

Fall 2018

AH302
The Idea of the Aesthetic

provisional syllabus

*(likely to be updated during the semester; registered students
should consult the latest syllabus on google classrooms)*

Seminar leader: Katalin Makkai
Course times: Tuesday and Thursday 17:30-19:00
Email: k.makkai@berlin.bard.edu
Office hours: Tuesday 15:00-17:00, and by appointment
Office: P98 004

Course description

“Aesthetics” and “aesthetic” are terms that are often taken for granted inside as well as outside academic discourse. We speak of aesthetic experiences and judgments and qualities, and we employ “aesthetics” to designate the study of such matters. Although their root is taken from the Greek, the now-familiar terms (in their now-familiar usages) are, however, comparatively new. They are commonly regarded as having been introduced into the philosophical lexicon in the eighteenth century—a few hundred years ago. This course studies some of the texts that were key to the discovery, or perhaps the invention, of the “aesthetic”. What work was the idea meant to do? How did its evolution retain or reconfigure its original senses and purposes? Is the idea of the aesthetic problematic, ideological, or chimerical? Do we need an idea of the aesthetic to think about art?

Course texts

All readings will be provided during the semester in printed form and/or electronically. Any reading that is provided only electronically must be printed out and brought to class as a printout.

Electronic devices

Students may not use any electronic devices (laptop, tablet, mobile phone) in the classroom.

Requirements

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Bard College Berlin expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III: Academic Misconduct.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) will affect the participation grade for the course. The two “free” absences are meant for minor illness, unavoidable appointments or travel, etc. In general, there are no “excused” absences. For regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence, please consult the Student Handbook.

Per BCB policy, a student who misses 30% or more of class meetings cannot receive a passing grade for the course.

ASSESSMENT

Participation

Each student is expected to arrive to class on time and prepared. Being prepared means: having carefully read the assigned texts in the assigned editions, bringing a print (=non-electronic) copy to class along with paper and pen, and being ready to initiate and to contribute to seminar discussion.

The participation grade will be negatively affected by:

- ☒ absences in excess of two (see “Attendance” above)
- ☒ repeated and/or significant lateness
- ☒ lack of preparation:
 - ☒ not completing the reading, or only “skimming” it
 - ☒ coming to class without a print copy of the reading (in the assigned edition)
 - ☒ coming to class without paper and pen

Contributions to seminar discussion should be productive as well as regular, and should engage responsively and respectfully with the contributions of others.

Each student will give a seminar presentation, the notes for which are due 24 hours in advance.

Written assignments

Museum visit post (750-1000 words), due October 12
Midterm essay (1500-2000 words), due October 26
Response post (750-1000 words), due November 16
Final essay (2500-3000 words), due December 21

Final presentation

In addition to the seminar presentation, each student will give a final presentation, the aim of which is to explain and motivate the final essay topic.

Policy on late submission of papers

From the Student Handbook on the submission of essays:

“Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.”

Grade breakdown

Participation	20%
Museum visit post	10%
Midterm essay	20%
Response post	10%
Final presentation	10%
Final essay	30%

Schedule

Week 1

Tu Sept. 4 Introduction

I. Some history

Th Sept. 6 Plato, from *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*

Week 2

Tu Sept. 11 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment (CPJ)*, Analytic of the Beautiful, First and Second Moments

Th Sept. 13 Kant, *CPJ*, Analytic of the Beautiful, from Third Moment
Rachel Zuckert, “The Purposiveness of Form: A Reading of Kant’s Aesthetic Formalism”

Week 3

Tu Sept. 18 Kant, from *CPJ*

Th Sept. 20 TBA (“l’art pour l’art”/”art for art’s sake”)

II. Aesthetic experience, formalism, and modernism

Week 4

Tu Sept. 25 Edward Bullough, “Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle”

Th Sept 27 Clive Bell, from *Art*

Week 5

Tu Oct. 2 Bell, from *Art*

Th Oct. 4 Noel Carroll, “Clive Bell’s Aesthetic Hypothesis”

Week 6

Tu Oct. 9 TBA

Th Oct. 11 TBA

F Oct. 12 **Museum visit post due 23:59**

Week 7

Tu Oct. 16 Roger Fry, from *Vision and Design*

Th Oct. 18 Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch”

Week 8

Tu Oct. 23 Greenberg, "Modernist Painting"

Th Oct. 25 Leo Steinberg, "Contemporary Art and the Plight of Its Public"

F Oct. 26 **Midterm essay due 23:59**

[fall break: Oct. 29-Nov. 4]

III. Conceptual art, pop art, and the demise of the aesthetic?

Week 9

Tu Nov. 6 Arthur Danto, from *After the End of Art*

Th Nov. 8 Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation"

IV. Aesthetics, politics, and society

Week 10

Tu Nov. 13 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Th Nov. 15 Theodor Adorno, TBA

F Nov. 16 **Response post due 23:59**

Week 11

Tu Nov. 20 Herbert Marcuse, from *The Aesthetic Dimension*

Th Nov. 22 John Dewey, from *Art as Experience*

Week 12

Tu Nov. 27 Yuriko Saito, from *Everyday Aesthetics*

Th Nov 29 A. W. Eaton, "Taste in Bodies and Fat Oppression"

Week 13

Tu Dec. 4 Final presentations

Th Dec. 6 Final presentations

Week 14

Tu Dec. 11 Final presentations

Th Dec. 13 Final presentations

Week 15

F Dec. 21 Completion Week
Final essay due 23:59