This seminar takes its title literally to explore the questions, What is art? What is beauty? How do we know? and Who decides? In searching for answers, over the course of the year we will examine hard questions in aesthetics (including current controversies), the psychology of perception and creation, issues of changing tastes and evaluations, and the roles of ethics, politics, religion, and ideology in shaping our ideas about works of visual art, architecture, literature, music, drama, and film. We will explore aesthetics in our communities, and will consider what is meant by "high" and "low" culture, examining works that have found their way into both categories. Guest lectures will add to our understanding, and class discussion at all times is intended to be lively. Writing assignments in the fall will include reading-response journals, a short paper, and a team project. In the spring, in addition to reading journals and a short paper, students will carry out their own investigations in areas of the arts and society that most intrigue them, to create significant major projects.

**Books for Fall Semester:**
Margaret P. Battin et al., *Puzzles about Art*
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*
Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*
Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*
Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*

**Books for Spring Semester:**
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories, Volume 1*
Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*
Yasmina Reza, *Art*
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*