

Religious Studies 245: Studies in the Rhetoric of Images
Spring 2002 Graduate Seminar

Images and Hermeneutics

Instructor: Barry Saunders

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Hermeneutics has been a celebrated mode of inquiry in the human sciences. It was, however, founded on approaches to text—sacred texts—and the applicability of hermeneutics to other objects or categories of signification has been contested. This seminar will explore various extensions of modern hermeneutic modes of inquiry to *images*—in part to develop a sense of the specificity, variation, and limits of hermeneutic thought in relation to visual interpretation and pictorial expression.

The course will address various notions of “image”—including, at the outset, images of divinity. Specifically, it will ask about images’ latent meanings or hidden depths—and how such depths may be associated (or not) with image-makers’ intentions. Consideration of particular cultural and cultic contexts of image production and display may help specify attributes of interpretable images, or felicity conditions of image interpretation. Whether and how hermeneutic traditions have affected iconological and other historical approaches to “art” will be considered. The seminar will develop case studies in hermeneutic approaches to images, as well as anti- or post-hermeneutic approaches.

Principal books—of which we will read major portions:

- Besançon, Alain. *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- Elkins, James. *The Domain of Images* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).
- Foucault, Michel. *This is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976)
- Mitchell, W.J.T. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
- Palmer, Richard E. *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

Other books from which we will read a large (50+ pp), or more than one, selection:

- Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
- Mueller-Vollmer, Kurt, ed. *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985).
- Muller, John P. and William J. Richardson, eds. *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
- Nelson, Robert S. and Richard Shiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- Thomas, Julia, ed. *Reading Images* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

Articles, Chapters, Excerpts (available through library reserve and/or master copies in folder in Religious Studies office, 101 Saunders Hall):

- Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image-Music-Text*, 32-51.
- Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, 217-51 [reprinted in *Reading Images*, 62-75].
- Bruns, "Secrecy and Understanding," *Inventions*, 17-43.
- Burwick, "Lessing's *Laokoon* and the Rise of Visual Hermeneutics," *Poetics Today*, 219-72.
- Clark, "Iconophobia," *Moments of Vision*, 30-49.
- Davey, "The Hermeneutics of Seeing," *Interpreting Visual Culture*, 3-29.
- Derrida, "Passe-Partout," *The Truth in Painting*, 1-14.
- Derrida, "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, 207-71.
- Foucault, "Las Meninas," & "The Prose of the World," *The Order of Things*, 3-45 [former reprinted in *Reading Images*, 184-97].
- Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" and "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 3-44.
- Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Hermeneutics*, 54-65.
- Gombrich, "The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols" & "Aims and Limits of Iconology," *The Essential Gombrich*, 437-84.
- Gombrich, "The Visual Image... in Communication," *The Image and the Eye*, 137-61.
- Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," *The Question Concerning Technology...*, 115-54.
- Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 15-86.
- Iser, "The Hermeneutic Circle," *The Range of Interpretation*, 41-81.

Jay, "The Noblest of the Senses: Vision from Plato to Descartes," *Downcast Eyes*, 21-82.

Merleau-Ponty: "The Intertwining: The Chiasm," *The Visible and the Invisible*,
Miles, "Vision and Sixteenth-Century Protestant and Roman Catholic Reforms,"
Image as Insight, 95-126.

Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn," *Picture Theory*, 11-34.

Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense,"

Pierce, "... A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation," *The Essential Pierce*, 225-28.

Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 137-55.

Weber, "The Blindness of the Seeing Eye," *Institution and Interpretation*, 73-84.

Wellerby, "Foreward" to Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, vii-xxxiii.

Course Requirements:

Four short papers (5-7 pages each) critically analyzing a reading, topic, or cluster of readings. Due dates: 2/12, 3/5, 4/9, 5/6.

Alternative: Substitute one longer research paper for first three short papers. Topic should be discussed with instructor by 2/5; paper due 4/16.

Advanced/PhD students will be asked to make at least one seminar presentation on a particular text/topic. Presentations by other students are encouraged—and should be discussed in advance with instructor.

Schedule:

1/8 Introduction

1/15 Vision & Visibility

Jay, "The Noblest of the Senses: Vision from Plato to Descartes," *Downcast Eyes*, 21-82.

Merleau-Ponty: "The Intertwining: The Chiasm," *The Visible and the Invisible*,
Summers, "Representation," *Critical Terms for Art History*, 3-16.

1/22 Icons & Iconoclasm

Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, selections: 1-148, 185-226.

Clark, "Iconophobia," *Moments of Vision*, 30-49.

Miles, "Vision and Sixteenth-Century Protestant and Roman Catholic Reforms,"
Image as Insight, 95-126.

1/29 Image/Text/Word

- Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image-Music-Text*, 32-51.
Bruns, "Secrecy and Understanding," *Inventions*, 17-43.
Gombrich, "The Visual Image... in Communication," *The Image and the Eye*, 137-61.
Mitchell, "Introduction" & "What Is an Image?," *Iconology*, 1-46.
Potts, "Sign," *Critical Terms for Art History*, 17-30.

2/5 Image & Interpretation

- Bann, "Meaning/Interpretation," *Critical Terms for Art History*, 87-100.
Bryson, "Semiotics and Visual Interpretation," *Reading Images*, 89-101.
Burwick, "Lessing's *Laokoon* and the Rise of Visual Hermeneutics," *Poetics Today*, 219-72.

2/12 Modern Hermeneutics

- Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 12-71 & 84-123.
Iser, "The Hermeneutic Circle," *The Range of Interpretation*, 41-81.
Schleiermacher, "Introduction [to *Hermeneutics and Criticism*]" and "General Hermeneutics," *Hermeneutics and Criticism...*, 3-29, 227-70.
Dilthey, "The Understanding of Other Persons and their Life Expressions," *Hermeneutics Reader*, 152-64.

[First short paper due]

2/19 Modern Hermeneutics II

- Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" and "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 3-44.
Gadamer, "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology," *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 274-292.
Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Hermeneutics*, 54-65.
Habermas, "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality," *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 294-319.
Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 124-217.

2/26 Image & Interpretation II

- Gombrich, "The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols" & "Aims and Limits of Iconology," *The Essential Gombrich*, 437-84.
Panofsky, "Introductory" & "Blind Cupid," *Studies in Iconology*, 3-31 & 95-128.
Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn," *Picture Theory*, 11-34.

3/5 Image/Text/Word II

- Pierce, "... A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation," *The Essential Pierce*, 225-28.
Schleiermacher, "Schematism and Language," *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, 271-280.
Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, selections.

[Second short paper due]

3/19 Image & Interpretation III

Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," *The Question Concerning Technology...*, 115-54.

Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 15-86.

Davey, "The Hermeneutics of Seeing," *Interpreting Visual Culture*, 3-29.

Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 137-55.

3/26 Image & Interpretation IV

Goodman, *Languages of Art*.

Mitchell, "Pictures and Paragraphs," *Iconology*, 53-74.

4/2 Photography & Elisions of Intention

Barthes, "Camera Lucida," *Reading Images*, 54-61.

Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, 217-51 [reprinted in *Reading Images*, 62-75].

Elkins, *The Domain of Images*, chaps 1-4, 3-68.

Weber, "The Blindness of the Seeing Eye," *Institution and Interpretation*, 73-84.

4/9 PostHerm: Foucault

Wellerby, "Foreward" to Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, vii-xxxiii.

Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*.

Foucault, "Las Meninas," & "The Prose of the World," *The Order of Things*, 3-45
[latter reprinted in *Reading Images*, 184-97].

[Third short paper due]

4/16 PostHerm II: Lacan

Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," *The Purloined Poe*, 173-212.

Johnson, "The Frame of Reference," *Ibid.*, 213-51.

Lacan, "Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*," *Reading Images*, 138-47.

Lacan, "Seminar on the Purloined Letter," *The Purloined Poe*, 28-54.

Poe, "The Purloined Letter," *Ibid.*, 3-27.

4/23 PostHerm III: Derrida

Derrida, "Passe-Partout," *The Truth in Painting*, 1-14.

Derrida, "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, 207-71.

Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense,"

4/30 TBA

[Fourth short paper due 5/6]