What is the relationship between art and falsehood? A significant tradition for conceptualizing the arts has long defined their sphere by reference to doubling, fantasy, and betrayal: when we are in the realm of art, we have left the kingdom of the real—and our capacity for proper engagement depends to a considerable degree on our ability to maintain (or at least recover) an awareness of this fact. By these lights, the arts function as something like a safe house for lying, an Elysium for those good deceptions willing to declare themselves. But is all this correct? There are excellent reasons to think not. This course takes up the problem of truth and falsehood in the arts in a sustained way: we will sift the genealogy of current theoretical positions on this issue by means of close reading of classical and recent texts; we will investigate works of art (painting, sculpture, poetry, etc.) that engage these matters, with particular attention to gaming at the margins of the seemingly stable categories; we will weigh the political and critical implications of different postures in this large arena; and we will experiment with new perspectives and practices.

**WEEK 1:**
**Introduction and Organizational Meeting**
(no reading)

**WEEK 2:**
**Art and Truth: Confidence Games**

Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man; His Masquerade*, [1857] (There are various suitable editions; I use the Library of America volume, which lumps this novella together with *Pierre* and various other things, but feel free to read it in any decent copy).


Examine:
WEEK 3:
Eyes, Lies, and Illusions

E. H. Gombrich, “Meditations on a Hobby Horse, or the Roots of Artistic Form,” in Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays (New York: Phaedon, 1994 [1963]): 1-12.
Plato, The Republic (I know the Paul Shorey translation best; use whatever edition you are familiar with—I am assuming your general familiarity with the text): book 3, 414b-415c (the “noble lie”); book 7, 514a-518d and 532a-535c (the “allegory of the cave” and the idea of dialectic), and book 10, 595a-608b (the “quarrel with the poets”).

Examine:

WEEK 4:
The Dialectics of Deceit


Examine / Be Aware of:
WEEK 5:

Larvatus Prodeo: Craft, Craftiness, and the Self


Examine / Be Aware of:


WEEK 6:

Mystification and Its Choreography


Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* [1843]. There are various editions. Read only Victor Eremita’s editorial preface.

Examine / Be Aware of:


WEEK 7:
Falsification as Critique


Patrick Herron, “Ruthven’s Faking Literature, Forging Literature, and Faking Forged Literature,” *Jacket* 17 (June 2002): online only.


Examine / Be Aware of:


WEEK 8:
Pastiche, Parody, Performance, Palimpsest


Examine / Be Aware of:


WEEK 9:
In-Class Presentations

No new reading: Think, catch up, get ahead on next week, and work on final projects.

NB: This week Princeton will host a one-day symposium entitled “Curiosity and Method,” which will deal with issues related to this course. A slate of interdisciplinary scholars and critics will address “marginal” problems in aesthetics and contemporary art. Consider attending.

WEEK 10:
Documenting Forgery and Forging the Documentary

NB: This week I’ll screen Orson Wells’ *F for Fake* (1975); time TBD.


Examine / Be Aware of:


WEEK 11:
*Traduttore, Traditore*: Delirious Translation


Examine / Be Aware of:


Kenneth Koch, “Some South American Poets.” These can be found in *The Pleasures of Peace* (New York: Random House, 1969), or the 2007 *Collected*.


WEEK 12:
*Now Who’s Laughing? Politics, Satire, Apocalypse*

Immanuel Kant, “On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives” (1797). This is widely available in several translations; we’ll try to settle on one (Beck’s 1949?).


The Editors of *Lingua Franca*, *The Sokal Hoax* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Read parts one and two.


Examine / Be Aware of:


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