

THE IMAGINARY, THE SYMBOLIC & THE REAL

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In this foundational program in the humanities and arts, three interrelated concepts, 'the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real,' will form conceptual anchor for our studies in aesthetics and ethics by means of philosophy, visual arts, and fiction. Jacques Lacan, a post-Freudian French psychoanalyst (1901-1981) conceptualized the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real as three intra-psychic 'orders' or 'registers' of human subjectivity. Broadly speaking, in Lacanian terms, 'the real' concerns that which lies outside language, cannot be symbolized, and is linked to the senses; 'the imaginary' has to do with the imagination, perception, and fantasy; and 'the symbolic' concerns those mediating elements of culture, experience, and world-making that are determined by and expressed through language.

In both quarters we will develop a working understanding of this basic triadic framework, which will entail a foundational overview of and introduction to psychoanalysis. Readings for this theoretical dimension of the program draw from the psychoanalytic canon, key historical texts in philosophy, and contemporary thinkers in the field.

Students will also read contemporary literary works that shed a different kind of light on our keywords. We'll take the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real as a point of departure for conducting our own creative writing experiments, drawing from fiction, poetry, cross-genre works, and literary critical insights.

The visual art component of the program in fall and winter will include attendance at the Evergreen Art Lecture Series, which brings artists to campus to share their work; introductory explorations of contemporary art history with a focus on psychoanalytic approaches to visual studies; and studio practices for an approach to art-making that plays with the relationship between the original and the copy as a way of enacting our insights into and posing questions about the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real.

In fall all students will participate in all aspects of the program. In winter quarter, students may opt to choose a disciplinary focus for a collaborative or individual project among the following: 1) visual studies and studio arts focus, which will entail curatorial endeavors that take advantage of our Natural History collection and the Evergreen Art Gallery ; 2) literary arts and creative writing focus, or 3) philosophy and psychoanalysis focus, centered on a student-organized mini-conference with student-led panels and talks to facilitate campus engagement with the theoretical content of the program. Each zone of engagement will be in dialogue with the others.

Fall Anticipated Credit Equivalences:

- 4 – Visual Art
- 4 – Literary Arts
- 4 – Philosophy
- 4 – Collaborative Projects, Individual Research Projects, or Capstones

Winter Anticipated Credit Equivalences:

- 4 – Visual Art
- 4 – Literary Arts
- 4 – Philosophy
- 4 – Collaborative Projects, Individual Research Projects, or Capstones