

Fall 2023

**AH 302: The Idea of the Aesthetic
Provisional 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 9:00-10:30
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Office hours: 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—for example, in the name of one of the concentrations offered at Bard College Berlin, “Art and Aesthetics”. Yet the meanings of these terms are not transparent. These terms are also comparatively new, although their root is taken from the Greek. 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 such an 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 the role and power of art?

Texts

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

Electronic devices

So that we can help each other to feel present and supported during class, please avoid the use of electronic devices—laptop, tablet, mobile phone—in the classroom.

Requirements

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. 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

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, **three** absences will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Absences beyond three will affect the participation grade.

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Please do not attend class if you test positive for COVID-19.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

ASSESSMENT

Participation

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and prepared. Being prepared means: having carefully read the assigned texts in the assigned editions, bringing a printout of the readings 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.

Students may be required to post responses to readings as part of preparation for class.

Written assignments

Midterm essay, due Oct. 22

Final essay, due Dec. 22

Presentation

Each student will give a seminar presentation.

Policy on late submission of papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will 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 a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade breakdown

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

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Schedule

- M Sept 4 Introduction [no assigned readings]
- W Sept. 6 Plato, from *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*
- M Sept. 11 David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”
- W Sept. 13 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment (CPJ)*, Analytic of the Beautiful: First and Second Moments
- M Sept. 18 Kant, *CPJ*, §§32 and 33
- W Sept. 20 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”
- M Sept. 25 Kant, *CPJ*, TBA
- W Sept. 27 Kant, *CPJ*, TBA
- M Oct. 2 Edward Bullough, “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle”
- W Oct. 4 Clive Bell, from *Art*
- M Oct. 9 Noel Carroll, “Clive Bell’s Aesthetic Hypothesis”
- W Oct. 11 Clement Greenberg, TBA
- M Oct. 16 midterm essay draft workshop
- W Oct. 18 Susan Sontag, “Beyond Interpretation”
- Su Oct. 22 midterm essay due by midnight**
- [fall break: Oct. 23-29]
- M Oct. 30 A. W. Eaton, “‘A Lady on the Street but a Freak in the Bed’: On the distinction between Erotic Art and Pornography”
- W Nov. 1 Lydia Goehr, “Political Music and the Politics of Music”
- M Nov. 6 Jacques Rancière, from *Aesthetics as Politics*

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- W Nov. 8 conceptual art and aesthetics? text TBA
- M Nov. 13 relational art and aesthetics? text TBA
- W Nov. 15 [no class]
- M Nov. 20 [no class]
- W Nov. 22 presentations
- M Nov. 27 presentations
- W Nov. 29 Sianne Ngai, from *Our Aesthetic Categories*
- M Dec. 4 Yuriko Saito, from *Everyday Aesthetics*
- W Dec. 6 aesthetics and the body, text TBA
- M Dec. 11 aesthetics and disability, text TBA
- W Dec. 13 Nicholas Whittaker, “Blackening Aesthetic Experience”
- M Dec 18 final essay workshop
- W Dec 20 final essay workshop
- F Dec. 22 final essay due by midnight**