

Laurie Fendrich

Graduate Humanities Seminar, Fall, 2003

Thinking About Art

This course will look at art with a philosophical—as opposed to an aesthetic—gaze. Through the selected readings, we will ask such questions as, How does art appeal to us? How does it fit into society? Is there a “nature” to the artist that makes artists different from others? Are art and artists always good for a society, or even for individuals? What is the purpose of art in today’s mass culture? Seminar discussions will focus closely on assigned readings. Course requirements include writing short essays on the reading assignments.

Preliminary Syllabus:

- Week One Introduction
- Week Two Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 1-90
- Week Three Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 91-167
- Week Four Rousseau, *The First Discourse* (approximately the first 50 pages)
- Week Five Rousseau, *The Letter to D’Alembert on the Theater* (first half)
- Week Six Rousseau, *The Letter to D’Alembert on the Theater* (second half)
- Week Seven Schiller, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (intro; first half: pp. 83-154)
- Week Eight Schiller, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (second half: pp. 154-190)
- Week Nine Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)
- Week Ten Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections)
- Week Eleven Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (first half)
- Week Twelve Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (second half)