of the ideas had been anticipated in the works of other 20th century linguists) but for the innovative approach that Saussure applied in discussing linguistic phenomena. Its central notion is that language may be analyzed as a formal system of differential elements, apart from the messy dialectics of real-time production and comprehension. Examples of these elements include his notion of the linguistic sign, which is composed of the signifier and the signified. Though the sign may also have a referent, Saussure took that to lie beyond the linguist's purview. Throughout the book, he stated that a linguist can develop a diachronic analysis of a text or theory of language but must learn just as much or more about the language/text as it exists at any moment in time (i.e. "synchronically"): "Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas". A science that studies the life of signs within society and is a part of social and general psychology. Saussure believed that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign, he called it semiology. While a student, Saussure published an important work in Indo-European philology that proposed the existence of ghosts in Proto-Indo-European called sonant coefficients. The Scandinavian scholar Hermann Möller suggested that they might actually be laryngeal consonants, leading to what is now known as the laryngeal theory. It has been argued that the problem that Saussure encountered, trying to explain how he was able to make systematic and predictive hypotheses from known linguistic data to unknown linguistic data, stimulated his de-

velopment of structuralism. His predictions about the existence of primate coefficients/laryngeals and their evolution proved a success when Hittite texts were discovered and deciphered, some 50 years later. The neutrality of this subsection is disputed. Relevant discussion may be found on the talk page. Please do not remove this message until conditions to do so are met. (January 2018) (Learn how and when to remove this template message) The closing sentence of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* has been challenged in many [weasel words] academic disciplines and subdisciplines with its contention that "linguistics has as its unique and true object the language envisioned in itself and for itself". By the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of Saussure's ideas were under heavy criticism. Saussure's linguistic ideas are still considered important for their time but have since suffered considerably under rhetorical developments aimed at showing how linguistics had changed or was changing with the times. As a consequence, Saussure's ideas are now often presented by professional linguists as outdated and as superseded by developments such as cognitive linguistics and generative grammar or have been so modified in their basic tenets as to make their use in their original formulations difficult without risking distortion, as in systemic linguistics. That development is occasionally overstated, however; Jan Koster states, "Saussure, considered the most important linguist of the century in Europe until the 1950s, hardly plays a role in current theoretical thinking about language." Over-reactions can also be seen in comments of the cognitive linguist Mark Turner who reports that many of Saussure's concepts were "wrong on a grand scale". It is necessary to be rather more finely nuanced in the positions attributed to Saussure and in their longterm influence on the development of linguistic theorizing in all schools; for a more recent rereading of Saussure with respect to such issues,



Succeeding these founders were numerous philosophers and linguists who defined themselves as semioticians. These semioticians have each brought their own concerns to the study of signs. Umberto Eco (1976), a distinguished Italian semiotician, came to the conclusion that “if signs can be used to tell the truth, they can also be used to lie”. Postmodernist social theorist Jean Baudrillard spoke of hyperreality, which referred to a copy becoming more real than reality. In other words, how the signified becomes more important than the signifier. Then French semiotician Roland Barthes used signs to explain the concept of connotation—cultural meanings attached to words—and denotation—literal or explicit meanings of words. Without Saussure’s breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, however, these semioticians would not have had anything to base their concepts on. Today, “contemporary commentators tend to describe the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers”. The relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary relationship. In other words, “there is no logical connection” between them. This differs from a symbol, which is “never wholly arbitrary”. The idea that both the signifier and the signified are inseparable is explained by Saussure’s diagram, which shows how both components coincide to create the sign. So the question is, how do signifiers create meaning and how do we know what that meaning is? In order to understand how the signifier and signified relate to each other, one must be able to interpret signs. “The only reason that the signifier does entail the signified is because there is a conventional relationship at play”. That is, a sign can only be understood when the relationship between the two components that make up the sign are agreed upon. Saussure argued that a sign’s “meaning depends on its relation to other words within the system” (for example, to understand an individual word such as “tree”, one must also understand the word “bush” and how the two relate to each other). It is this difference from other signs that allows the possibility of a

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Medium

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Succeeding these founders were numerous philosophers and linguists who defined themselves as semioticians. These semioticians have each brought their own concerns to the study of signs. Umberto Eco (1976), a distinguished Italian semiotician, came to the conclusion that “if signs can be used to tell the truth, they can also be used to lie”. Postmodernist social theorist Jean Baudrillard spoke of hyperreality, which referred to a copy becoming more real than reality. In other words, how the signified becomes more important than the signifier. Then French semiotician Roland Barthes used signs to explain the concept of connotation—cultural meanings attached to words—and denotation—literal or explicit meanings of words. Without Saussure’s breakdown of signs into signified and signifier, however, these semioticians would not have had anything to base their concepts on. Today, “contemporary commentators tend to describe the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers”. The relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary relationship. In other words, “there is no logical connection” between them. This differs from a symbol, which is “never wholly arbitrary”. The idea that both the signifier and the signified are inseparable is explained by Saussure’s diagram, which shows how both components coincide to create the sign. So the question is, how do signifiers create meaning and how do we know what that meaning is? In order to understand how the signifier and signified relate to each other, one must be able to interpret signs. “The only reason that the signifier does entail the signified is because there is a conventional relationship at play”. That is, a sign can only be understood when the relationship between the two components that make up the sign are agreed upon. Saussure argued that a sign’s “meaning depends on its relation to other words within the system” (for example, to understand an individual word such as “tree”, one must also understand the word “bush” and how the two relate to each other). It is this difference from other signs that allows the possibility of a speech community. However we need to remember that signifiers and their significance change all the time, becoming “dated”. It is in this way that we are all “practicing semioticians who pay a great deal of attention to signs... even though we may never have heard them before.” And while words are the most familiar form signs take, they stand for many things within life, such as advertisement, objects, body language, music, and so on. Therefore, the use of signs, and

the two components that make up a sign, can be and are—whether consciously or not—applied to everyday life. One of his translators, Roy Harris, summarized Saussure’s contribution to linguistics and the study of “the whole range of human sciences. It is particularly marked in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology.” Although they have undergone extension and critique over time, the dimensions of organization introduced by Saussure continue to inform contemporary approaches to the phenomenon of language. Prague school linguist Jan Mučkarovský writes that Saussure’s “discovery of the internal structure of the linguistic sign differentiated the sign both from mere acoustic ‘things’... and from mental processes”, and that in this development “new roads were thereby opened not only for linguistics, but also, in the future, for the theory of literature”. Ruqaiya Hasan argued that “the impact of Saussure’s theory of the linguistic sign has been such that modern linguistics and their theories have since been positioned by reference to him: they are known as pre-Saussurean, Saussurean, anti-Saussurean, post-Saussurean, or non-Saussure”. Saussure was born in Geneva in 1857. His father was Henri Louis Frédéric de Saussure, a mineralogist, entomologist, and taxonomist. Saussure showed signs of considerable talent and intellectual ability as early as the age of fourteen. In the autumn of 1870, he began attending the Institution Martine (previously the Institution Lecoultr until 1969), in Geneva. There he lived with the family of a classmate, Elie David. Graduating at the top of class, Saussure expected to continue his studies at the Gymnase de Genève, but his father decided he was not mature enough at fourteen and a half, and sent him to the Collège de Genève instead. Saussure was not pleased, as he complained: “I entered the Collège de Genève, to waste a year there as completely as a year can be wasted.” After a year of studying Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit and taking a variety of courses at the University of Geneva, he commenced graduate work at the University of Leipzig in 1876. Two years later, at 21, Saussure published a book entitled *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (Dissertation on the Primitive Vowel System in Indo-European Languages). After this he studied for a year at the University of Berlin under the Privatdozenten Heinrich Zimmer, with whom he studied Celtic, and Hermann Oldenberg with whom he continued his studies of Sanskrit. He returned to Leipzig to defend his doctoral dissertation

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## OpenType features

## Ligatures

liga

Affiche flags

These feature a functional join between a pair of letters, like f and i. They're typically drawn to avoid ugly collisions between letters. Ligatures are usually on by default.

## Discretionary ligatures

dlig

Rich asterisk

Also know as "fancy" or "rare" ligatures. These feature a decorative join between a pair of letters, usually inspired by classic 16<sup>th</sup> century typography. You can use them for a touch of class or pure visual interest in your typography.

## Ordinals

ordn

2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> M<sup>me</sup>

Ordinals are optically adjusted, small, raised lowercase letters. You can use them for numerical abbreviations like 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and in languages like French for 1<sup>e</sup> or M<sup>me</sup>.

## Fractions

frac

1/4 Cup 53/82 In

Dynamic fractions will automatically substitute for pre-built and arbitrary fractions.

## Subscript

subs

H<sub>2</sub>O C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O

Subscripts & Inferiors are optically adjusted, small lowered numerals. They usually sit below the baseline. You can use them for chemical formulae, like H<sub>2</sub>O.

## Superscript

sup

Footnotes.<sup>5</sup>

Superscripts are optically adjusted, small raised numerals. You can use them for footnote references in running text,<sup>1</sup> chemistry notation (<sup>2</sup>H) and mathematical exponents (x<sup>3</sup>).

## Case-sensitive forms

case

1-5 (R/G) «Q»

Punctuation designed specifically to align with capital letters.

## OpenType features

## Small capitals

smcp

KÖNIG 1875

Literally “small capital letters” drawn specially to harmonise with lowercase letterforms in running text. You can use them for acronyms (USA), all-caps words and subtitles. They’re also used instead of Italics for emphasis.

## Contextual alternates

calt

4:20 1×5 fö1

Alternates that intelligently substitute depending on context. The raised colon will only appear between numerals to indicate time. The multiplication sign will only substitute x or X for × between numerals.

## Default numerals

0123456789

These are the default numerals.

## Tabular lining numerals

tnum

0123456789

Tabular lining numerals all share the same width. You can use them to align columns of data or a price list, for example. The associated currency and math symbols also have the same width.

## Old-style numerals

onum

0123456789

Old-style numerals are designed to harmonise with lowercase letterforms in running text. They typically have ascenders and descenders. You could think of them as “lowercase numerals”.

## Tabular old-style numerals

onum

tnum

0123456789

Tabular old-style numerals all share the same width. You can use them to align columns of data or a price list, for example. The associated currency and math symbols also have the same width.

OpenType features

---

## Alternate old-style 1

ss01I526–I580

---

## Alternate old-style 0

ss02

1526–1580

Uppercase

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Lowercase

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

### Small capitals

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

## Uppercase accents

À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à á â ã

## Lowercase accents

á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ ÷ à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý ÿ ÷

### Small capital accents

[illegible]

## Character set

## Numerals

0123456789

## Tabular numerals

0123456789

## Old-style numerals

001I23456789

Tabular old-style  
numerals

001I23456789

## Small capital numerals

0123456789

Tabular small capital  
numerals

0123456789

## Currency &amp; math

\$¢£€¥฿đƒNꝀꝀꝀꝀŁ₩ƒ +- = ÷ × &lt; &gt; # %

Tabular currency  
& math

\$¢£€¥฿đƒNꝀꝀꝀꝀŁ₩ƒ +- = ÷ × &lt; &gt;

Small capital currency  
& math

\$¢£€¥฿đƒNꝀꝀꝀꝀŁ₩ƒ

Tabular small capital  
currency & math

\$ ¢ £ € ¥ ฿ đ ƒ N Ꝁ Ꝁ Ꝁ Ꝁ Ł ₩ ƒ

Character set

Superscript, denominator  
& subscript

0123456789 0123456789 0123456789

## Ordinals

ao abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

## Ligatures

fb ffb ff fh ffh fi fi ffi ffi fj ffj fk ffk fl ffl

### Discretionary ligatures

ch ck çk cl çl cl ct ct' ct'  
sh sk şk sl şl sl' sl' sp şp şp st şt şt şt st'

## Ligature accents

fi ffi

## Punctuation & symbols

&@ ()[]{} /|\ ċ?i! •- - — ~ \_ .,:;...  
 !"“”‘ ’ „, «»<> °^\*†‡ § ¶ © ® ™

## Punctuation & symbol capital forms

@ () [] {} / | \ • • - - — « » ‹ ›

Punctuation & symbol  
small capital forms

**& c ? i !**

### Prebuilt fractions

$$\frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{1}{4} \quad \frac{3}{4} \quad \frac{1}{3} \quad \frac{2}{3} \quad \frac{1}{8} \quad \frac{3}{8} \quad \frac{5}{8} \quad \frac{7}{8}$$

## Arrows

Klim Type Foundry