

Fall 2020

## **AH 302: The Idea of the Aesthetic Syllabus**

*The schedule of classes/readings is subject to change.  
Registered students should consult the syllabus on  
Google Classrooms, which will be kept updated.*

Instructor: Katalin Makkai  
Course times: Monday and Wednesday 15:45-17:15  
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Office hours: TBA  
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?

### **Texts**

All readings will be provided during the semester electronically and are to be brought to class as printouts.

### **Electronic devices**

Students may not use any electronic devices (laptop, tablet, mobile phone) in the classroom, unless an accommodation letter has been issued.

### **Requirements**

#### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and 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 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

#### **ATTENDANCE**

Anyone who feels ill must not attend class in person. An alternative to in-person attendance will be offered. Students who cannot begin the semester in person due to pandemic-related travel restrictions will join the class remotely.

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In addition, each student is entitled to two absences for which no documentation is required and which will not affect the course grade. Any further absences should be discussed with the instructor.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

Masks must be worn in the classroom.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

##### **Participation**

Each student is expected to arrive to class, whether in person or remotely, 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 writing materials, and being ready to initiate and to contribute to seminar discussion. Repeated and/or significant lateness will affect the participation grade, as will lack of preparation.

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 take part in two paired presentations meant to introduce and open the discussion of the assigned reading.

##### **Written assignments**

Presentation 1 notes

Presentation 2 notes

Midterm essay (2000-2500 words), due Oct. 18

Final essay (2500-3000 words), due Dec. 18

##### **Final presentation**

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

##### **Policy on late submission of papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to 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. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

##### **Grade breakdown**

Participation	30%
Midterm essay	25%
Final presentation	10%
Final essay	35%

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## Schedule

### Week 1

M Aug 31 Introduction [no assigned readings]

W Sept. 2 Plato, from *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*

### Week 2

M Sept. 7 David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”

W Sept. 9 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment (CPJ)*, Analytic of the Beautiful: First and Second Moments

### Week 3

M Sept. 14 Kant, *CPJ*, §§32 and 33

W Sept. 16 Kant, *CPJ*, Analytic of the Beautiful: Third Moment §10, §12, §13, only the last four paragraphs of §14 (so from “In painting and sculpture” through the end), and §16  
Rachel Zuckert, “The Purposiveness of Form: A Reading of Kant’s Aesthetic Formalism”

### Week 4

M Sept. 21 Kant, *CPJ*, continued [no new readings]

W Sept. 23 Edward Bullough, “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle”

### Week 5

M Sept. 28 Clive Bell, from *Art*

W Sept. 30 Noel Carroll, “Clive Bell’s Aesthetic Hypothesis”

### Week 6

M Oct. 5 Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch”

W Oct. 7 Greenberg, “Modernist Painting”

### Week 7

M Oct. 12 midterm essay draft workshop

W Oct. 14 Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”

**Su Oct. 18 midterm essay due by midnight**

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[fall break: Oct. 19-25]

**Week 8**

M Oct. 26 Alexander Nehamas, “An Essay on Beauty and Judgment”

W Oct. 28 Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art”

**Week 9**

M Nov. 2 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

W Nov. 4 Jean-Paul Sartre, from *What Is Literature?*

**Week 10**

M Nov. 9 Pierre Bourdieu, text TBD

W Nov. 11 Theodor Adorno, “Commitment”

**Week 11**

M Nov. 16 Jacques Rancière, from *Aesthetics as Politics*

W Nov. 18 John Dewey, from *Art as Experience*

**Week 12**

M Nov. 23 Yuriko Saito, from *Everyday Aesthetics*

W Nov. 25 Pornography vs erotic art, text TBD

**Week 13**

M Nov. 30 Final presentations

W Dec. 2 Final presentations

**Week 14**

M Dec. 7 Final presentations

W Dec. 9 Final presentations and wrap-up

Completion Week

**F Dec. 18 final essay due by midnight**