

{ }

julian chehirian

Proposal for Interdisciplinary Major: to formalize an interdepartmental major and to argue for its purpose within the scope of a liberal arts education.

TITLE: Enframing the Human (Constructions of Human Experience)

DESCRIPTION: Examines major disciplinary currents in the humanities with the purpose of understanding their prisms in relation to other vantage points for knowing. Analyzes the way in which the framing of these 'disciplines' forms a parallel to the basic human activity of enframing experience, on a continuum from the basic parameter of the 'self' to more external frameworks (i.e. historical, political, linguistic, anthropological) for human understanding.

APPLICABLE COURSEWORK

**ART HISTORY**

ARTS 1\*\*: History of Photography  
ARTH 105: The Historical Experience  
ARTH 205: Art of the Renaissance  
ARTH 210: Modern Art  
ARTH 490: Independent Study, 'Modernity and Philosophy'

**SOCIAL HISTORY**

HIST 110: Renaissance & Revolution, Europe 1400-1815  
HIST 235: West in Crisis, 1900-1945  
HIST 312: Tolstoy vs. Napoleon  
SOCY 225: Contemporary Arab World  
ANTH 150: Anthropology of American Life  
SIS 140: Cross Cultural Communications  
SIS 250: Civilizations of Africa  
SIS 308: Intro to Peace and Conflict Resolution  
JLS 202: History of International Thought & Law  
JLS 496/606: Legal History Seminar (H): Study on 19th Century Intellectual History, Austrian, Art, and Architectural Histories, and Urban Planning.

**PHILOSOPHY**

PHIL 105: Western Philosophy  
PHIL 230: Meaning & Purpose of the Arts  
PHIL 301/601: Modern Philosophy (H)  
PHIL 411: Psychoanalysis as Philosophy  
PHIL 412: Michel Foucault  
JLS 496/606: Foundations of Knowledge (H)  
TESL 500: Principles of Linguistics  
PHIL 500: Hegel & Psychoanalysis (Georgetown University)

**SYNTHESIS**

2 Independent Studies: Art History / Social History  
Observation and Analysis at St. Elizabeths Psychiatric Hospital

{ }

julian chehirian

2 Honors Thesis Projects: "Psychoanalysis on Intersubjectivity", and (2) "Art & Psychosis: Intelligibility of Non-Linguistic Self-Expressions", supervised by Professor Jane Flax (AU) and Professor Wilfried ver Eecke (Georgetown).

**Philosophy** is an axis of this interdisciplinary major (philosophy, art history, social history).

Philosophy contributes an approach and sensitivity to the form, substance, and arrangement of thoughts. It contributes a wariness which has its purpose: so that you would arrive cautiously when the impulse is to arrive complacently at a new arrangement of ideas.

Philosophy is a metronome, gps, gyroscope, calibrator; it contributes to this course of study a locational tool: to know (more or less) *where on or in-relation* to the paths already taken I am currently in thinking and experience.

Philosophy contributes to this interdisciplinary major:

- an analytical, exploratory, and critical mood
- *a body of conceptual references* (by which differences/similitudes in ideas can be interpreted or revealed through dis-/association)
- *a body of historical references* (from the history of thought and its ferment - serving a locational function)
- *a sensitivity to method or approach* (coming to terms with the possibility of a multiplicity of 'approaches' can prompt the process of determining *why* an approach is necessary in the first place)

**Art history** is a second axis in this interdisciplinary major.

The study of Art history (time spent with this prism as the primary vantage point for objects) contributes the ability to catalogue and contextualize the objects of this discipline. A wedge of fired clay can assume a more complex identity in my experience of it. It is now girded - enframed - by what can be historical, cultural, or material landscapes of reference and knowledge. The discipline of Art history, by pointing itself towards 'object', serves as an inlet to the concepts which encircle that object in the human understanding.

Studying the history of art might expose us to a wide spectrum of creators and historical contexts for creation. The totalizing *differences* (in a broad sense of this term) between the creator of a Sumerian devotional figurine, the sculptor of an Etruscan roof statue, and Frida Kahlo, studied, can place us at a sort of anthropological nexus by which we can transcend disciplinary boundaries and approach the aspect of the human being 'as creator' from any imaginable angle.

Art History contributes to this interdisciplinary major:

- a unifying, synthesizing mood
- *a body of aesthetic references* (by which we can distinguish and

{ }

julian chehirian

- differentiate *currents* or *undertows* in material history)
- a *body of historical references* (which set a material legacy parallel to other cultural, political, and historical narratives of which it was an aspect)
  - multiple planes of consideration when approaching unidentified objects or ideas

#### **OBJECTIVES OF MAJOR**

A student following this interdisciplinary course of study will:

- Follow the genealogy of major arteries of thought in the humanities through parallel studies in the History, Philosophy & Religion, JLS, Art History, Sociology, SIS, and Anthropology departments.
- Benefit from a cross-fertilization between different courses of study.
- Be able to examine or analyze something through through a synthesis of the many prisms of thought to which they have been exposed.
- Examine the inter-dependency of human knowledge by engaging in topic specific studies which incorporate their multi-disciplinary interests.

This open and inclusive, rigorous and applied specialization should inspire a broad, aerial outlook on the state of human knowledge.

#### **ENFRAMING AS LEARNING**

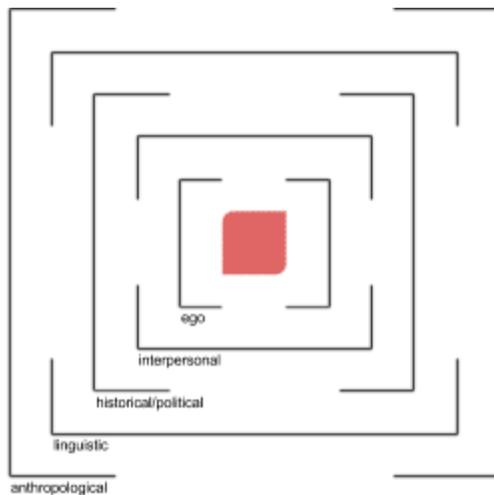
My studies at AU can be distilled into phases of total engagement with a particular course of study. Each discipline has offered to me a particular view of reality. If during one semester I had oriented myself towards the study of art history, then during that time, the world seemed in accordance with the arrangement of things which that discipline *revealed*. Heidegger uses this word in *Basic Writings* to emphasize the idea of an *unveiling* of something extant which had heretofore been concealed. Studying [e.g. anthropology] during my second year, this *unconcealing* manifested itself as a flicker - a light which paled as soon as it had shone - a sort of conceptual spasm through which the entire world was arranged and revealed from the basic vantage point of anthropology (which in that case was the elevation of the very prism or frame of *culture* to the forefront of the mind). 'Revelations' such as this belie the irreducible complexity of the world: the simultaneous participation and unfolding of infinite vantage points, truths, and arrangements. I believe, however, that it is somehow the goal of a discipline to achieve this moment of revealing which affirms it, in the most basic form of: we're onto something. The **enframing** of reality through a particular framework of knowing, articulated and acknowledged by the intellect in such a moment, is a fundamental and *individual* validation of what we are doing in the university.

If it is a goal of the liberal arts education to reveal to us complexity and dynamism in the world (rather than to schematize and reduce it), then it could

{ }

julian chehirian

actualize itself through facilitating such revelations in a student pursuing several courses of study. Its current formulation can, unfortunately (but realistically), only offer to provoke the student. In my experience, the JLS department has offered strong support to students interested in forging a program which allows them forays into several disciplines at once during their valuable and limited time at AU. If one is unable to compromise over their interdependent academic interests, a formalization of those interests within the framework of an interdisciplinary major is the most proper resolution.



**METHODOLOGY: META-PARAMETER STUDY**

In this diagram I indicate some parameters through which phenomena can be approached. These prisms, extracted from the analyses which they provoke, inform us about the nature of enframing activity in 'academic work'. To facilitate this meta-parameter study, I propose not just analyses of phenomena through historical, political, linguistic, anthropological, subjective, and intersubjective parameters - but a deeper study of how specific disciplinary prisms affect the processes of our thought.

**ENFRAMING: IDEAS UNDERLYING THE TERM**

Though there is not one arrangement of characterizations which can account for the totality of human perception and understanding, there are some (at least reasonable) comments which can be made about it which are inspired by the way in which it seems to arrange itself. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Prolegomena* are efforts to express something purposeful (and truthful) about experience without diluting or interfering with the irreducible, singular subjectivity of any one person. With this disclaimer, I will introduce my own attempt to 'say something of purpose' without reducing reality.

An activity which all humans engage in is meaning making. Understanding, learning, recognizing, approaching, withdrawing - more generally, engaging with the world around them in-step with what their senses and faculties construct for them as reality. If Leibniz's monadic theory is taken as an illustration, then it can be fathomed that each of us are windows to perception. We are each inlets to experience - placed within our own referential orbits of garnered and constructed meaning. Perceiving whatever are the objects of our perceptions through this referential subjectivity, we experience 'reality' through a series of **parameters** which are in flux. As unfolding, learning, and change are the processes of life itself, our situational, referential, and contextual parameters are bound to shift. I argue, though, that the enframing of experience is a constant. I am not

{ }

julian chehirian

equating the word enframing with subjectivity; I do not mean to make the dull argument that there is an external reality which subjective experience captures only parts of. I want to propose that *within* personal experience, we can understand our meaning making activity as an act of **enframing**. If Kant chose to analyze the *forms* of understanding in order to learn something about the human being and its fate, then I want to penetrate at least ankle-deep into the *contents* of understanding (the specific things rendered in the understanding and their interrelationships) in order to stand above *and* within the parameters which frame experience. My interest in doing this is in step with my interest in pursuing education and training in psychoanalysis.