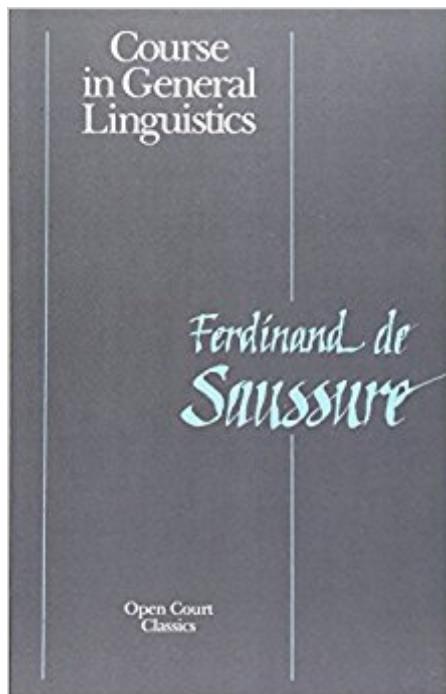# Course In General Linguistics (Open Court Classics)

Synopsis

The Cours de linguistique generale, reconstructed from students' notes after Saussure's death in 1913, founded modern linguistic theory by breaking the study of language free from a merely historical and comparativist approach. Saussure's new method, now known as Structuralism, has since been applied to such diverse areas as art, architecture, folklore, literary criticism, and philosophy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When Ferdinand De Saussure died in 1913, he had spent a lifetime investigating the complex role that language played in the way that human beings learned. His interest, therefore, was limited to explicating the issues faced by his fellow theorists. He had no abiding interest in literature, sociology, psychology, or any other discipline than linguistics. Fortunately, after his death, several students combined their lecture notes to publish posthumously the COURSE IN GENERAL LINGUISTICS in 1916. One cannot overstate the colossal ramifications of this book. Despite the fact that it was written with a French speaking scholar in mind who had more than a passing familiarity with Proto-Indo European languages, serious students in various disciplines were quick to note its potential to advance their respective causes. Within a few decades, his theories became bedrock assumptions for those who sought to uncover an overarching set of rules that would account for the behavior of discrete units within that system. De Saussure begins by distinguishing between the entire spectrum of language discourse (langue) and the individual spoken utterances of single

words (parole). He was not concerned with parole. His focus was on langue. He had the controversial idea that langue did not exist as an actual entity in the physical universe. Langue had to be constructed from parole. The inference was that all languages, however unrelated semantically, yet shared a common structure. It is his relentless urging that all languages had this shared root that allows moderns to call him the Father of Structuralism. Further, he devised a conceptual tool to describe how langue and parole interact to produce meaning. Any word could be reduced to a simple structure--the sign.

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