

PS 495 (001): Politics and the Arts
Winter 2007

Elizabeth Wingrove
7648 Haven Hall
647-0086
Office hours: Tues, 1:30-3:30
or by appointment
ewingrov@umich.edu

Description

This course explores the relationship between art—as a creative and productive process as well as an artifact—and politics. The topic is vast, potentially encompassing such distinct issues as aesthetic theory; theories of representation; the historical, material, and social conditions in which artists work and/or their products circulate; the political intentions or aims of artists; and the artistic aims or intentions of political actors, to name just a few. While all of these issues will arise (in small or large ways) over the term, the readings have been selected to focus our attentions on 1) some classical (and yet enduring) accounts of how art and artistic production matter to the well-being of a political community, 2) some contemporary challenges to and complications of those accounts, and 3) some “case studies” that offer different interpretive approaches to how one might read the political effects and/or “message” of art. The artistic genres/forms we will consider include theater, painting, film, carving, music, and photography.

Requirements

The class will be conducted as a seminar. Among other things this means that all assigned readings must be completed prior to the session for which they are assigned, and that all students should come to every session prepared to discuss those readings. In addition to this preparation/participation, students will develop an independent project over the course of the term (on the basis of class themes and personal preferences/desires) that culminates in a written (13-15 page) paper and an in-class presentation of 10-15 minutes. (See project hand-out for details, due dates, etc.) Finally, there will be two (2) in-class writing assignments on questions drawn from the readings. (**NB:** I reserve the right to increase the number of these in-class exercises, depending on factors to be discussed during our first session.) The final grade will be calculated as follows: 30% participation (which will include in-class writing assignments), 70% class project (see hand-out for breakdown of percentages as they apply to the different components of the project). **NB: all assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.**

Readings

The following books have been ordered through Shaman Drum Book Store, 315 S. State Street and should be purchased:

- 1) *Politics and the Arts* (Jean-Jacques Rousseau), trans. Allan Bloom.
- 2) *spell #7* (Ntozake Shange)

All other readings are available either through the library (noted by Δ below) or in a coursepack (noted by * below) that should be purchased at Dollarbill Coursepacks (Church Street and South University). *If you anticipate or know that you will have problems purchasing the materials required in the course, please let me know immediately.*

Weekly Schedule

Jan. 8 First Meeting

Jan 15 MLK Day (No class)

Jan. 22

- Plato. *Republic* II, III, VII, X [any translation]Δ
- Lodge, Rupert. *Plato's Theory of Art* (New York, 1953), Chapters IX, XIII, XIV*

Jan. 29

- Mullin, Amy. "Feminist Art and Political Imagination," in *Hypatia* 18, 4 (Fall 2003): 190-213 [available through library e-journals]Δ
- Adorno, Theodor. "Commitment," in *Aesthetics and Imagination* (London, 1977) by Ernst Bloch et al *
- Visit Guerrilla Girls site at: <http://www.guerillagirls.com/>

Feb. 5

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* [1758], in *Politics and the Arts* (Ithaca, NY: 1960), trans. Allan Bloom

Feb. 12

- Nochlin, Linda. "Women, Art, and Power," and "Morisot's *Wet Nurse*: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York, 1988)*

Feb. 19

- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* [1962] (Cambridge, MA: 1989), Chapters 1 and 5*
- Fernandes, Sujatha. *Cuba Represent!* (Durham, NC: 2006), Introduction and Chapter 2*

Feb. 26 Winter Recess (No class)

Mar. 4

- Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944] (New York: 1969)*
- Watts, Steven. "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century," in *The Journal of American History* 82, 1 (June 1995): 84-110 [**available through library e-journals**] Δ

Mar. 12

- Shange, Ntozake. *spell #7* [1981]
- Lester, Neal. *Ntozake Shange: A Critical Study of the Plays* (New York: 1995), Chapter 3*
- Cronacher, Karen. "Unmasking the Minstrel Mask's Black Magic in Ntozake Shange's *spell #7*," in *Theatre Journal* 44, 2 (May 1992): 177-193 [**available through library e-journals**] Δ

Mar. 19

- Townsend-Gault, Charlotte. "Art, Argument and Anger on the Northwest Coast," in *Contesting Art: Art, Politics, and Identity in the Modern World* ed. Jeremy MacClancy (Oxford, 1997)*

March 25 (Sunday): Screening of *Peter Grimes* (Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 1981)
6:30pm-9pm, room TBA

Mar. 26 Visitor: Professor Naomi André (and WS150 students)
"Gender Politics in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (1945)"

Apr. 2: Visitor: Professor Carol Jacobson
"The Evolution of an Artist-Activist"

Apr. 9: Project/Paper Presentations

Apr. 16: Project/Paper Presentations