

English 651: Aesthetics and The American Founding (Winter 2007)

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Office: UH 301.40

Office Hours: MW 2:00-4:00 and by appointment

Section # 01

Days: MW 6:00-7:40

Room: UH 263

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Course Texts:

William Hill Brown	<u>The Power of Sympathy</u>
Edmund Burke	<u>A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful</u>
Charles Brockden Brown	<u>Edgar Huntly</u>
J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur	<u>Letters from an American Farmer</u>
Thomas Jefferson	<u>Notes on the State of Virginia</u>
William Dunlop	<u>André, A Tragedy</u> (on electronic reserve)
Texts by Francis Hutcheson and Henry Home, Lord Kames	
Available on-line from the Liberty Fund Website	
Main Page: http://www.libertyfund.org/index.htm	
The "Online Library of Liberty:" http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/index.php	

Conceptions Behind Course: During the 18th century, many English-speaking people on both sides of the Atlantic saw the new field of aesthetics as the centerpiece of a unifying science of man. Discussions of concepts such as "beauty" and "sublimity" engaged not only critics of the arts, but also political thinkers and philosophers carving out a new systematic theory of mind and psychology. And in another interesting twist, moral science (with its focus on the human capacity for virtue and sympathy) drew equally heavily on aesthetic discourse. This class represents an attempt to introduce students to the complexity of aesthetic discourse in the decades leading up to the American Revolution, and then to further demonstrate how that discourse influenced writers and visual artists as they responded to the pressures and changes wrought by the break from England. In doing so, we will see that it is no exaggeration to suggest that aesthetics played a crucial role in the founding of the United States.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Attendance in class and participation in discussion are crucial parts of this course. As such, each student will be allowed no more than two absences during the quarter without suffering a penalty on his or her final grade. For each absence beyond two, one-third of a letter grade will be deducted off the student's final average for the class.

Tardiness: Students who arrive late to class will be marked tardy. Three tardies will add up to an absence.

Late work: Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor (owing to *extra-ordinary* circumstances), late work will not be accepted.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas. It constitutes a serious breach of the California State University Code of Student Ethics. Everything that a student turns in with his or her name on it must be his or her own work. Depending upon the severity of the case, plagiarism can result in failure for the assignment in question or for the entire course.

Course Requirements: To pass this course students must complete all of the listed assignments. The grade breakdown will be as follows:

Blackboard Entries*	30%
1 Short Paper (4-6 pages)	20%
1 Long, Seminar-length Paper (15-20 pages)**	50%

- * One of the goals for this class will be to develop a collective, on-line reading journal (using Blackboard). I will use our initial class sessions to provide students with some guidance regarding what kind of entries might be posted to the discussion board. Students must post one entry per week, beginning in week two, ending in week nine (for a total of eight entries). You are free to post more than once, but only the first will be graded. These entries should be about 250 words long. They will serve as a basis for in-class conversation and also provide a public record of the interaction between individual and collective responses to the material. Initial posts must be submitted to Blackboard by Wednesday at 12:00 midnight. Value: 15%

Once every week (between weeks two and nine), each student must also respond to a posting made to the discussion board by a classmate (a total of eight responses). You are, of course, free to respond more frequently than this, but again I will only grade the first entry). Responses should also be around 250 words long. Responses must be Submitted to Blackboard by Sunday at 12:00 midnight. Value 15%

- ** There will be a bibliographical component to the final paper (an annotated bibliography assignment). This will be due before the final paper due date.

Logging into Blackboard:

The Blackboard Homepage is at the following address:

<http://blackboard.csusb.edu/?bbatt=Y&bbatt=Y>

Instructions for logging in are printed on that page (if you forget how). It is pretty straightforward.

Please verify (and change, if necessary) your email address during the first week of the quarter. You should also change your password. Instructions on doing so are listed in the “Personal information” section (you’ll find the link to this section on the left hand side of the page you’ll reach after you log in.)

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week One: Introduction to Course/The Aesthetics of Beauty and Virtue

M 1/8 Introduction to Course

Unit One: Some Touchstones of 18th Century Aesthetic Theory

W 1/10 Francis Hutcheson [Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue](http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=0449)
Part I. Available on-line from The Liberty Fund
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=0449>

Week Two: The Aesthetics of Beauty and Virtue/Aesthetics and Revolutionary-Era Rhetoric

M Martin Luther King Holiday– No class

W 1/17 Francis Hutcheson [Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue](http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=0449)
Part II. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=0449>

Week Three: Aesthetics and Revolutionary-Era Rhetoric

M 1/22 Henry Home, Lord Kames [Elements of Criticism](http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=1252.01), Vol 1. Chapters 1 and
Chapter 2, Part 1 (Sections 1-7)

Available on-line from the Liberty Fund

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=1252.01>

W 1/24 Henry Home, Lord Kames [Elements of Criticism](http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=1252.01), Vol 1. Chapter 2, Parts 2-7.

Week Four: Beauty and Romantic Sublimity

M 1/29 Henry Home, Lord Kames [Elements of Criticism](http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=1252.01), Vol 1. Chapters 3-4, 6, 8-9,

14-15.

W 1/31 Edmund Burke

A Philosophical Enquiry, “Introduction on Taste,”
Part I and II. (11-79)

Week Five: Dramatizing Virtue

M 2/5 Edmund Burke

A Philosophical Enquiry, Parts III-V (83-161)

Unit Two: Early National Literature in an Aesthetic Framework

W 2/7 No Reading for Today– In-Class Discussion of Paintings
Short Essay Due in Class

Week Six: Dramatizing Virtue/The American Georgic

M 2/12 William Dunlop

“André, A Tragedy” (CP)

M 2/14 St. John de Crèvecoeur

Letters from an American Farmer Letters I-IV (35-
126)

Week Seven: The American Georgic/The Nationalist Landscape

M 2/19 St. John de Crèvecoeur

Letters from an American Farmer Letters V-XII (127-
227)

W 2/21 Thomas Jefferson

Notes on the State of Virginia (3-87)

Emailed topics for Seminar Paper Due

Week Eight: The Nationalist Landscape/The Literature of Passion: American Sentimentalism

M 2/26 Thomas Jefferson

Notes on the State of Virginia (88-176)

W 2/28 William Hill Brown

The Power of Sympathy (7-53)

Week Nine: The Literature of Passion: American Sentimentalism and American Gothic

M 3/5 William Hill Brown

The Power of Sympathy (53-103)

W 3/7 Charles Brockden Brown

Edgar Huntly (3-94)

Annotated Bibliography Due in Class

Week Ten: The Post-Revolutionary Literature of Passion: American Gothic

M 3/12 Charles Brockden Brown Edgar Huntly (95-183)

M 3/14 Charles Brockden Brown Edgar Huntly (184-285)

Week Eleven: Wrap-Up

M 3/19 Open Day (set aside for catch up, if needed)

The Final Paper will be Due on Friday, March 23, by 4:00 p.m.