Seminar: The History of the Idea of Style

English 607: Topics in Rhetoric
Monday 2-4:50, 253 PLC
CRN: 16845

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Office Hours: MW 10-11
TU 11-12 & by appointment

...the notion of style, generically considered, has a specific, historical meaning. It is not only that styles belong to a time and a place; and that our perception of the style of a given work of art is always charged with an awareness of the work's historicity, its place in a chronology. Further: the visibility of styles is itself a product of historical consciousness. Were it not for departures from, or experimentation with, previous artistic norms which are known to us, we could never recognize the profile of a new style. Still further: the very notion of "style" needs to be approached historically. Awareness of style as a problematic and isolable element in a work of art has emerged in the audience for art only at certain historical moments—as a front behind which other issues, ultimately ethical and political, are being debated. The notion of "having a style" is one of the solutions that has arisen, intermittently since the Renaissance, to the crises that have threatened old ideas of truth, of moral rectitude, and also of naturalness.

Susan Sontag, "On Style" (1966)

Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behavior or in the artifacts produced by human behavior, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints. As a rule, few of the constraints which limit choice are newly invented or devised by those who employ them. Rather they are learned and adopted as part of the historical-cultural circumstances of individuals or groups. An individual’s style of speaking or writing, for instance, results in large part from the lexical, grammatical and syntactic choices made within the constraints of the language and dialect he has learned to use but does not himself create.... However, since such constraints allow for a variety of realizations, patterns need not be alike in all respects in order to be shared replications, but only in those respects that define the pattern-relationships in question.

Leonard B. Meyer, "Toward a Theory of Style" (1979)

These modes of writing, though different, are comparable, because they owe their existence to one identical process, namely the writer's consideration of the social use to which he has chosen his form, and his commitment to this choice. Placed at the centre of the problematics of literature, which cannot exist prior to it, writing is thus essentially the morality of form...

Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero (1953)

In its simplest manifestation, style is ingratiation. It is an attempt to gain favor by the hypnotic or suggestive process of "saying the right thing." Obviously, it is most effective when there is agreement as to what the right thing is.

Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (1935)
Readings

Most of the readings for this course will be indicated by URLs for E texts or made available as PDFs on Blackboard. If you wish to use other editions or translations, that’s fine.

Books ordered and available in the UO Bookstore textbook department:

Requirements

- Be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each class meeting.
- Attend each class meeting and participate in discussion.
- Post a weekly response to readings and discussion.
- Prepare and give a ten-minute book report.
- Complete an imitation exercise.
- Write a seminar paper.

Weekly responses are posted on the Discussion Forum on Blackboard and are due on noon of the Sunday before the next class. Please to read each others’ posts before class. Responses to the posts are helpful in creating dialog but not required.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments
(Any changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard)

Week 1 Sept. 26
Website: Silva Rhetoricae http://rhetoric.byu.edu/ (be generally familiar with how the site is organized)
E text: Aristotle from Rhetoric Book I, chapters 1 and 2; Book III
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0060%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D2
(Note: select “View text chunked by book” for easier reading.)

Week 2 Oct. 3
PDF: “Style” from Encyclopedia of Rhetoric
PDF: Cicero: from De Oratore Book III
E text: Demetrius, On Style
http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/demetrius/index.htm
E text: from Rhetorica ad Herennium Book 4

Week 3 Oct. 10
E text: Longinus, On the Sublime
http://fxylib.znufe.edu.cn/wgfljd/%B9%C5%B5%E4%D0%DE%B4%C7%D1%A7/pw/longinus/
E text: Horace, Ars Poetica
http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/HoraceArsPoetica.htm
Hermogenes, On Types of Style

Week 4 Oct. 17
E text: Augustine, On Christian Doctrine
http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/ddc.html
Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova

Week 5 Oct. 24 – book report choices due
Erasmus De Copia (ch 1-33)
E text: Sherry, A Treatise on Schemes and Tropes
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28447/28447-h/28447-h.htm
PDF: Puttenham, from The Arte of English Poesie
E text: Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence
PDF: Fraunce, from The Arcadian Rhetoricke
Week 6 Oct. 31 -- Imitation Exercise Due
PDF: Lamy, from Art de Parle
PDF: Bacon, “Of Discourse”
PDF: Hobbes, from Leviathan; from Brief of Aristotle’s Rhetoric
PDF: Spratt, from History of the Royal Society

Week 7 Nov. 7 -- Book Reports (1-3)
PDF: Campbell, from The Philosophy of Rhetoric
PDF: Blair, from Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres
PDF: Spencer, The Philosophy of Style
PDF: Coleridge, from Biographia Literaria
E Text: Pater, “Style”

Week 8 Nov 14 -- Book Reports (4-6)
PDF: Stein, from Poetry and Grammar
PDF: Burke, “Style” from Permanence and Change; “The Four Master Tropes” from A Grammar of Motives
PDF: Miles, from Style and Proportion
PDF: Perelman, sec.s 38-42 of The New Rhetoric

Week 9 Nov. 21 -- Book Reports (7-10)
PDF: Jakobson, “The Metaphoric and the Metonymic Poles”
PDF: Sontag, “On Style”
PDF: Fish, “Affective Stylistics”
PDF Cixious, tba

Week 10 Nov. 28 -- Book Reports (11-15)

Seminar Paper Due: Friday, Dec. 9 before noon.