

## IDH 3005\_HONORS SEMINAR: AESTHETICS, VALUES, AND AUTHORITY

**This syllabus is subject to change. Please check WebCT for the latest version.**

Fall 2006

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Office Hours: W 10:30\_noon, R 3:30\_4:30, and by appointment

This seminar takes its title literally to explore the questions, What is art? What is beauty? How do we know? and Who decides? In searching for answers, we will examine the history of theories of aesthetics, issues of changing tastes and evaluations, and the roles of ethics, politics, religion, and ideology in shaping our ideas about works of visual art, literature, music, drama, and film, as well as architecture and community planning. Guest lectures will add to our understanding, and class discussion at all times is intended to be lively. Writing assignments in the fall will include reading journals, a short paper, and a field research report done in groups. In the spring semester we will further develop this fall's topics as we examine ideas of "high" and "low" culture, looking at various genres of popular culture in relation to their times and changing value systems. In addition, by carrying out and presenting major projects, students will have the opportunity to conduct further investigations into the often perplexing but fascinating questions that are the subject of this course.

### **Texts:**

Margaret P. Battin et al., *Puzzles about Art* (St. Martin's)

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (BBC\_Penguin)

Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo\_Events in America* (Knopf)

Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (Harper & Row\_Icon)

Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (MIT)

The editions noted above are available at the FIU Bookstore.

### **Assignments:**

Readings should be completed by the dates indicated in the syllabus below. This is above all a discussion course, and the best discussions take place when we're all well prepared. To encourage timely and thoughtful reading, students are asked to keep journals about what they have read. These need be only a page in length for each assignment, and may contain thoughts, observations, questions (even the most mundane), or anything else that strikes you in relation to the reading. Anything you have written in your journal may be brought up in class discussion, and questions certainly should be.

On days when the reading assignment is marked with an asterisk (\*), students will hand in their journal pages for that assignment (so journals are best kept in a looseleaf notebook or folder). Each journal entry must be handed in by the start of the class for which it is due; late journals will not be accepted. Up to two missing journals may be made up, either with one-page responses to additional *New York Times* articles (see below) or one-page commentaries on the Honors College Convocation or Honors Excellence Lecture. Journal pages will be read by the instructor but not graded. A grade (worth 25% of your grade for the course) will be computed based simply on the number of journals you hand in: 14-17 will earn an A; 11-13 a B; 8-10 a C; 5-7 a D; and fewer than 5 an F.

Students will also write two papers in the course, each worth 35% of the course grade. These will further explore issues covered in class, and will have an oral presentation component. The first paper, due on Thursday 10/12, will be based on a relevant article each one of you will choose from the Arts section of the *New York Times* internet edition (easily accessed through the FIU Library database system). The second paper will be a group project concerning aesthetics in our environment or local community. Both assignments will be discussed further in class, and guidelines will be posted on WebCT. A student who does not complete both of these papers cannot receive a grade in the course higher than C\_, regardless of average.

**WebCT:** This class will have its own WebCT site that we will use for the posting of useful web links and to communicate with each other. Login instructions are attached. Students will be responsible for all announcements made via WebCT and are asked to respond to them on the system. Participation in WebCT discussions will be reflected in the class participation grade, but does not take the place of participation in class. Students are expected to check WebCT e\_mail and discussion boards every day.

**Attendance:** Faithful attendance is strongly advised, as are active and thoughtful participation in class discussion. In a discussion class such as this one, absent students by definition fail to contribute to an important part of the learning experience. Class participation will count for 5% of your grade in the course but will be worth much more in terms of what you will gain from class discussions. Students whose absences are judged excessive risk having their final grades lowered for that reason.

**Plagiarism** is defined as submitting as your own something written in whole or in part by someone else. It is a serious offense and, if confirmed, could result in failure in the course and dismissal from the Honors College. The Honors College and English Department policies on plagiarism are linked to your WebCT site under "Academic Integrity."

**Reading Assignments:** (Subject to change: please see WebCT for the latest version.)

Students must bring to class each day a notebook and writing implement, as well as the book or books containing the reading assigned.

R 8/31 Introduction to course

T 9/5 *Puzzles about Art*, "Art and Artworks" (1\_26)\*

R 9/7 Guest lecture, Prof. Kenneth Rogerson, Philosophy: "Theories of Aesthetics" *Puzzles*, "Beauty, Ugliness, and the Aesthetic Experience" (28\_46; as in later assignments as well, additional cases will be looked at in class)\*

T 9/12 *Puzzles*, "Meaning and Interpretation" (60\_76)\*

R 9/14 *Puzzles*, "Creativity and Fidelity" (105\_147)\*

T 9/19 *Puzzles*, "Critical Judgment" (180\_217)\*

R 9/21 *Puzzles*, "Art and Other Values" (148\_178), *Ways of Seeing*, Chapter 5 (83\_112)\*

T 9/26 Guest Lecture, Prof. Pip Brant, Art and Art History: "Transgressive Art"

R 9/28 *Women, Art, and Power*, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (145\_178), and "Women, Art, and Power" (1\_36)\*

T 10/3 *Women, Art, and Power*, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art" (136\_144) and short handout excerpted from Lise Vogel's "Fine Arts and Feminism: The Awakening Consciousness"\*

R 10/6 Student conferences to discuss first papers

**M10/9 Honors College Convocation at University Park: Required of all Students in the Honors College 1:00-4:00**

T 10/10 Time off to work on papers.

R 10/12 **FIRST PAPER DUE (35%)**; class presentations

T 10/17 *The Image*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (3\_76), *Ways of Seeing*, Chap. 1 (7\_34)\*

R 10/19 *The Image*, Chapters 5 and 6 (181\_261), *Ways of Seeing*, Chap. 7 (129\_54)\*

T 10/24 *Building the Dream*, Introduction\_Chapter 1: "The Puritan Way of Life" (xv\_17)\*

R 10/26 *Building the Dream*, Chapters 3-4: "The 'Big House' and the Slave Quarters," "Housing Factory Workers" (41\_72)\*

T 10/31 *Building the Dream*, Chapters 6\_7: "Victorian Suburbs and the Cult of Domesticity," "Americanization and Ethnicity in Urban Tenements" (91-134)\*

R 11/2 *Building the Dream*, Chapter 8: "The Advantages of Apartment Life" (135\_51)\*

T 11/7 *Building the Dream*, Chapter 11: "Planned Residential Communities" (153-57, 193-214)\*

R 11/9 *Building the Dream*, Chapter 12: "Public Housing for the Worthy Poor" (215-39)\*

T 11/14 *Building the Dream*, Chapters 13-14: "The New Suburban Expansion and the American Dream," "Preserving Homes and Promoting Change (240-81)\*

R 11/16 Student conferences to discuss group projects

T 11/21 Additional student conferences to discuss group projects

R 11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday

T 11/28 Time off to work on projects

R 11/30 Class presentations of group projects

T 12/5 Continued class presentations

R 12/7 **SECOND PAPER DUE (35%)**; continued class presentations