

IDSVA SYLLABUS
Directed Reading I, Part 2
Word & Image Seminar

Course Number:	901.2
Course Name:	Directed Reading I, Part 2: Word & Image Seminar
Dates:	July 23 – 30, 2010
Format:	Residency: Providence R.I., on the campus of Brown Univ.
Instructor:	Professor Paul Armstrong
Credits:	1

Course Description

How do words and images represent? Do unique limits and possibilities characterize verbal and visual representation? For example, is linguistic representation necessarily temporal, unfolding in time from beginning to end according to the sequential demands of narrative? By contrast, is visual representation inherently spatial, a simultaneous rendering of parts in a synchronic whole? Or is representation in both domains governed by general semiotic, epistemological, or social and cultural factors that are constant across different media? What consequences do these questions have for aesthetic theory, artistic practice, and interpretation?

These issues have a long history in philosophy, aesthetics, and literary theory. This seminar will examine major statements about the relation between verbal and visual representation from Lessing's classic study Laocoön to contemporary theories of the semiotic and social construction of images. Special attention will be paid to important recent moments in this history (especially Joseph Frank's influential theory of "spatial form" and Murray Krieger's seminal argument about the aesthetic implications of "ekphrasis," the depiction of painting in poetry) not only because of their significance in the "word-image" debate but also because of the light they shed on the aesthetic issues under dispute. The seminar will conclude by examining how this tradition informs contemporary conversations about "visual culture," the politics of form, and the problem of reading.

Schedule

Friday, July 23: The Implications of "Laocoön"

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry (1766), trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984)

Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön" (1940) in Art in Theory 1900-2000, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 562-68

Monday, July 26: "Laocoön" and Literature

Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), in The Idea of Spatial Form (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991), pp. 5-66

Murray Krieger, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or Laokoon Revisited" (1967) in Krieger, Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992), 263-88

Tuesday, July 27: The Debate about "Spatial Form"

Frank Kermode, "A Reply to Joseph Frank," Critical Inquiry, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring, 1978), pp. 579-588

W. J. T. Mitchell, "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory," Critical Inquiry, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring, 1980), pp. 539-567

Joseph Frank, "An Answer to Critics" (1977) and "Some Further Reflections" (1978), in The Idea of Spatial Form, pp. 69-132

Wednesday, July 28: The Relation between Painting and Literature

Wendy Steiner, The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), pp. 1-69

Jacques Derrida, "Passe-Partout" in The Truth in Painting, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), pp. 1-13

Jacques Derrida, "Before the Law" in Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-220

Thursday, July 29: Verbal and Visual Representation

W. J. T. Mitchell, "What is an Image?" in Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986), pp. 7-46

W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn" and "Metapictures" in Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994), pp. 11-82

W. J. T. Mitchell, “What Do Pictures Want?” and “Drawing Desire” in What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005), pp. 28-75

Friday, July 30: Reading Images

John Bender and Michael Marrinan, “Scenario” and “Diagram” in The Culture of Diagram (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010), pp. 1-52

Charles Altieri, “Reading Feelings in Literature and Painting” in The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of Affect (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2003), pp. 231-54

Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Prologue: Babylonian Modernity” and “Section 1: Babylon, Long Island” Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1-65

Format

Each participant in the seminar will be assigned a reading to present for discussion. This presentation (5-10 minutes) should summarize the text’s argument and offer three questions or criticisms that should focus discussion on the most important, questionable, or controversial aspects of the reading. Students must complete the readings before arriving in Providence so that the work of the seminar does not detract from their research on their field statements.