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History 203A/303A  
Thurs., 2:15-4:05  
Bldg. 260, Rm. 012

**History 241G /341G**  
[HPS 151, STS 134]  
**The History of the Senses**  
**Spring 2007**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The course examines the technological, medical, philosophical and scientific history of the five senses, drawing upon readings from antiquity to the present. We look at how physiologists and philosophers have explained the functioning of the senses; how doctors have tampered with them, both to help and to hinder; and especially how a wide range of technologies (including medical devices, scientific instruments, and tools of the arts) have continually transformed the nature and experience of sensation.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** The primary assignment for the course, other than weekly readings and participation in class discussions, is a research paper (~15 pages), due on **June 8<sup>th</sup>**. The topic, outline and bibliography for the paper will be due in class on **May 10<sup>th</sup>**. Students who want to use this course to satisfy their **Writing in the Major** requirement must also submit a rough draft of the paper on **May 24<sup>th</sup>**. Finally, students will be responsible for presenting the readings to the class and guiding our discussion each week on a rotating basis.

**READINGS:** Readings marked with an [R] are contained in a course reader; others are taken from the books listed below; those with web addresses entered beneath them are online. **It is crucially important to make print-outs of online readings and bring them along to class.** The reader and books are available for purchase from the Stanford Bookstore and are also on reserve at Green Library.

Aristotle. *On the Soul*. Green Lion Press, 2001. 1888009179

Robert Darnton. *Mesmerism and the End of Enlightenment in France*. Harvard, 1986. 0674569512

Denise Gigante. *Taste: A Literary History*. Yale, 2005. 0300106521

Denise Gigante. *Gusto: Essential Writings in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gastronomy*. Routledge, 2005. 0415970938

Galileo Galilei. *Sidereus Nuncius, or The Sidereal Messenger* (1610). University of Chicago Press, 1989. 0226279030

Descartes, René. *The Meditations*. Hackett, 1993. 0872201929

Descartes, René. *The World and Other Writings*. Cambridge, 1998. 0521636469

Helmholtz, Hermann von. *Science and Culture: Popular and Philosophical Essays*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

William Paley. *Natural Theology*. Oxford, 2006. 0192805843

Jonathan Ree. *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses – A Philosophical History*. Owl Books, 2000. 0805062556

**SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1 (April 5<sup>th</sup>) – Introductions**

**Week 2 (April 12<sup>th</sup>) – Philosophical Approaches to the Senses**

**Reading:**

Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II.6–12, III.1-2 (c.350 BCE)

Plato, *Republic*, Bk. VII, allegory of the cave [**online**]

René Descartes, *The World and Other Writings: Treatise on Man* (1662),  
Parts 3, 4, 5

**Week 3 (April 19<sup>th</sup>) – The Senses Through New Lenses**

**Reading:**

Descartes, *The Meditations* (1641), II; *Treatise on Light* (1664), Ch. 1

Galileo Galilei, *The Sidereal Messenger* (1610)

Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (1665), preface online at

<http://www.roberthooke.org.uk/micro2.htm>; plates at

<http://www.roberthooke.org.uk/rest2.htm>

**Week 4 (April 26<sup>th</sup>) – The Touch of Enlightenment**

**Reading:**

Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Treatise on the Sensations* (1798) [**R**]

Diderot, Denis. *Letter on the Blind for the Benefit of Those Who See*  
(1749) [**R**]

**Week 5 (May 3<sup>rd</sup>) – The Social Sense**

**Reading:**

Diderot, Denis. *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb* (1751) [**R**]

Ree, *I See A Voice* (2000), excerpts to be assigned

**Week 6 (May 10<sup>th</sup>) – The Sixth Sense**

**Reading:**

Franz Anton Mesmer, *Memoir* (1799) [R]  
Darnton, *Mesmerism* (1989), excerpts to be assigned  
Riskin, Franz Anton Mesmer (SuperEnlightenment article online)

**Week 7 (May 17<sup>th</sup>) – Taste and Taste**

**Reading:**

Gigante, *Taste* (2005), excerpts to be assigned  
Gigante, *Gusto* (2004), excerpts to be assigned  
Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927), Overture,  
online at  
<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/p/proust/marcel/p96s/chapter1.html>

**Week 8 (May 24<sup>th</sup>) – Vision, God and Darwin**

**Reading:**

William Paley. *Natural Theology*. Oxford, 2006  
Hermann von Helmholtz, “The Recent Progress in the Theory of Vision”  
(1873), in *Science and Culture*

**Week 9 (May 31<sup>st</sup>) – Conclusions, student presentations**

**\*\*\* final papers due on June 8<sup>th</sup> \*\*\***