

**IDSVA SYLLABUS**  
**Directed Reading I**  
**Foundational Texts: Plato to Kristeva**

<b>Course Number:</b>	Course 901.3
<b>Course Name:</b>	Directed Reading I, Part 3: Foundational Texts: Plato to Kristeva
<b>Dates:</b>	September 7-December 18, 2010
<b>Format:</b>	Online & Teleconference
<b>Instructor:</b>	Professor George Smith
<b>Credits:</b>	3 Credits

**Course Description:**

Directed Reading I, Part 3 is titled Foundational Texts: Plato to Kristeva. It extends from the Word & Image Reading and the Brown Residency mini-seminar, Word & Image. Directed Reading I, Parts 1 and 2, brought together texts spanning the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, with a view toward developing an historical critique of the relation between spatial and temporal forms of aesthetic representation. The purpose of Directed Reading I, Part 3, Plato to Kristeva, is to situate the issues covered in Word & Image within an expanded field of earlier and more recent moments in philosophy and aesthetics.

Starting with Plato's *Republic* and ending with Kristeva's *The Powers of Horror*, and traversing some twenty-five hundred years across the history of ideas, we go from the establishment of classical misogyny to the postmodern critique of patriarchy, from the critique of beauty as a corruption of truth to the celebration of corruption as an instance of the beautiful and the true. As we move across these philosophical horizons, taking up foundational texts as we go, we begin to see recurrent themes and emerging points of argument. Beyond the properly aesthetic question that asks, 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? 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?

**Learning Objectives:**

In addition to developing the knowledge and skills requisite to addressing the above-proposed questions, our larger learning goal is to integrate Directed Reading I with our first- and second-year seminar readings, to begin the work of shaping these readings into an organically threaded text. This narrative, which we call the history of ideas, is meant to

inform our thinking in preparation for the oral examinations and to widen the theoretical scope of the thesis project.

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Foundational Texts: Plato to Kristeva is categorized as a Directed Reading in part because it transfers the center of instruction from the course professor to the course participant. While I will “direct” the reading insofar as I have arranged the syllabus and will provide the framework for discussion, chief responsibility for conducting the course will fall to members of the class. This is to help third-year students become more confident in and reliant on one another’s grasp of key concepts. With greater peer reliance comes more individual responsibility. This in itself becomes a source of further intellectual and professional development.

To that end every student will take a lead in discussing the texts (TBA.) Discussion leaders 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 *Aesthetic Lectures*, Derrida’s *Truth in Painting*?

### **Course Requirements:**

Toward the end of each reading a designated discussion leader will post a question or questions on Open Class Forum and lead the online discussion. At the end of reading numbers four and eight, I will post a notice on IDSVA Seminars Cohort 1, asking you to submit a three to five-page analysis of the intertextual relations among the four texts most recently read and discussed in Open Class Forum. My 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 in student teleconferences (schedule TBA).

A final ten-page thematization of the intertextual relations among the required texts will be due December 15. This final essay is to be prepared through group collaboration via teleconferencing (date TBA).

All materials should be delivered to Professor Smith via First Class and to IDSVA Submission Storage. Submitted documents must be titled with both the document name and email subject line according to the following format:

**familyname, givenname\_901.3\_assignment #\_yymmdd**  
(e.g., “Jones, Sally\_901.3\_assignment 1\_100223”).

Late submissions will be accepted but not given credit unless prior arrangements have been made with me. Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis in response to special circumstances.

Weekly thirty-minute telephone call times TBA.

**Assessment:**

Grades will be determined by assessment of contributions to Open Class Forum & teleconferencing (20%); Writing Assignments (30%); Final Essay (50%).

Credit for Directed Reading I is distributed as follows:

Directed Reading I, Part 1 (Word & Image Reading with Professor Carvalho) counts for 1 credit.

Directed Reading I, Part 2 (Word & Image Seminar with Professor Armstrong) counts for 1 credit.

Directed Reading I, Part 3 (Foundational Texts: Plato to Kristeva with Professor Smith) counts for 3 credits.

Total Credits for Directed Reading I: 5.

**Required Texts:** (Schedule TBA)

1. Plato. *Republic*.
2. Aristotle. *Poetics*.
3. Baxandall, Michael. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
4. Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Winckelmann: Writings on Art*
5. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.
6. Schiller, *Aesthetic Education of a Man: In a Series of Letters*.
7. Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea*.
8. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*, Eds. Geuss and Speirs, (Cambridge).
9. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Carol Diethe, (Cambridge).

10. Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh (SUNY series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy).
11. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 2002. (Pages TBA)
12. Kristeva, Julia. *The Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

\*Minimal bibliographic information has been given to allow for use of Google books and similar sources.

**Writing Schedule:**

Assignment 1 TBA

Assignment 2 TBA

Final Essay TBA