



Master of Arts in Humanities

SEMIOTICS

- Theory of semiotics
- Cultural semiotics: media, art
- Sociosemiotics: communication, subculture studies
- Biosemiotics: zoo- and ecosemiotics
- 2-year interdisciplinary program
- International students and teaching staff
- Instruction in English
- Scholarships and stipends

Why Semiotics

Semiotics is the general study of sign processes, or *semiosis*. Semiosis makes the world meaningful.

Today's world, where processes have a disbalance of global and local dimension, challenges us to understand the need of individuals and societies for defining their identity. Semiotics is centrally relevant to achieve this understanding. Semiotics is a general methodology of humanities and life sciences.

The program provides interdisciplinary background and gives a theoretical base for application of semiotic ideas to a wide variety of disciplines and scientific study.

Excellent international career prospects

- Graduates can apply their expertise in the professions that require a complex knowledge of cultural analysis, i.e. semiotic consulting companies, marketing or media.
- Practical applications of semiotics include translation and science writing, design and architecture, advertising, and communication strategies.
- Employees of international organizations, e.g. embassies, where tolerance and conflict management skills are vital, can improve their professional education.
- Program graduates can continue on to doctoral studies and research. Semiotics is particularly relevant to advanced study in the life sciences, where biosemiotic understanding and semiotical interpretation is proving to be of remarkable value.



Statue of Juri Lotman in Tartu in front of the University Library.

Why study Semiotics in Tartu

The University of Tartu is one of the key semiotic centres in the academic world today. The tradition of excellence in semiotic theory in Tartu was established by Juri Lotman in 1960s, the founder of semiotics of culture and the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School, as well as the oldest journal of semiotics, *Sign Systems Studies*.



National Quality Award 2008

This Master's degree program has been selected by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research as one of the winners of the 2008 national competition of the most attractive international Master's programs in Estonia.

Why choose the University of Tartu for your Master's

The University of Tartu is one of the few institutions in the world teaching **full Master's and PhD degree programs** in semiotics since 1993. This international Master's program combines the major semiotic traditions of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce with the leading contemporary and innovative thought.

As one of the world's major centres of semiotics, the University of Tartu collaborates and is regularly visited by **professors from all around the world**: Myrdene Anderson, Paul Bouissac, John Deely, Dinda Gorlee, Jesper Hoffmeyer, Winfried Nöth, Roland Posner, Frederik Stjernfelt, Eero Tarasti, and many others.

The finest collections of semiotic materials in Tartu include the memorial library of Thomas Sebeok, one of the world leaders in the 20th century semiotics, and the Centre of Jakob von Uexküll, a Baltic German whose works have been very important to the development of biosemiotics.

The University of Tartu, established in 1632, is one of the oldest universities of Northern Europe. Since the 19th century it has been famous for its scientific level, professional work atmosphere, and **creativity**. The University of Tartu is an active member of elite international associations such as the Utrecht Network and the Coimbra Group of Universities.

The University of Tartu offers **excellent** support systems for international students, personal counseling services, comfortable student residence halls, a modern library, electronic study information database and IT facilities.

“TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE SEMIOTICALLY ACTIVE!”

THOMAS SEBEOK



Thomas Sebeok:

As Locke said in 1690 (!), semiotics is to be a new category, a bridge between physics and ethics. Tartu already has a long tradition in this field, combining Lotman's and Uexküll's main ideas. Besides, Tartu semiotics has great connections with Finland and other Scandinavian countries, as well as Russia.



Claus Emmeche:

A lot of things said and done in biosemiotics are inspired by genetics, and genetics should start concentrating on the informational and textual side of the genome. This is a vast project for biosemiotics in Tartu - to interpret the genome once it is finally described.



Umberto Eco:

Already in the 1960s, Lotman saw semiotics as a cognitive science – semiotic systems are models that explain the world in which we live.



John Deely:

Tartu University's place in the world of semiotic development is unique. The two main ideas underlying the full-scale development of semiotics today — *Umwelt*, and *Modeling System* — came from Estonian researchers connected with Tartu: Jakob von Uexküll and Juri Lotman; and it was the combination of these ideas in the work of Thomas Sebeok, after his meeting with Lotman in Tartu, that became the principal basis of the full-scale of semiotics as “the doctrine of signs” as the 21st century opened. The semiotics program developing at Tartu gives every promise of being the single most important academic focus for semiotic studies on the planet in the first half of this new century.

LIST OF COURSES

Curriculum structure:

General module	30 ECTS
Specialty module	54 ECTS
Elective courses	6 ECTS
Master's thesis	30 ECTS
TOTAL	120 ECTS

General module:

- History of Semiotics: Basic Concepts and Classical Works
- Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School
- Readings of J. von Uexküll and J. Lotman
- Methodology of Semiotic Analysis
- Master's Seminar

Specialty module:

1. Culture module (18 ECTS):

- Cultural Semiotics and Theories of Culture
- Semiotics of Art
- Semiotics of Translation
- Semiotic Analysis of Performance and Multimediality

2. Nature module (18 ECTS):

- Biosemiotics
- Ecosemiotics: Cultural Interpretations of Nature
- Zoosemiotics: Umwelt and Animal Communication
- Landscape Semiotics

3. Society module (18 ECTS):

- Sociosemiotics and Societal Theories
- Ideology and the Concept of Identity
- Models of Communication and Mass Media
- Semiotic Analysis of Subcultures

Elective courses: can be chosen from courses currently available at the University of Tartu.

Master's thesis: individual research paper, written under the supervision of a professional semiotician.

Degree awarded: Master of Arts in Humanities

Language of Instruction: English

Program duration: 2 years, including three semesters of study, one semester writing the Master's thesis

Address for inquiries:

Department of Semiotics	International Student Service
University of Tartu	University of Tartu
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Telephone +(372) 737 6155	Telephone +(372) 737 6109
Ms. Katre Väli katre.vali@ut.ee	studyinfo@ut.ee

Useful information:

University of Tartu	www.ut.ee
Department of Semiotics	www.ut.ee/SOSE/eng.htm
Tartu	www.visittartu.com
Estonia	www.visitestonia.com

Program website www.ut.ee/semiotics

General admission requirements:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent (at least 3 years of studies at a higher educational institution) in social sciences, natural sciences or humanities.
- English language requirement: applicants for whom English is not a native language need to provide proof of English language proficiency. One of the following is accepted: TOEFL – 550 or higher (computer based 213, internet based 79/80); IELTS – 6,5; Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English – C; Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English – B.

Application process:

1. Before applying please check www.ut.ee/studentoffice/studies/ma/english for current information
2. Submit the application form online www.ut.ee/studentoffice or request it from studyinfo@ut.ee
3. Mail the signed application form with all the necessary documents by the indicated deadline to:

International Student Service, University of Tartu, Ülikooli 18, Tartu 50090, Estonia.

Applicants will receive confirmation upon receipt of their application and its status. Completed applications will be considered by the Admission Commission and students accepted into the program will be notified of their admission soon after.

Documents to be submitted:

- application form for Master's studies;
- letter of motivation
- copy of the Bachelor's diploma (or highest preceding study level) and diploma supplement (transcript/grade list) in the original language certified by the educational institution issuing the document or a notarized copy;
- official translation of the diploma and diploma supplement into English, translation certified;
- non-EU applicants: copy of the upper secondary school certificate with a transcript/grade list and official translation of upper secondary school certificate (with a transcript/grade list) into English (both documents certified);
- official test results of English language proficiency;
- copy of the valid identification document;
- scholarship request letter.

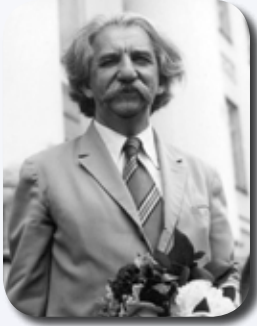
Application deadline:

EU applicants - June 1
non-EU applicants – please consult the website

NB! Applicants graduating in 2009 with diplomas issued later than the set deadlines (e.g. in July), please send the application form and the most recent Transcript of Records by the required deadline. Indicate to the International Student Service when your diploma will be issued. For further information contact the International Student Service directly.

Tuition fees and scholarships:

Program fee covers tuition, some study materials, supervision and advising of thesis preparation. For 2009/2010 applicants 15 scholarships will be available covering full tuition for 2 years of the program. Scholarship request letter must be included with the application. Additionally a stipend of 200 EUR/month will be granted in the course of studies to students with the best academic results.



Juri Lotman
(1922–1993)

was a leading scholar in theory of culture, Russian cultural studies, and semiotics. He studied in St. Petersburg as a student of Vladimir Propp, and worked at the University of Tartu from 1950 until his death. In 1964 he became the editor-in-chief of *Sign Systems Studies*, the oldest continuing journal in semiotics. His books include *Lectures on Structural Poetics* (1964), *The Structure of Artistic Text* (1970), *An Analysis of the Poetic Text* (1972), *Semiotics of Film* (1973), *Universe of the Mind* (1990), and *Culture and Explosion* (1992). Lotman was a founding member of the International Semiotics Association, and he became vice-president of that association in 1968.

Julia Kristeva:

Lotman was a modest, immensely cultured man and a meticulous technician who was also an improviser of unusual verbal seductiveness and a tireless generator of new ideas, who foregrounded and in this sense prefigured the dynamics of cultural facts.



Jakob von Uexküll
(1864–1944)

was a Baltic German philosopher and biologist, and an alumnus of the University of Tartu, whose work is nowadays included among the major classics of semiotics. One of his most important books regarding semiotics is *The Theory of Meaning* (1940).



Thomas Sebeok
(1920–2001)

was an American semiotician and linguist who contributed to many fields of semiotics, particularly to the expansion of the purview of semiotics to include non-human communication systems. He established zoosemiotics as a field, was a principal influence in the establishment of biosemiotics as a field, and he showed, in the context of semiotic studies, the importance of issues addressed by the philosophy of mind. He was the editor-in-chief of the central semiotic journal *Semiotica*, and a strong supporter of Tartu semiotics — as expressed, for instance, in his publication *The Estonian connection* (1998).

The Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics was led by professor Juri Lotman of the University of Tartu, and established a series of publications and conferences in Estonia in the 1960s. The school made a programmatic entry into international science in 1973, when J. Lotman, V. Ivanov, V. Toporov, A. Pjatigorskij and B. Uspenskij collectively published *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures*. The theses laid the foundation for semiotics of culture as a separate discipline, the primary aim of which was “the study of the functional correlation of different sign systems”. From here it follows that Russian culture, Estonian culture, or your own culture, are all equally valuable to science, and each of them adds something to the understanding of human culture as such.



The Department of Semiotics was established in 1992. Its staff – faculty and researchers – includes 20 scholars. The number of students with semiotics as their major is currently 150. The department is a part of the Faculty of Philosophy. The Semiotics Department belongs to the new Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory. In the past we have taught in Estonian and in Russian, with a few courses in English. In 2009, the full-scale English language Master’s Program will be launched. The Semiotics department of the University of Tartu belongs to all key networks in the field (International Association for Semiotic Studies, European Semiotic Society, Semiotic Society of America) and has connections with the semiotic centres of the region (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Russia), and the world. To date, the Semiotics Honorary Doctors of the University of Tartu are Thure von Uexküll and Umberto Eco.