

STUDIES IN CRITICISM & ARTISTIC CONCEPTS: IMAGE & RHETORIC

ART 423-0, Winter 2005

Wednesday 6-9pm

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This course is designed as a graduate-level introduction to theoretical models and critical issues relevant to a possible discourse on contemporary art. Since at least the late '70s, with "the return of representation" and the instituting of semiotics as a ruling artworld paradigm, artworks have been thought of not as private creations by isolated authors but instead as having their exhibition primarily in mind; no matter how opaque or ironic the signifiers they present, they are nevertheless trajected toward semiosis, anticipating reception by an audience. Given today's preoccupation with communications and information, this seminar will consider ways in which images are said to be constituted by and/or implicated in and/or irreducible to larger systems of production, distribution and reception. We will examine, for example, how language, often said to challenge and invade visual imagery from without, can perhaps be considered as inhering latently within images, or at least within our perception and understanding of images. Much of the class will be devoted to an examination of different language-based methodologies (linguistic, semiotic, rhetorical), as well as the gaps and antagonisms between these methodologies, in an effort to determine the degree to which any one of them can be said to have a purchase on our experiences of visual art.

A set of readings will be assigned for each class meeting. Student participation in class discussion is mandatory. To facilitate discussion, each student is required to bring to class several written-out questions about the readings. In addition, each week a few students will be asked to bring slides of artworks related to that week's readings. The aim of both the presentations and questions should be to connect the texts to recent art practice, as well as to dig out from beneath the readings their underlying assumptions and contradictions, to extend and elaborate their lines of thought, to draw connections between one text and another, and/or to connect the texts to recent art practice.

Each student's final grade will be determined according to her or his participation in weekly discussions/presentations (70%) and her or his final project (30%).

IMAGE AND RHETORIC: WINTER 2005 READING SCHEDULE

- 1/5 SEEING & READING:** Leonardo da Vinci, from Treatise on Painting; Martin Jay, from Downcast Eyes; Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, "Vision's Resistance to Language"; Stephen Melville, "Criticism, Theory, Materiality"
- 1/12 SERIES & SIGNIFICATION:** Norman Bryson, "Discourse, Figure"; Kaja Silverman, "Saussure"; Michael Fried, from Three American Painters; Rosalind Krauss, "Stella's New Work and the Problem of Series"; Annika Marie, "Ad Reinhardt: Between One and the Same"
- 1/19 POETICS & RHETORIC:** Fried, from Absorption and Theatricality; Timothy Gould, "Utterance and Theatricality"; Roland Barthes, from "Myth Today" and S/Z; Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp"
- 1/26 TROPES:** Michael Baxandall, from Giotto and the Orators; Kenneth Burke, "The Four Master Tropes"; Hayden White, introduction to Tropics of Discourse; Roman Jakobson, from "Two Aspects of Language"
assignment: bring in 4 slides, each of an artwork corresponding to one of the 4 rhetorical modes
- 2/2 PAUL DE MAN & ALLEGORY:** Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense"; Hans-Georg Gadamer, from Truth and Method; de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality"; Peter Burger, from Theory of the Avant-Garde
- 2/9 SPEAKING VERSUS WRITING:** Walter Ong, "Some Psychodynamics of Orality"; Marshall McLuhan, from Understanding Media; W.J.T. Mitchell, "Eye and Ear"; Lane Relyea, "Talking in Place of Writing in Place of Art"
- 2/16 INDEX VERSUS INFORMATION:** Hal Foster, "Wild Signs"; Jean Baudrillard, "Procession of Simulacra" and "Ecstasy of Communication"; Jonathan Crary, "Eclipse of the Spectacle"; Wendy Chun, "Human Mediated Communications"
- 2/23 FIGURING MODERN EXPERIENCE:** Immanuel Kant, from Critique of Judgment; Michel Foucault, "Fantasia of the Library"; Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire"; Mary Ann Doane, "Temporality, Storage, Legibility"
- 3/2 METAPHOR & INTERSUBJECTIVITY:** Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere"; Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse"; Ernesto Laclau, "Metaphor and Social Antagonisms"