

On the Sublime

HNRS 115 – 3 credit hours

Course Instructor: Kelly Younger (English)

Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

University Honors Program

Kelly Younger, Director

Course Description: On the Sublime takes its title from the 1st century text attributed to Longinus and is an interdisciplinary investigation into the aesthetics of perception, expression, and various ways of knowing. This first Honors seminar is required of all entering Honors Program students and serves as an invitation for Honors students to explore the ways we look at ourselves, each other, and the world around us; to understand the history of Great Ideas and their effects; to synthesize personal opinion with research; to create and articulate perception and identity; to experience and initiate wonder; to identify and seek out the sublime; and to foster a life-long love of learning. This course also serves as a foundation for The University Honors Program.

Texts:

de Botton, Alain. 2002. *The Art of Travel*. Pantheon, New York, NY.

Dickens, Charles. 2001. *Great Expectations*. Modern Library, New York, NY.

Homer. 1997. *Iliad*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Hackett, Indianapolis, IN.

Leader, Darian. 2002. *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us From Seeing*. Counterpoint, New York, NY.

Melchior-Bonnet, Sabine. 2002. *The Mirror: A History*. Routledge, New York, NY.

Sontag, Susan. 1997. *On Photography*. Picador, New York, NY.

Vowell, Sarah. 2003. *The Partly Cloudy Patriot*. Simon and Schuster, New York, NY.

Weschler, Lawrence. 1996. *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*. Vintage, New York, NY.

Syllabus

Date	Topic
30 Aug	Introduction to the Course
1 Sept	Alain de Botton, <i>The Art of Travel</i> (Departure I-II: "On Anticipation," "On Traveling Places," Motives III-IV: "On the Exotic," "On Curiosity.")
6 Sept	Lawrence Weschler, <i>Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder</i> (Part I)
9 Sept	Required Evening Event: Field trip to The Museum of Jurassic Technology, followed by Honors Dinner
13 Sept	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> (Books 1-3)
15 Sept	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> (Books 4-8)
22 Sept	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> (Books 18-22) Writing Project I: <i>On Wonder</i> Due
27 Sept	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> (Books 23-24)
29 Sept	Alain de Botton, <i>The Art of Travel</i> (Landscape V-VI: "On the Country and the City," "On the Sublime," Art VII-VIII: "On Eye-Opening Art," "On Possessing Beauty")
4 Oct	Darian Leader, <i>Stealing the Mona Lisa</i> (Part I)
6 Oct	Darian Leader, <i>Stealing the Mona Lisa</i> (Part II)
11 Oct	Susan Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> ("In Plato's Cave," "America, Seen Through Photography, Darkly")

13 Oct	Susan Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> ("Melancholy Objects," "The Heroism of Vision")
18 Oct	Susan Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> ("Photographic Evangels," "The Image-World")
20 Oct	Alain de Botton, <i>The Art of Travel</i> (Return IX: "On Habit")
27 Oct	Sarah Vowell, <i>The Partly Cloudy Patriot</i> HNRS 115 private Q&A with author Sarah Vowell
1 Nov	Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, <i>The Mirror: A History</i> (Part I: <i>The Origin of the Mirror</i>) Writing Project II: <i>On Perception</i> Due
3 Nov	Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, <i>The Mirror: A History</i> (Part II: <i>The Magic of Resemblance</i>)
8 Nov	Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, <i>The Mirror: A History</i> (Part III: <i>Troubling Strangeness</i>)
10 Nov	Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, <i>The Mirror: A History</i> (Conclusion)
15 Nov	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part I)
17 Nov	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part I)
22 Nov	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part I)
29 Nov	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part II)
1 Dec	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part II)
6 Dec	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part III)
8 Dec	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (Part III)
12 Dec	Writing Project III: <i>On the Sublime</i> Due
15 Dec	Final Examination

Grading Policy:

Students will complete three major writing projects:

I) *On Wonder* (10%)

Using Lawrence Weschler's *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder* as an example, conduct your own investigation of an object of wonder. In an intelligent and well-written 5 page essay, discuss the history, significance, theory, and/or meaning of your object. Like Weschler, you should support your ideas with textual citations and references. Choose a topic that is of vital interest to you (i.e., an approach from your own major);

II) *On Perception* (25%)

Select one work of art in any genre (e.g., a painting, photograph, film, text, performance, sculpture, etc.) and discuss it in the style of Leader and/or Sontag. For example, discuss some of the 'problems, aesthetic and moral, posed by the omnipresence' of the image. What does it reveal about 'why we look at art, why artists create it, and why it has to be so expensive?' Create your own specific thesis for this 8 page essay. Do not merely summarize, explain, or offer your impressions. Rather, model your project on Leader and Sontag who 'combine anecdote, observation, and analysis;'

III) *On the Sublime* (50%)

Using Alain de Botton's *The Art of Travel* as a paradigm, select a Person of note who interests you, a Place you have either visited or wish to visit, and a Thing you wish to investigate, prove, or resolve. In other words, create a 15 page mini-thesis project shaped to your own curiosity and area of study. You may use authors and topics from class, outside of class, or any combination, but focus on supporting and revealing how your topic 'gently moves [you] to acknowledge limitations,' serves as a reminder of 'all that exceeds [you],' or challenges you to move beyond your own great expectations.

The Final Examination (15%) is a comprehensive written exam based on the seminar readings. You may choose two of the three questions for response.