

Vision, Power, and Desire

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Course Description

On the ground that vision is not so much a transparent/transcendental concept as subtly intertwined with the problem of power and desire, this course is designed to survey how and why vision assumes a brand-new cast in the theoretical domain. The dominant representatives of visual culture—paintings and photographs—will be put on the agenda for theoretical discussion and critical scrutiny. Rene Descartes, Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, among others, will be the major theorists furnishing us with perspectives of different colorings on the issues in question and giving us plenty food for thought.

Requirements:

1. class participation (40%): read the assigned articles before class and present your comments at each meeting to facilitate in-depth discussion
2. term paper (60%): 10 pages minimum for the first-year MA students, and 12 to 15 pages otherwise

Tentative Syllabus

9/18 Introduction

9/25 **Tamar Garb**, “Powder and Paint: Framing the Feminine in Georges

Seurat’s *Young Woman Powdering Herself*” in *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France*

10/2 **René Descartes**, *Optics* (Discourse One to Discourse Six)

10/9 No Class

10/16 **Michel Foucault**, “Panopticism” in *Discipline and Punish*

10/23 **Maurice Merleau-Ponty**, “Eye and Mind,” in *The Primacy of Perception*

10/30, 11/6 **Sigmund Freud**, “Gradiva” in *SE 9*;

11/13 **Jean-Paul Sartre**, “The Look,” in *Being and Nothingness*;

11/20, 11/27 **Jacques Lacan**, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as

Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” and “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty” in *Écrits*

12/4 **Georges Bataille**, “The Pineal Eye,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*;

12/11 **Luce Irigaray**, *i love to you* § 8 -- § 11; **Kelly Oliver**, “Toward a New

Vision” and “Witnessing the Power of Love” in *Witnessing : Beyond Recognition*
12/25 Susan Sontag, “The Heroism of Vision,” in *On Photography*; ***John Berger**,
“Uses of Photography” in *About Looking*;

1/1 No Class

1/8 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography* (Part One)