AESTHETICS, VALUES, AUTHORITY

Art requires philosophy, just as philosophy requires art. Otherwise what would become of beauty? (Paul Gauguin)

Reading is a means of thinking with another person’s mind; it forces you to stretch your own. (Charles Scribner Jr.)

To explore the categories of aesthetics, values and authority, with a focus on fiction, students will study a carefully planned selection of books seemingly unaligned. Yet, to mention several focuses---a remote village in historic China under Mao, the Vermeer household in seventeenth-century Holland, Harry Potter’s obscure world of the imagination, Iran’s complex and repressive modern-day culture---for which exploration finds that a single link is thematically determined by the coming-of-age motif.

Each time students engage in a new book there will be an opportunity to participate in communal discussion and critical thinking through exercises built on analytical and written expression skills; and when interest is expressed, creative projects, as well as a semester group project. Expect to view films, visit the art museum, attend the theatre, attend lectures and entertain surprises as the university and our class schedule affords. Some of the books we will study include Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, Girl With a Pearl Earring, Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstres and Persepolis.

Requirement Note: Grades will be based on written assignments, presentations, discussion participation, and collegiate good citizenship, which includes academic honesty, attendance and timeliness.

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