STUART HALL – THE WORK OF REPRESENTATION

- **Representation** is the production of meaning through language. It connects meaning and language to culture - MEANING THROUGH DIFFERENCE

- **Two systems of representation:**
  1. **Mental representations:** Meaning depends on the mental, conceptual maps we create in our heads – without them, we could not interpret the world.
     While each individual interprets the world in a slightly different way, cultures have broadly the same conceptual maps
  2. **Language:** The overall process of constructing meaning by expressing ourselves – either in a linguistic or non-linguistic way. Our shared conceptual maps must be translated into a common language

- **Culture** can be defined as “shared meanings or shared conceptual maps”. Children become cultural subjects by internalizing culturally specific conceptual maps

- **Signs** describe words, sounds, or images. They represent concept and conceptual relations which we carry around in our minds. They help to make up the meaning systems of our culture
  - Signs are organized into languages and through them we can translate our thoughts (CONCEPTS) into words, sounds and images (CODES) and communicate with other people.
  - Signs allow us to translate concepts into words, sounds or images and view this as a form of language to express meaning and communicate. 2 types of signs: 1; iconic (visual). 2; indexical (written and spoken).
    - Written or spoken signs are indexical as they have no obvious relationship to the things they refer to. The relationship is arbitrary.
    - Visual signs are iconic as they resemble to a certain degree what they are referring to (paintings, photos etc)
  - **Codes** fix the relationship between concepts and signs: Meaning is constructed and fixed by the code
    - Iconic signs: Visual, e.g. photograph
    - Indexical signs: Written, spoken
      - The relationship between these systems of representation between the sign, the concept, and the object is entirely arbitrary (= no natural relationship between sign and meaning/concept, e.g. random collection of letters or sound – e.g. T.R.E.E. doesn’t have anything to do with an actual tree)

- **How is language used to represent the world? – 3 theories**
  - Reflective: Language functions like a mirror – it reflects the true meaning of what already exists
    - Critique: How would people express abstraction??
  - Intentional: Language only expresses the personal meaning of the individual using it
    - Critique: Private language doesn’t enable us to communicate
  - Constructionist: Differentiation between material and symbolic world – Most significant impact on current cultural studies
    - We construct meaning by using arbitrary signs