

J.D. Fleming  
ENGLISH 811  
Mimesis

"Can you tell me what mimesis is?" asks Plato's Socrates. A fundamental question of literary theory. And yet one, perhaps, that literary critics scarcely ask anymore. In this course, we will return to it, through a selection of texts both ancient and modern. Authors will include Plato (*Ion*, *Republic X*, *Phaedrus*), Derrida ("Plato's Pharmacy"), Auerbach ("The Scar of Odysseus"), and Gadamer (selections from *Truth and Method*). Possibly also Aristotle (selections from *Poetics*), Sidney (the *Defence of Poetry*), Saussure (selections from the *Course in General Linguistics*), Paul Feyerabend (selections from *Natural Philosophy*), and others. Wherever possible, we will also consider the art and literature that our theorists are talking about. The course, in sum, will be an opportunity for extended reflection on the quintessentially literary phenomenon of representation and imitation—in language, to be sure, but also in general. Even if we remain unable to answer Socrates's question, we will perhaps be empowered to claim that we have grasped it more fully.

Evaluation:

Two in-class presentations (50%)

Term Paper, 15-20 pages (50%).