

Fall 2019

AH 302
The Idea of the Aesthetic

Preliminary Syllabus

Instructor: Katalin Makkai
Course times: Monday and Wednesday 15:45-17:15
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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-10:30, and by appointment
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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 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 final 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 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 give a seminar presentation, introducing and opening the discussion of the assigned reading.

Written assignments

Midterm essay (2000-2500 words), due in Week 8 (specific due date TBA)

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in Week 15 (specific due date TBA)

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

Schedule Weeks 1 and 2

Week 1

M Sept. 2 Introduction [no assigned readings]

W Sept. 4 Plato, from *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*

Week 2

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

W Sept. 11 Kant, *CPJ*, Analytic of the Beautiful, from Third Moment
Rachel Zuckert, "The Purposiveness of Form: A Reading of Kant's Aesthetic Formalism"