

Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts
902 Seminar VII: The Artist-Philosopher: Aeschylus to Kristeva

Fall 2020

Course Number: Course 902
Course Name: Seminar VII: The Artist-Philosopher
Dates: September 21 – December 12, 2020
Format: Online & Conference
Faculty: Prof. Howard Caygill (Sept. 21-Oct. 26); Prof. Dejan Lukic (Nov. 2-Dec. 12)
TA:
Credits: 5

SYLLABUS

Seminar VII, Fall 2020

The Artist-Philosopher: Aeschylus to Kristeva

Course Description:

Seminar VII, *The Artist-Philosopher: Aeschylus to Kristeva*, situates the artist-philosopher as a figure who transgresses the boundaries between art and philosophy that were originally established by Western Metaphysics. Sometimes this figure finds itself at the heart of the central philosophical issues; at other times it rises in the poetic and artistic gestures that swirl around these central issues. In this course, then, we look at main concepts in Western philosophy through the lens of the artist-philosopher, so as to renew, or even undo, their trajectory. As we travel through the chronology of philosophical thought, we will ask, what might constitute New Philosophy? And what tools does the artist-philosopher have at its disposal, and which ones does she have to envision herself?

Starting with Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and ending with Kristeva's *The Severed Head*, and traversing some twenty-five hundred years across the history of ideas, we go from the themes of alterity and the refugee as seen through the words of ancient Greek tragedy (and by one of the early artists-philosophers) to the postmodern critique of patriarchy, beauty and purity, and a celebration of 'otherness' as an instance of the beautiful and the true. The classic idea of rational beauty will be analyzed and challenged throughout the course by way of a focus on parallel narratives highlighting the power of horror and abjection, which start with Aeschylus, goes through definitions of the sublime, and comes full circle with Bataille and Kristeva.

In the first part of the course, as we move across these philosophical horizons, taking up foundational texts as we go, we will begin to see recurrent themes and emerging points of argument. Beyond the properly aesthetic question that asks, for instance, what is the relation between word and image, we now come to questions such as, what is truth, what is beauty, what is the relation between beauty and truth? In the second part of the course, we enter a new conceptual framework. Each week we will submerge ourselves in early philosophical text, one "new" response to it, and one "contemporary" example from the visual arts. In this way the intertextual nature of our inquiry will be highly visible.

While these broader questions arise as the main issues informing a centuries-long debate, the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of these questions shift from one historical moment to the next, often coiling back on themselves in surprising, even shocking ways. In the end it remains for us to ask, where do *we* stand in the history of ideas? What is *our* contribution to the on-going dialogue concerning the New Philosophy?

Learning Objectives:

- To develop the knowledge and skills required to address the above- posed questions, so as to integrate Seminar VII with our first- and second-year seminar readings, and begin the work of shaping these readings into an organically threaded narrative.
- To understand how this narrative, which we call the history of ideas, informs thinking in preparation for the oral examinations.
- To widen the theoretical scope of each individual dissertation project.
- To understand the figure of the artist-philosopher and its place in contemporary and future philosophical and artistic research.
- To develop a special method of investigation which connects early philosophical arguments to contemporary philosophical experiments and artistic gestures.

Course Requirements:

Videoconference and Individual Calls. Students are required to attend all classes and scheduled phone meetings. If for any reason you cannot attend a conference or meeting, please let Professor Caygill or Professor Lukic know ahead of time, and be sure to watch the video recording for the missed teleconference, and to reschedule a meeting with your instructor. It is the student's responsibility to keep an updated calendar with conferences, meetings, and due dates for the entire semester. You should schedule at least two hours for Videoconferences, and at least 30 minutes for individual calls.

Students are also expected to check their emails regularly (i.e. at least every 48 hours), and to sign up for daily Canvas notifications. If there is a change in the schedule you will be notified via email, either through your IDSV A Gmail account or, more likely, via Canvas.

Open Class Forum. Students can initiate optional written discussion in Canvas ("Discussions" area) every week. However, in designated OCF weeks the discussion will be more structured and will require students to answer specific questions. OCF should be considered as a focused conversation with the readings and one another (not a social-media style forum for scattered musings). The primary goal for the OCF is to guide students in the task of "formulating the question"; the TA will model the questions to facilitate the learning process.

- During OCF weeks, the TA will post a couple of intertextual questions based on the assigned readings (these questions will be 'pinned' by the TA). Each student is required to answer/address a question at least once in the discussion thread, and for each OCF-designated week. Students are encouraged to pose their own questions as well, as part of their answers.
- These questions will be posted as one post no later than **Tuesday** at midnight Eastern Time.
- Replies to questions should be **thoughtful and succinct (under 200 words)** in order to keep the conversation lively and to the point.

- Replies should (i) address at least one of the questions, and (ii) engage productively with other student comments.
- You are welcome to reply to more than one question, but please post the replies separately.
- Every student is required to answer a question in OCF-designated weeks. Replies should preferably be posted by **Saturday** at midnight Eastern Time at the latest, but posting replies sooner will enable more fruitful discussion.
- The TA will moderate the OCF discussion as needed.

In addition to serving our immediate learning and engagement with the material, Open Class Forum discussions should also lay the groundwork for the seminar exam (essay) questions. Cohort OCF discussion is archived for this purpose. Moreover, if you have a good solid OCF trail, oral exam prep is very doable. Without that, orals prep can be tough if not grueling.

Students are expected to actively discuss the texts during OCF, Calls, and Conferences, and to bring up questions they have discussed within their study groups. Students are encouraged to conduct outside research as they think about what questions to pose and what problems to address. Each discussion should begin with an exposition of the text's central thesis, an analysis of its main points in defense thereof, and a consideration of its intertextual relation to the pertinent arguments that come before and after it. This latter step is especially important as regards preparation for the oral exam. How, for example, might Plato's *Republic* inform our thinking about Kant's *Third Critique*, Hegel's *Aesthetics Lectures*, Derrida's notions of *Différance*?

Written Assignments. Professor Caygill and Professor Lukic will post 2 essay questions total in Assignments in Canvas, asking you to submit an analysis of the intertextual relations among the texts most recently read and discussed in either Videoconference, Open Class Forum or Individual Calls. Questions will be formulated as examples of the kind that might be posed as part of the Oral Exam. Written responses will be worked out by students in their study groups in order to collaborate and support one another on approaches to take in the papers (students are responsible to organize their own study groups; please note that, as for any other assignment, each student will produce his/her own individual paper).

Written Assignment 1 (5-8 pp) – posted on 10/9, due by 10/25

Written Assignment 2 (8-10 pp)– posted on 11/30, due 12/12

Assignment Submission. All materials should be uploaded through Assignments in Canvas. Submitted documents must be titled according to the following format:

familyname, givenname_902_assignment #_yymmdd
(e.g., Jones, Sally_902_assignment 1_181016).

Please use Times New Roman point 12, double-spaced, leaving a 1" margin on top/bottom and 1" on right and left sides. No other fonts or formats are acceptable. Make sure all your documents (including drafts) are editable: files should have a word .doc or .docx extension - no

.pdf will be accepted. Clearly mark your name, seminar and assignment on the front page of your document, indicate collaborators, and number your pages. Please use MLA style in your papers, including drafts. Please refer to the IDSVA Writing Guide at all times.

Assessment:

Grades will be determined by assessment of contributions to Open Class Forum, Calls & videoconferencing (30%); and the two Written Assignments (70%).

Total Credits for Seminar VII: 5

Required Texts (In reading order):

§=Texts are page-limited (not the whole book). **PDF or Epub**= text available in digital format (Canvas). We recommend that for full books you get the printed copy.

Taplin, O. (ed., trans.), (J.) Billings (ed.) *Aeschylus: the Oresteia. The Texts of the Plays, Ancient Backgrounds and Responses, Criticism*. Pp. xxxvi + 251, ills, map. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-393-92328-5. **(Epub)** Note: the digital version does not contain the *Ancient Background and Responses* and *Criticism* by modern authors such as Hegel, Nietzsche, etc.)

Plato. *Republic*. Translated with an Introduction by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2004. (§Focus especially on Books: 2, 3, 6-7, 10.) ISBN-10: 0872207366, ISBN-13: 9780872207363 **(PDF)**

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Malcolm Heath, London: Penguin, 1997. ISBN-10: 0140446362, ISBN-13: 9780140446364 **(PDF)**

Longinus. *On the Sublime*. Trans. Penelope Murray, T.S. Dorsch. *Classical Literary Criticism*. London: Penguin, 2004. 113-166. Print. ISBN-13: 9780140446517

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Edited by Adam Phillips, Oxford World's Classics, 2009. ISBN-10: 0199537887, ISBN-13: 978-0199537884

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, and David. G. Irwin. *Writings on Art*. Translated by David. G. Irwin. London: Phaidon, 1972. ISBN-10: 071481508X, ISBN-13: ISBN-13: 978-0714815084 **(PDF)**

Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. Trans. Ellen Frothingham. New York: Dover, 2005. **(Epub)**

Greenberg, Clement. "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in Harrison & Wood, *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, pp. 562-7.

Blake, William. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790. In *Blake's illuminated manuscripts*, by David Bindman (ed.), or:

Free digital text here (with no images): <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45315>

Free archive of Blake's images: <http://www.blakearchive.org/work/mhh>

Hölderlin, "Mnemosyne" (1803)

<https://mesocosm.net/2012/06/06/mnemosyne-by-friedrich-holderlin/>

Bergson, Henri. "The Metaphysics of Life". Trans. Michael Vaughan. *SubStance*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Issue 114: *Henri Bergson's "Creative Evolution" 100 Years Later* (2007). § pp. 25-32. **(PDF)**

Esposito, Roberto. "Ecstasy" in *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. Trans. Timothy C. Campbell. Stanford University Press, 2009. **(PDF)**

Badiou, Alain & Slavoj Žižek. *Philosophy in the Present*. Polity, 2009. **(PDF)**

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. Oxford University Press; Reissue edition, 2009. **(PDF)**

Badiou, Alain. "Who is Nietzsche?" in Dominiek Hoens, Sigi Jottkandt & Gert Buelens (eds.), *Pli*. Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009. § pp. 1-11. **(PDF)**

Freud, Sigmund. "A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad", (1925a [1924]). § *SE*, 19: 227-232. **(PDF)**

Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing", in *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. § 246-291. **(PDF)**

Flusser, Vilém. *Does Writing Have a Future?* Trans. Nancy Ann Roth. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. § Excerpts. **(PDF)**

Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing" and "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013. **(PDF)**

Harman, Graham. "Immaterialism", in *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*. Polity, 2016. § pp. 1-34 (Part 1). **(PDF)**

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010. § Chapters 1, 5, 8. **(PDF)**

Bataille, Georges. *The Sacred Conspiracy*. Trans. John Harman and Natasha Lehrer. Atlas Press. § Excerpts, pp. 122-137. **(PDF)**

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa". Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976), §pp. 875-893. **(PDF)**

Kristeva, Julia. *The Severed Head: Capital Visions.* Trans. Jody Gladding. Columbia University Press, 2011. § Chapter 1, 3, 6, 9. (PDF)

Baert, Barbara. “The spinning Head: Round forms and the Phenomenon of the Johannesschüssel” in *Runde Formationen. Mediale Aspekte des Zirkulären*, ed. Joseph Imorde & Andreas Zeising, (Bild- und Kunstwissenschaften, 10), Siegen, 2019. § pp. 45-58. (PDF)

Students and initials (cohort '18):

TBA

Course Schedule:

Prof. Howard Caygill will teach the course during Weeks 1-5.

Prof. Dejan Lukic will teach the course during Weeks 7-11.

Part 1: Aeschylus to Blake – Prof. Howard Caygill

Week 1: Sept 21-27 -- VC: Wednesday, Sept 23, 5-7 pm EDT

Aeschylus the artist-philosopher

-J. Billings and O. Taplin (eds) *The Oresteia* (Norton Critical Edition with texts by Hegel and Nietzsche et.al.)

Art: Francis Bacon, *Triptych inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus*, 1981

<https://www.francis-bacon.com/artworks/paintings/triptych-inspired-oresteia-aeschylus>

Week 2: Sept 28-Oct 4 – OCF

Plato and Aristotle - emphasising dialogue between them on tragedy

-Plato. *Republic* (Focus especially on Books: 2, 3, 6-7, 10).

-Aristotle. *Poetics*.

Art: Giuseppe Penone, *Albero Porta - Cedro*, 2012

<https://gagosian.com/exhibitions/2014/giuseppe-penone-ramificazioni-del-pensiero-branches-of-thought/>

Week 3: Oct 5-11 – Calls

The Sublime - Ancient and Modern - Longinus and Burke

-Longinus. *On the Sublime*.

-Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.

Art: NASA Bill Anders's *Earthrise*, 1968

https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_1249.html

Week 4: Oct 12-18 – VC: Wednesday, Oct 14, 5-7 pm EDT

The Laocoon - horror and genre - Winckelmann, Lessing, Blake and Greenberg

-Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, and David. G. Irwin. *Writings on Art*.

-Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*.

-Blake, William. *Laocoon*, 1820 (image):

<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/romanticism/images/WilliamBlake-Laocoon-c1820.jpg>

-Greenberg, Clement. "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in Harrison & Wood, *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, pp. 562-7.

Art: Willie Bester, *Trojan Horse*, 2007

<https://www.bowmansculpture.com/sculpture/708e9b376da845a1476ae14889f7e79d3>

Week 5: Oct 19-25 – VC: Wednesday, Oct 21, 5-7 pm EDT

Blake, William. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790

Free digital text here (with no images): <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45315>

Free archive of Blake's images: <http://www.blakearchive.org/work/mhh>

Written Assignment 1 – posted on 10/9, due by 10/25

Week 6: FALL BREAK Oct 26-Nov 1*

**Daylight Saving Time ends Nov 1 at 2am EDT*

Part 2: Hölderlin to Kristeva – Prof. Dejan Lukic

The first part of the course already introduced specific contemporary artworks as conceptually embedded in the history of philosophical ideas. The second part continues the conversation around the artist-philosopher and uses a more explicit tripartite combinatorial model that intertextualizes a) historical text with b) contemporary text and c) a work of art. The purpose is to show how the "artist-philosopher" as a figure of thought and practice is transhistorical as demonstrated through selected artworks, and texts that address artworks.

Week 7: Nov 2-8 -- VC: Thursday, Nov 5, 7-9 pm EST

-Hölderlin, "Mnemosyne" **1 page** (online)

-Henri Bergson and Michael Vaughan, "The Metaphysics of Life", pp. 25-32. **8 pp.**

-Roberto Esposito, "Ecstasy," in *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. **24 pp.**

-Alain Badiou & Slavoj Žižek, *Philosophy in the Present*. **72 pp.**

Art: Cecilia Vicuna and Vija Celmins.

Week 8: Nov 9-15 -- Calls

- Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. **140 pp.**
- Alain Badiou, “Who is Nietzsche?”, pp. 1-11. **10 pp.**

Art: Berlinde de Bruyckere.

Week 9: Nov 16-22 -- OCF

- Sigmund Freud, “A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad”, 227-232. **6 pp.**
- Jacques Derrida and Jeffrey Mehlman, “Freud and the Scene of Writing”, in *Writing and Difference*. **51 pp.**
- Vilem Flusser, *Does Writing Have a Future?* Excerpts. **32 pp.**

Art: Vanda Vieira-Schmidt

Week 10: Nov 23-29 - Calls

- Martin Heidegger, “The Thing” and “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. **42 pp.**
- Graham Harman, “Immaterialism”, in *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*. **33 pp.**
- Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (chapters 1, 5, 8). **50 pp.**

Art: Agnes Denes.

Week 11: Nov 30-Dec 6 – VC: Thursday, Dec 3, 7-9 pm EST

- Georges Bataille, *The Sacred Conspiracy*, excerpts. **20 pp.**
- Hélène Cixous, Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, “The Laugh of the Medusa”, pp. 875-893. **19 pp.**
- Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* (chapter 1, 3, 6, 9). **43 pp.**
- Barbara Baert, “The spinning Head: Round forms and the Phenomenon of the Johannesschüssel,” p. 45-58. **14 pp.**

Art: Teresa Margolles.

Final Paper – posted on 11/30, due 12/12

Week 12: Dec 7-12

Writing Period.

Final Paper due Saturday 12/12