**The Art of Noticing**

**FRSEMR 34S**

**(20 August 2016: subject to revision)**

**Fall 2016**

**Tuesdays 2-4**

**Barker Center 024**

**Gordon Teskey, Professor of English**

**gordon.teskey@gmail.com**

**Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4, Barker Center 206**

**Course Description**

In this course students write about poetry, art, architecture, music, and natural phenomena, paying special attention to how we notice and organize detail. Because noticing is the one basic mental practice shared by the sciences and the humanities, students in both will benefit from the exercises in this course. The advanced writing element is important. Students learn to improve their writing by paying attention to word choice, to the arrangement of subordinate and principal clauses, to the use of repetition in the connection of sentences, to paragraph structure, to large-scale organization, and to economy. There are outings to Harvard's Museum of Natural History, to the Houghton Library at Harvard, and to Harvard's newly re-opened Museum of Art. We will also visit the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

**Required Texts**

Bloom, Harold, ed. *The Best Poems in the English Language: from Chaucer through Robert Frost*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis*: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Intro. Edward W. Said. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013

**Course Requirements**

All requirements must be completed.

Attendance at all classes is required in this course. If for any reason you must miss a class or a portion of a class, please send an email in advance.

You are required to keep a portfolio for the class, which is also your final project. This portfolio will contain your class notes, your museum notes, and all exercises and short essays submitted during the course. The portfolio will be turned in for evaluation at the end of the course. For a checklist of the twelve short essays and exercises to be included in your portfolio, see the end of this syllabus.

**Evaluation**

The course is pass/fail. following percentages are approximate weightings for determining final standing:

Class attendance: 30%

Class participation: 30%

Portfolio: 40%

**Accessibility**

If you have an accessibility issue, please contact Harvard’s Accessibility Services [Accessibility@dcemail.harvard.edu](mailto:Accessibility@tufts.edu" \t "_blank)or [617-998-9640](tel:617-998-9640" \t "_blank). Accommodation will be made according to the instructions from the Accessibility Services.

**Religious Holidays**

If you are unable to attend certain classes because of religious observances please inform the instructor at the *beginning* of the term. You will be given an alternative way to fulfill your attendance and assignment responsibilities for those dates.

**Academic Integrity**

You are responsible for reviewing the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources,* prepared by the Harvard College Writing Program: [http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu" \t "_blank). In short: you must not present under your name any work that was not done by you. You must give your sources for unusual facts and original thoughts that are not your own. You must not cite others’ work verbatim without quotation marks around the cited passages and proper citation of your source. Any collaborative work you do on an assignment must be approved by the instructor. Also, you must not present for this course work that you have already presented in another course.

**The Harvard College Honor Code (required for Harvard College syllabuses)**

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

**Schedule of Classes**

**Describing**

September 6:

Introduction. Noticing things in William Wordsworth’s “Lucy” poems.

***Exercise 1****: Describe the Dogon Ceremonial Sculpture to someone who can’t see it.*

September 13:

*Dogon Sculpture* discussion. Starting your portfolio. Introduction to the Harvard Museums

Habits: Remembering to Notice. Go to the Art Museum on your own and choose one work of art to work on intermittently for the duration of the course. (You can change works at any time.)

***Exercise 2****: Timed Noticing (Art Museum). Look at a work until you have seen it thoroughly. Walk away. Return and time yourself for one minute. Write down what you saw in that minute.*

***Exercise 3****: Describe the Art Museum as a Frame for Art*

**\***Reading for this class: Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western* Literature, chapter 1, “Odysseus’ Scar” (On Homer and the Bible)

**Framing**

September 20::

What you noticed *in* the Art Museum and *about* the Art Museum.

***Exercise 4****: Write a description of one work of Greek or Roman art (Art Museum)*.

**\***Reading for this class: Auerbach, chapter 2, “Fortunata” (On Petronius’ *Satyricon*)

September 27:

Art Museum: Ancient Greek and Roman Art; Asian Art

***Exercise 5****: Write an essay on a tree in Harvard Yard.*

**Focusing**

October 4:

Noticing things in poems: Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; Ezra Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro.”

***Exercise 6****: Write an Essay on Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud.”*

**\***Reading for this class: Auerbach, chapter 6, “The Knight Sets Forth”

October 11:

Harvard Museum of Natural History: Find a natural object and an imitation of a natural object. Describe each.

***Exercise 7****: Write a description of a natural or an artificial object in the Museum of Natural History. Base your description on what you find on the other side of the wall of resistance to noticing.*

**Distinguishing**

October 11:

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: the American Wing. Why are different works of art on different floors of the American wing? What distinctions have been used? Find one work of art in the American Wing and make it your own. Find another work of art in another part of the museum.

***Exercise 8:*** *Boston Museum of Fine Art (MFA), American Wing. How does a museum tell us about difference? Discuss the vertical organization of the American Wing. Illustrate by referring to several works of art in the museum.*

October 18:

The Isabella Stewart Gardiner Museum: An Italian palace in the Fenway. Contrast a small painting by Giotto (“The Presentation of Christ in the Temple”) and a large canvas by Titian (“The Abduction of Europa”).

***Exercise 9****: Write a two-column list of differences between Giotto’s “Presentation of Christ in the Temple” and Titian’s “The Abduction of Europa.” Then, choosing the most important of the details you notice, write an introductory paragraph to an essay comparing these works.*

**Listening**

October 25:

Mozart, Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

How to listen actively. How to distinguish what you hear into parts. How to unify what you have distinguished.

***Exercise 10***: *Describe the contrast between rhythmical and lyrical themes in the first movement of Mozart’s ‘Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550’.*

**\***Readings for this class: Auerbach, chapter 8, “Farinata and Cavalcante” (on Dante); and Auerbach, chapter 13, “The Weary Prince” (on Shakespeare)

November 8:

Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Opus 58. Pianist: Mitsuko Uchida

What is performance? How sharp are the lines of distinction between performance, interpretation, and musical structure, or content? Is watching Mitsuko Uchida play different from only listening to her play? What is the role of gesture in performance? Compare her to Lang Lang.

***Exercise 11****: With reference to Mitsuko Uchida’s performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, opus 58, describe the role of performance in the appreciation of music.*

**Teaching**

November 15:

***Exercise 12:*** *Give a ten-minute presentation to the class of a poem or of an artwork from the Art Museum. Turn in a brief plan for what you will say.*

\*Reading for this class: Auerbach, chapter 14, “The Enchanted Dulcinea” (on Cervantes); chapter 18, “In the Hôtel de la Mole” (on Stendhal); and “Epilogue”

November 22:

Student teaching continued.

**Conclusion**

November 29:

Student teaching continued.

Final Portfolios Due.

**Checklist of Exercises To Be Collected in Your Portfolio**

1. Describe the Dogon ceremonial sculpture to someone who can’t see it.
2. Timed Noticing (Art Museum). Look at a work until you have seen it thoroughly. Walk away. Return and time yourself for one minute. Write down what you saw in that minute.
3. Describe the Art Museum as a frame for art.
4. Write a description of one work of Greek or Roman art (Art Museum).
5. Write an essay on a tree in Harvard Yard*.*
6. Write an Essay on Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud.”
7. Write a description of a natural or an artificial object in the Museum of Natural History. Base your description on what you find on the other side of the wall of resistance to noticing.
8. Boston Museum of Fine Art (MFA), American Wing. How does a museum tell us about difference? Discuss the vertical organization of the American Wing. Illustrate by referring to several works of art in the museum.
9. Write a two-column list of differences between Giotto’s “Presentation of Christ in the Temple” and Titian’s “The Abduction of Europa.” Then, choosing the most important of the details you notice, write an introductory paragraph to an essay comparing these works.
10. Describe the contrast between rhythmical and lyrical themes in the first movement of Mozart’s ‘Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550’.
11. With reference to Mitsuko Uchida’s performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, opus 58, describe the role of performance in the appreciation of music.
12. Give a ten-minute presentation to the class of a poem or of an artwork from the Art Museum. Turn in a brief plan for what you will say.