General Semantics and Its Implications in Language and Communication Studies, Pedagogy, Psychology and Media

Semester I

ICT-01: General Semantics and Language and Communication Studies

Objectives:

1. To teach the students the basic ideas, theories and applications of General Semantics
2. To introduce the students to the socio-cultural and epistemological contexts of General Semantics as a philosophical-scientific method propounded by Alfred J. Korzybski
3. To make the students understand the implications of General Semantics in the domains of thought, language, communication and action
4. To train the students in developing the mental habits recommended by Alfred Korzybski

Background / Context / Historical Perspectives:

1. The World War I and General Semantics
2. General Semantics as a non-Aristotelian, non-Newtonian and non-Euclidean Method
3. General Semantics in the History of Scientific/ Mathematical Thinking

Detailed Description of the Course Content

Unit I. An Introduction to General Semantics

A) A Brief History of General Semantic

B) Major concepts in General Semantics
   1. Time-binding
   2. Consciousness of Abstracting
   3. Map is Not the Territory
   4. Non-Elementalist Thinking
   5. Extensional Devices
   6. Structural Differential

Suggested Readings for Unit I:

For I. A
b. “Alfred Korzybski” an Essay by Neil Postman from Conscientious Objections
c. Chapter 9, “General Semantics” from Dare to Inquire: Sanity and Survival in the 21st Century and Beyond

For I.B

e. General Semantics: An Outline Survey by Kenneth Johnson
f. Relevant Sections from *Drive Yourself Sane: Using the Uncommon Sense of General Semantics*

**Unit II. General Semantics and the Perspectives about Human Beings**

Human beings as a time-binding class of life
Human beings as Organism-as-a-whole-in an Environment

**Suggested Readings for Unit II:**

Chapters 3 & 4 from *The Manhood Of Humanity*,
Preface to *Science and Sanity*, by Robert Pula

**Unit III. General Semantics and the Science of Communication**

1. General Semantics and Neuro-Linguistics
2. Understanding the Non-Aristotelian, Non-Newtonian, Non-Euclidean Orientation
3. Intensional versus Extensional Logic
4. The ‘Is’ ness of Identity
5. E-Prime

**Suggested Readings for Unit III:**

Relevant Excerpts from *Drive Yourself Sane: Using the Uncommon Sense of General Semantics*
Chapter 10-14 from *Dare to Inquire: Sanity and Survival in the 21st Century and Beyond*

**Unit IV: General Semantics as a General Theory of Evaluation of Thought and Action**

Lectures 1-4 from *General Semantics Seminar 1937: Olivet College Lectures*
Chapter 4 from *Sensible Thinking for Turbulent Times* by Martin H. Levinson

**Prescribed Texts and their Discussion:**

ICT-02: General Semantics and Its Applications

Objectives:
1. To expand the basic ideas, theories and applications of General Semantics to the possibilities of practice
2. To introduce the students to the methods of General Semantics for communication, Teaching/Learning and critically understanding media
3. To explore the implications of General Semantics in the training in life-skills
4. To train the students in internalizing the mental habits recommended by Alfred Korzybski and to evaluate the role of GS in psychology and psychotherapy

Background / Context / Historical Perspectives:
1. General Semantics view on language use and its implications in Teaching/ Learning and Media
2. General Semantics and Life Skills
3. New Ways of Understanding ‘Sanity’

Detailed Description of the Course Content

Unit I. General Semantics and Other Areas: An Overview

Suggested Readings for Unit I:
2. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 from Kodish, Bruce. Dare to Inquire: Sanity and Survival for the 21st Century and Beyond.

General Reading:
Korzybski’s Introductions to Science and Sanity and Manhood of Humanity
“On Alfred Korzybski” and “What did Alfred Want” from Drive Yourself Sane: Using the Uncommon Sense of General Semantics by Bruce Kodish and Susan PresbyKodish, pp 202-211.

Unit II. General Semantics, Language and Teaching/Learning
A. Limitations of Language as a medium of knowledge and communication
B. Developing the consciousness of abstracting
C. Suggested remedies: Extensional Devices (revising the relevant sections from Part I of the course)

Suggested Readings for Unit II:
1. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 from Levels of Knowing and Existence by Harry L. Weinberg
2. Chapters 11 & 12 from Language Habits in Human Affairs by Irving J. Lee
3. Revise Chapter 12 and 13 from Drive Yourself Sane: Using the Uncommon Sense of General Semantics by Bruce Kodish and Susan PresbyKodish

Unit III: General Semantics and Life-Skills
A. General Semantics and Communication
B. Job Skills through General Semantics
Suggested Readings for Unit III

For Intensive Study:
Part III, Chapters 8, 9 & 10 from Sensible Thinking for Turbulent Times by Martin Levinson

For General Reading:
1. Understanding Each Other: Improving Communication through Effective Dialogue by Cathrina Bauby
2. Practical Fairy Tales for Everyday Living by Martin Levinson

Unit IV: General Semantics and Psychology

For Intensive Study:
2. Chapters 8 & 10 from Levels of Knowing and Existence by Harry L. Weinberg

For General Reading
1. Drive Yourself Sane by Kodish and Kodish
2. Sensible Thinking for Turbulent Times by Martin Levinson
3. General Semantics in Psychotherapy: Selected Writings on Methods Aiding Therapy, Isabel Caro and Charlotte Read (Ed.)

Prescribed Texts and their Discussion: