Course Description
In this course, we will read philosophical dialogues and their modern successors, a novel and a play whose subjects are art and rhetoric. Ancient to modern writers have been fascinated with the power of art, and for each, ideas about art are connected to those about language and society. In our reading of Ion and Gorgias we will look at Plato's ideas on art, rhetoric (oratory), and power before his Republic. Phaedrus, written later, complements the discussion in earlier texts, developing Plato's ideas about the relation of the intellect, the emotions, and the appetites. We will also read Plato's Symposium to consider, as Tina Turner says, what love has to do with it. We will then discuss Diderot's Rameau's Nephew, which revisits some of Plato's themes from the perspective of the eighteenth century and the changing world of the Enlightenment. Finally, we will explore the dialogue form in the twentieth century through one modern novel, Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Tom Stoppard's play Arcadia. In our dialogue, we will explore not only at what these writers say, but how they say it, and speculate on how and why conversation, rather than monologue, can give rise to knowledge. Among the questions I hope we consider are the following: How are ideas born from conversation (and, I hope, our conversations)? What is the importance of human relationship in intellectual inquiry? How does the dialogue imply, and necessitate, our participation as readers?

Texts
Course Requirements
The work for the course combines class participation, intensive reading, and various types of writing. There will be four 500-750 word short essays, for which I will give you specific questions (you will have the option of exploring your own topic, too, of course). These are called "Response essays" in the syllabus to distinguish them from the longer essays. There is also one 1500-word essay, one 1500- to 2000-word essay and a philosophical dialogue.

Ground rules: Attendance is required, and more than two unexcused absences may adversely affect your grade in the course. You are expected to have completed the readings before the class for which they are assigned. Papers are due on deadline. Academic honesty is assumed and plagiarism will be penalized according to the policy in the Gallatin Bulletin. Please no laptops, cell phones, PDA's etc. in class. Just bring your books, brain, heart and imagination.

Papers
READ THIS CAREFULLY!
Required Format for Papers: All essays must have a title. Every essay should be typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread, with pages numbered. Please use 12-point font! When you quote from and cite your sources, you are expected to use the MLA citation format, either parenthetical documentation or footnotes. All essays must include a list of Works Cited following the MLA format. (I’m serious about this, so pay attention!). See MLA Handbook or you can find MLA format on line! Excellent site: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/. To save paper, please put your Works Cited at the end of your paper; you do not need a separate page. Paper format and grammar count as part of the essay grade. Grammar and proofreading matter in your responses, too.

Preliminary Syllabus

1/29 Introductions
In class writing: Tell me about a dialogue that changed you.

1/31 Plato and Art: Inspiration
Reading due: Ion
What is the dialogue saying about inspiration? about art and knowledge?

2/5 Reading due: Ion and Gorgias. We will discuss the beginning of Gorgias, pp. 1-32.
What questions do you have (refer to page numbers) so far? What is Gorgias saying about oratory (rhetoric) and knowledge? oratory and justice? Why isn’t oratory a craft? How is Socrates criticizing the power of orators? What are the points of view about happiness and justness, and what is your response? What is the argument about medicine and justness?
Gorgias, pp. 32-69. Response essay #1 due.

Gorgias, pp. 69-113

Gorgias, last thoughts and Phaedrus

Phaedrus. Please read through 241d. Please read the poems at the end, too. You may enjoy them.


Phaedrus, 257b-end.

Phaedrus, last thoughts and Symposium

Symposium

Symposium

Symposium and conclusion to Plato. Writing due: Essay #1.

Introduction to Diderot and Denis Diderot, Rameau's Nephew, pp. 33-82 (top)

NO CLASS--SPRING BREAK

Rameau’s Nephew, pp. 33-82. Writing due: Response essay #3.

Rameau's Nephew, pp. 82-125

Rameau's Nephew, pp. 82-125

Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts


Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts

Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts

Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts

Tom Stoppard, Arcadia. Essay #2 due today or 4/23. (Some people might want to write this last essay on Arcadia, and that is an option, but we will discuss that as we get there. I want to give you enough time to write your last essay and your philosophic dialogue; at the same time, I want you to be able to write an essay on a text with which you resonate. So we will see how things unfold for individuals.
To think about as we begin:

Socrates on elenchus (refutation) and conversation (discussion/dialogue)

from Sophist 230B

. . . when any one believes himself to be saying something worth while on a certain subject, ask questions about it. As men wander without consistency in their beliefs, they do not find the examination difficult: they gather these beliefs together in conversation and place them side by side. And they show that these beliefs contradict each other on the same aspect of the same subject. The pupils, realizing it, are angry with themselves, but gentler to others, and in this manner they get rid of proud and fixed beliefs about themselves. This kind of deliverance is very pleasant for the hearers and lasting for the victim. Just as doctor think that the body cannot profit from the nurture provided for it until the inner obstacles are removed, so in the case of the soul whose who bring the process of purification about think that no benefit can be got from any knowledge that is brought forward until the man who tests the opinions of another has led him to feel a sense of shame and removed the beliefs that stood in the way of knowledge. In this way a man is made pure and no longer thinks he knows more than he actually does.

--That is a very excellent state to be in.

--For these reasons, Theaetetus, we must say that this test, the elenchus, is the greatest and most powerful of all purifications. The man who has not undergone it, be he the Great King of Persia himself, is corrupt (impure) in the way that matters most. He is uneducated and ugly in the things in which any one who is top be really happy should be most beautiful and pure.