

SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE IN THE VISUAL ARTS

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Course Description: This course currently has no GenEd applicability. It is a 3-credit, 300-level Art History course.

This Course Uses the Standard University Grading: See Undergraduate Catalogue:
<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1534>

The study of visual signs and symbols has long been a topic of art-historical interest, and over the past century the discipline of Art History has developed a broad array of methods for the study and interpretation of these often enigmatic images. This 3-credit course surveys the use of symbols and symbolic language in world art and material culture from ancient times through the present, also presenting the fundamental primary and secondary literatures pertaining to this topic, and examining the methodological and more broadly philosophical conditions that govern their interpretation. Because the scholarly literature concerning the interpretation of symbols has undergone a massive revolution over the past 25 or 30 years, more recent scholars have found it difficult to connect their modes of inquiry with those of previous generations. Instead of consigning these older, pre-1980s traditions of scholarship to oblivion, this course employs the language and logic of 'sustainability'—more familiar from the fields of engineering and environmental science—as a means of recovering or 'recycling' the often quite valid insights of this increasingly forgotten body of literature.

Sustainable Scholarship:

Scholarly practices in the interpretation of symbols have changed radically over the past century. As a result, when we look at scholarly publications from past generations, we often find that, over time, the same symbol is now radically differently interpreted. But too often, more recent interpretative scholarship has simply overwritten past readings of the symbolic image, assigning them 'junk' status rather than seeking to understand the terms in which they were once considered valid. In order to involve students in this history of scholarly practice—and in order to promote the ideal of interpretative scholarship as a sustainable activity—the course also examines the questions: Why do these changes in scholarly practice occur? Are newer interpretations necessarily more valid or more "correct" than old ones? What should we do with "old" scholarship when

"new" scholarship claims to have displaced it? Instead of simply discarding "old" scholarship in favor of more recent answers, this course will offer opportunities for students to become familiar with the history of symbolic interpretation as it unfolded over time, revealing how interpretative scholarship often makes the most meaningful progress not by throwing away the insights of the past, but rather by *recycling* those insights, that is, by preserving and building upon the most valid conclusions of previous generations.

Course Goals: The interpretation of symbolic images is a major area of art-historical inquiry, pertaining to the sub-disciplines of iconology and semiology. With rare exceptions, all art history courses involve some discussion of symbolism or symbolic imagery, but this course takes those discussions to a more advanced level. Instead of merely telling students what a given symbol "means," it is the goal of this course to explain *how we know* what it might mean, to identify the parameters within which such knowledge can be claimed, and how we can build valid interpretative arguments for previously ill-understood symbolic images. As such, the course seeks to fulfill the Department's Learning outcome goal that each student should learn to engage with the historical experience of art in a methodologically informed and sophisticated manner.

By the end of this course, students will: 1) have command of a representative set of art-historical monuments and sources relevant to this topic; 2) acquire a deep knowledge of the fundamental methods, sources and problems in the interpretation of symbols; 3) become familiar with the history of art-historical scholarship in this area; and 4) gain practical command of the relevant research methods through the development of an original research project, to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. In addition, with an eye to building a fully sustainable approach to scholarship in this area, students will also develop: 5) An ability to recover relevant bibliographic sources from the distant past even when they have been forgotten, discredited or ignored by more recent scholarship. 6) The acquisition of a conservationist approach to past interpretative scholarship, no matter how historically distant or philosophically alien that scholarship may seem. 7) The ability to recognize when more recent scholarship has too lightly discarded the scholarship of the past, and to renew valid lines of inquiry which have been abandoned or unjustly discredited in the name of 'newness' and 'modernity.'

Graded Assignments, Grading Procedures and Criteria:

1) Class participation: 10% (I am looking for substantial contributions to discussion and intelligent questions reflecting a serious engagement with the course material.)

2) Class Presentations: 20% (This represents an aggregate average of the presentations. In order to lighten the burden for the entire class, two or more groups of students will be assigned to lead discussion of the readings in alternating weeks. Presentations should exhibit logical organization, appropriate use of presentation software, judicious use of source materials, factual accuracy and application of the course's analytical principles.)

3) Term Paper (Due 11/24/2015): 30% (The Term Paper will be developed over the course of the semester. The paper is a maximum of 12 text pages in length (not including endnotes, bibliography and illustrations. It will be graded based on originality of thesis, clarity and cogency of argumentation, logical organization, grammatical correctness, scholarly style, judicious and appropriate use of source materials, and factual accuracy.)

4) Midterm Exam 10/20/2015): 20% (The Mid-term includes: [a] objective questions graded in terms of factual knowledge and accuracy; and [b] an essay portion graded in terms of factual accuracy, precision and correctness of English grammar, understanding of historical context, and grasp of fundamental theoretical and methodological principles.

5) Final Exam (12/15/2015, 8AM): 20% (The Final is a cumulative examination two hours in length. The objective and essay portions are similar to those of the mid-term, and are graded on identical criteria.)

*****Final Exam Date: Tuesday Dec. 15, 8-10AM**

*****NB:** All undergraduate courses are required to have a two-hour Final Exam except if special departmental permission is granted. However, a student may seek to reschedule final examinations so that he or she has no more than three (3) examinations on any given day. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the rescheduling or be responsible for taking the examination as originally scheduled. Please inform the instructor as soon as possible if you are eligible to reschedule the Final Exam for this class.

Course Procedures and Policies:

Attendance and absences: Regular attendance is expected. There is no textbook for the course and the requirement for participation in discussion presupposes regular attendance. The implication is that students who attend regularly will probably perform much better than those who do not; and points will be lost on days when the absent student was expected to make a class presentation. Absences are in any case excused in the event of participation in University athletic events, religious observances or holidays, illnesses, family emergencies, accidents, or other unforeseeable circumstances such as extreme weather events or traffic conditions. However certain conditions may apply as regards the presentation of documentation for such absences:

If an absence is foreseeable, please inform the instructor in advance. In the instance of religious observance it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructors within the first three weeks of class regarding any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester. The calendar of religious holidays can be found at: http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html#religious If you must be absent on the day of a scheduled examination, or the day of a presentation for which you are responsible, please take extra steps to document the reason for the absence.

In general, students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university's policies on medical and other absences can be found at:

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

Academic integrity: The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibit students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: <http://www.shc.umd.edu>

Students with Disabilities: The University of Maryland is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add/drop period if academic accommodations are needed. To obtain an Accommodation Letter prepared by Disability Support Service (DSS), a division of the University Counseling Center, please call 301.314.7682, e-mail dissup@umd.edu, or visit the Shoemaker Building for more information.

Copyright notice: Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and may not be recorded or reproduced or anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

Emergency protocol: In the event that classes are canceled due to inclement weather, please monitor your university e-mail and course website account for instructions. I will provide instructions via coursemail so that we may remain on schedule.

Schedule:

T Sept. 1: Introductory Lecture and Discussion / Course Requirements

- How does the study of symbols relate to the disciplinary areas of art history, philosophy, and literature?
- How can we sustain the study of symbols over time - why don't we reach a point where we know the meaning of all of the symbolic images in art history?

Th Sept. 3: Sustainable Scholarship I: Old & New Modes of Symbolic Interpretation Lecture:

The way we interpret symbols has changed dramatically since the mid-20th century. In this lecture I'll explain that change and examine the question: What explains this change, and does it really invalidate the results of the "old" interpretative methods. I'll also examine different types of symbols from around the world... and beyond!

-For today:

- a) Bring examples of symbols that you believe have only one possible meaning or connotation for any modern American viewer.

- b) Bring examples of symbols that you believe could be accurately interpreted by anyone at any time - even someone from the past or future or from a completely different culture.
- c) Bring examples of symbols that you believe have more than one possible meaning or connotation.

T Sep. 8: Sustainable Scholarship II: Symbols, the Trash-Heap of Art History and Recycled Knowledge?

Lecture:

The study and interpretation of symbols in western culture is a very old area of scholarship, going back centuries. But the "answers" we get from scholars today are often very different from those encountered in past scholarship—even the relatively recent past of the mid and late 20th century. How can this be?

For discussion today, think about these questions:

There is a school of thought that says there is no art-historical truth aside from that which art historians have published up to the minute. Therefore, if you know all of the publications, you know all art-historical truth. (We'll see an egregious example of this kind of thinking later this semester.) Another school of thought says that art-historical truth exists on a metaphysical plain, awaiting discovery. With which view do you agree?

Also:

Are new art-historical ideas necessarily more true than old ones? Is it possible that a scholarly argument advanced in 1890 could be equally... or even *more* "right" than a scholarly argument published this year? How did scholars research the literature on symbols before the existence of the internet? What research catalogs or indices were used before the computer revolution of the 1990s? Do our modern bibliographical search technologies retrieve all of the relevant literature—even publications from a century ago?—or do they only retrieve more recent publications? In an environment where older publications are indeed forgotten, scholars may tend to reinvent the wheel, advancing arguments that have already been advanced by past scholars.

Th Sept. 10: Iconology and Iconography I: 'The Science of Symbolic Images'

Lecture and Discussion:

In this lecture, I'll summarize the following:

Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in: *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) pp.

Ernst Gombrich, "The Aims and Limits of Iconology," in: *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972) 1–25.

Peter Hecht, "The Debate on Symbol and Meaning in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art: An Appeal to Common Sense," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 16 (2/3) (1986) pp. 173-187.

Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (trans. Christopher Wood) (New York: Zone Books, 1997) esp. 27-67.

Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923–1929)

T Sept 15: Semiotic Approaches I: 'Symbols and the Theory of Signs'

Lecture:

This lecture explains the science of semiology and semiotics and how these relate to/differs from humanistic iconology and iconography. I'll explain the outlines of theories of the "sign" introduced by Saussure and Pierce, as well as related theories and their ideological rationales. What are the characteristics of a semiotic approach to symbols? Do semioticians share any philosophical assumptions with humanistic iconography? Is it possible that semiotic theories are more applicable to certain forms of art, and less so to others?

Th Sept. 17: Semiotic Approaches, II: 'The Critique of Iconography'

Read and Present:

Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," *The Art Bulletin* 73 (2) (June 1991) pp. 174-298.

Giulio Carlo Argan and Rebecca West, "Ideology and Iconology," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (2) (Winter 1975) pp. 297-305.

Christine Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography and Semiotics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (3) (Spring 1978) pp. 289-301
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/430439>

James Elkins, "What Does Pierce's Sign System Have to Say to Art History?" *Culture, Theory and Critique* 44 (1) (2003) pp. 5-22.

T 22 Sept: Symbols, Academic Skepticism and the Charge of 'Over-Interpretation'

Lecture:

Many recent scholars interested in the interpretation of symbolic images have taken a skeptical stance, doubting whether artists were intellectually interested in symbolic discourse and often questioning whether famously enigmatic images are really even symbolic in nature. In this lecture I'll survey a few of these skeptical arguments - including some skeptical critics of my own work on Guido Reni's Abduction of Helen (c. 1627-29). This will lead to a discussion of how we can recognize a symbol when we see one.

Th Sept 24: Recycling Scholarship, I: Van Eyck's Arnolfini Wedding Portrait and the Theory of 'Disguised Symbolism'

Read and Present:

- Erwin Panofsky, "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 64 (372) (March 1934) pp. 117-119 and 122-127.
- Schabacker, Peter H. "De Matrimonio ad Morganaticam Contracto: Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait Reconsidered," *Art Quarterly* 35 (1972) 375-98.
- Jan Baptist Bedaux, "The Reality of Symbols: The Question of Disguised Symbolism in Jan van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Portrait,'" *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 16 (1) (1986), pp. 5-28
- Seidel, Linda. "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait": Business as Usual?" *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1) (Autumn, 1989), pp. 54–86
- John Ward, "Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism in Van Eyck's Paintings," *Artibus et Historiae* 15 (29) (1994) pp. 9–53
- Edwin Hall, *The Arnolfini Betrothal: Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of Van Eyck's Double Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft1d5nb0d9/>

T Sept. 29: Renaissance Neo-Hieroglyphics, I: From Idea to Rebus

Lecture:

In this lecture, I'll be discussing the Renaissance reinvention of hieroglyphics:

-What do we know now, about real Egyptian hieroglyphics?

-**Key text:** [Horapollon], *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollon* (Trans. and Intro. by George Boas) [(s.l.) : Pantheon Books, (s. d.)]

-Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), Commentary on Plotinus, *Enneads V*

-Pierio Valeriano Bolzani (1477-1560), *Hieroglyphica, sive, De sacris Aegyptiorvm literis commentarii* (Basel: Michael Isengrin, 1556)

Th Oct 1: Renaissance Neo-Hieroglyphics II: From Idea to Rebus

Read and Present:

- Charles Dempsey, "Renaissance Hieroglyphic Studies: An Overview," in: *Interpretation & Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (ed. Jon Whitman) (Boston: Brill, 2000) pp. 365ff.
- Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (Copenhagen: 1963; Princeton: 1993)
- Brian Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) Chapter 3 ('Humanists and Hieroglyphs')
- Marzia Faietti, "The Rebus of an Artist. Agostino Carracci and 'La carta dell'ogni cosa vince l'oro,'" *Artibus et Historiae* 55 (28) (2007) 155-171.

T Oct. 6: The Ancient Gods from Early Modernity to the Twentieth Century

Lecture:

I'll show that humanistic culture regarded the images of the ancient Greek and Roman gods as symbols embodying complex moral- and natural-philosophical concepts. When explorers discovered the gods of Asia, Africa and the New World, they interpreted these new deities with the same assumptions.

Th Oct. 8: The Ancient Gods in Early Modernity, II

Read and Present:

Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (first English edition 1953) (New York: Harper Torchbook Edition, 1961) pp. 63-64 (the physical tradition); and 84-104 (the moral tradition)

Madeline Lennon, "Cartari's Imagini: emblematic references in the relationship of text and image," *Emblematica* 3 (1988) 263-282.

Robert L. McGrath, "The 'old' and 'new' illustrations for Cartari's *Imagini dei dei degli antichi*: a study of 'paper archaeology' in the Italian Renaissance," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 59.1962, 213-226.

T Oct. 13: Concealed Wisdom: The Emblem in Early Modern and Modern Culture

Lecture:

In this lecture, I'll summarize the still-valid observations of:

Mario Praz, "Emblem, Device, Epigram, Conceit," in: *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1975) 11-54.

I'll also survey numerous works of art that relate to or incorporate emblematic imagery.

Th Oct. 15: The Form and Function of Emblems in Early Modern Culture

Read:

Hessel Miedema, "The Term Emblema in Alciati," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 31 (1968) pp. 234-250.

William S. Heckscher, "Pearls from a Dung-Heap: Andrea Alciati's 'Offensive' Emblem: 'Adversus Naturam Peccantes.'" In *Art the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H.W. Janson*. Ed. Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York: Abrams, 1981) 291- 311.

-If interested, see also:

Manning, John. "The Dungheap Revisited: Some Further Reflections on Alciato's Emblem LXXX and the Nature of its 'Obscenity'" in Peter Daly and Daniel S. Russell, eds., *Emblematic Perceptions: Essays in Honor of William S. Heckscher on the Occasion of his Ninetieth Birthday*. Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1997. 123-34.

Peter M. Daly, "Emblem Theory: Modern and Early Modern," in: *Companion to Emblem Studies* (ed. Peter M. Daly) (AMS Studies in the Emblem, No. 20) (Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, 2008) Ch. 3.

- Peter M. Daly, "The Nachleben of the Emblem in Some Modern Logos," in:
Companion to Emblem Studies, Ch. 21.
- Karl A.E. Enenkel, "The Neo-Latin Emblem: Humanist Learning, Classical
Antiquity, and the Virtual 'Wunderkammer,'" Companion to Emblem
Studies, Ch. 6.

T Oct 20: Mid-Term Examination

Th Oct. 22: Ancient Painting, Humanism and the Problem of Symbolic Figuration

Lecture:

I'll discuss several ancient Greek and Roman literary sources that describe highly enigmatic symbolic images. These include Lucian's *Icones*, the *Imagines* of the Philostrati, and the Tablet of Cebes. I'll explain how these became models for many symbolic images in the Renaissance-Baroque period through the 18th and 19th centuries.

T Oct. 27: Symbolizing the Self: The Impresa and the Mystery of Personal Identity

Read and Present:

- Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Two Elizabethan versions of Giovio's treatise on imprese," *English Studies* 52, Issue 1-6 (1971) pp. 118ff
- Liana De Girolami Cheney, "The Impresa in the Italian Renaissance," in:
Companion to Emblem Studies (ed. Peter M. Daly) (AMS Studies in the
Emblem, No. 20) (Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, 2008) Ch. 10.
- Renee Neu Watkins, "L.B. Alberti's Emblem, the Winged Eye, and His Name, Leo," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz* 9 (1960) 256-58.
- Laurie Schneider, "Leon Battista Alberti: Some Biographical Implications of the Winged Eye," *Art Bulletin* 72 (2) (June 1990) 61-70.
- Erwin Panofsky, "The Ideological Antecedents of the Rolls-Royce Radiator," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (4) (Aug. 15, 1963), pp. 273-288.

Th Oct. 29: The Philosophy and Politics of Symbolic Personification

Lecture:

In a brief lecture, I'll introduce the symbolic mode of personification in the visual arts from the Renaissance through modern times. I'll provide background on its foremost theorist, Cesare Ripa. For those interested, Ripa's famous book, the *Iconologia*, can be found translated into English by Pierce Tempest (1653-1717) and Isaac Fuller (1606-1672) -- online at:
<https://archive.org/details/iconologiaormora00ripa>

Th Nov. 5: Theories, Practices and Purposes of Personification

Read and Present:

- E. H. Gombrich, "Icones symbolicae: The visual image in neo-platonic thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948) 163-192.
- Cesare Ripa, "Proemio" (trans. A. Colantuono) from *Iconologia* (Rome: Lepido Facii, 1603) n.p. (I will provide a typescript)
- Anthony Colantuono, "Enigma, Rhetorical Syllogism and the Aesthetic of Strangeness in Ripa's *Iconologia*," in: *Cesare Ripa und die Begriffsbilder der Frühen Neuzeit, Tagungsband* (ed. Cornelia Logemann and Michael Thimann) (Universität Heidelberg, 24-25 September 2009) (Zurich-Berlin: Diaphanes, 2011) 41-55.
- Janet A. Headley, "The monument without a public: the case of the Tripoli monument," *Winterthur portfolio* Vol. 29, issue 4 (winter 1994), p. 247-264.
- Hélène Lipstadt, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier : memory, mourning and national memorials," *Memory & oblivion* (Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1-7 September 1996) (ed. Wessel Reinink, and Jeroen Stumpel) (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999)

T Nov. 10: Stable and Unstable Context in the Interpretation of Symbolic Images

Lecture:

In this lecture I'll review a few cases spanning the 15th through 19th centuries where the interpretation of a given symbolic image depends heavily on our assumptions about context. I'll distinguish between "stable context" (where historical evidence provides a very specific context for reading the symbol) versus "unstable context" (where we know nothing about the original context in which the symbol was invented and used - and where scholars are therefore free to propose a wide range of hypothetical interpretative contexts).

Th Nov. 12: Recycling Scholarship: Readings of Botticelli's Primavera

Read and Present:

- Aby Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Primavera," in: *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance* (ed. Kurt Förster) (Los Angeles: Getty Research for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999) 88-156; and 405-31.
- E.H. Gombrich, "Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of His Circle," in: *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: 1972) 31-81.
- Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 3-19.
- Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love*, 20-49.

T Nov. 17: The Symbolic Imagery of Love and Sexuality

Lecture:

Following up on Botticelli's *Primavera*, I'll explore the manner in which concepts of love and sexual desire have been reduced to symbolic forms in various world cultures.

Th Nov. 19: Hermetic and Esoteric Symbolism and the Aesthetics of Mystery

Read and Present:

Dürer and the Symbolic Mystery of *Melancholia*

Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943) pp. 156-171.

Philip L.Sohm, "Dürer's Melencolia I: the limits of knowledge," *Studies in the History of Art* 9 (1980) 13-32.

David Pingree, "A new look at Melencolia I," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980) 257-258.

Keith Moxey, "Panofsky's *Melancholia*," in: *Künstlerischer Austausch* [acts of the international conference] (ed. Thomas W. Gaetgens) (Berlin: Akademie, 1993) II, p. 681-692.

Elena Filippi (trans. Michael Friel), "Albrecht Dürer's Meisterstiche: proposal for an historical-epochal reading," *Chicago Art Journal* 5 (1) (Spring 1995) pp. 33-43.

Hans Weitzel, "A further hypothesis on the polyhedron of A. Dürer," *Historia Mathematica* 31 (2004) 11-14.

T Nov. 24: Art and the Symbolic Language of Dreams

Lecture: Symbolic Dream Imagery from Raphael to Dalí

Read/Present:

Maria Ruvoldt, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep and Dreams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) (select a few interesting examples)

Charles Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2001) Ch. 3 ("Spirits of the Nightmare: Botticelli's Mars and Venus as a Problem in Grammatical Interpretation") pp. 107-146.

Z. Dana Andrus, "Some implications for another reading of Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare*," *Gazette des Beaux-arts* Vol. 126, issue 1523 (1995), pp. 235-252.

Th Nov. 26: No Class Today [Thanksgiving Break]

T Dec. 1: The Symbolism of Death in the Visual Arts

Lecture:

Employing a psychological model of interpretation, I'll argue that many cultures use symbols to negotiate, mediate or distance the uncomfortable but inevitable human reality of death. This distancing effect, comparable to the Freudian notion of repression, may provide some clues to the origin of symbols in general.

Th Dec. 3: Hieronymus Bosch's Symbolic Method and the Linguistic Model

Lecture:

I'll briefly summarize the theories of Dirk Bax regarding Bosch's bizarre imagery. Bax's notion that Bosch's imagery is basically a visualization of Netherlandish figurative speech relates to the iconological model of symbolic interpretation, and as such has drawn criticism from champions of semiotics.

Read:

Albert Cook, "Change of signification in Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights," *Oud Holland* 98 (2) (1984) 76-97.

Laurinda S. Dixon, "Bosch's Garden of Delights triptych: remnants of a 'fossil' science," *Art Bulletin* 63 (1) (Mar 1981) 96-113.

Anna Bockskowska, "The crab, the sun, the moon, and Venus: studies in the iconology of Hieronymus Bosch's triptych the Garden of Earthly Delights," *Oud Holland* 91 (4) (1977) 197-231.

Walter S. Gibson, "The Strawberries of Hieronymus Bosch," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* Vol. 8 (2003), p. 24-33.

Nicolas Calas, "Of Mice and Folly in The Garden of Delights," *Artforum* 20 (3) (Nov 1981) 70-74.

T Dec . 8: Memory and Mind: The Cognitive Functions of Symbols

Lecture:

I'll sum up some past and current ideas about the rhetorical, cognitive and mnemonic functions of symbols in western culture.

Th Dec. 10: Final Discussion

Each group should bring a selection of symbolic images from your own research papers - be prepared to illustrate these in PowerPoint.