

Fall 2024

AH 302: Ideas of the Aesthetic Syllabus

Instructors: Katalin Makkai, Michel Chaouli
Course times: Wednesday 10:00-13:00
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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—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?

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.

Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu), to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

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Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

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

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.

Texts and electronic devices

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

In order to foster a sense of presence during class, please avoid the use of electronic devices—laptop, tablet, mobile phone—in the classroom, unless of course an accommodation letter directs otherwise.

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.

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

Written assignments

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

Final essay (2500-3000 words), due Dec. 20

Presentations

Each student will participate in two group presentations, one during the course of the semester on the assigned reading, and one on the final essay topic.

Policy on late submission of papers

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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 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	30%
Final essay	40%

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Provisional Schedule

*Readings will be uploaded to Google Classroom

*The schedule is subject to revision

*Once the semester has started, please consult Google Classroom for the current schedule as the syllabus on the website may be outdated

1) W Sept. 4: Introduction

Reading TBA

2-3) W Sept. 11 & W Sept. 18: Immanuel Kant, led by Michel Chaouli

Reading:

Kant, from *Critique of the Power of Judgment (CPJ)*, Analytic of the Beautiful

4) W Sept. 25: Kant on the “aesthetic”, continued

Reading:

Kant, from *CPJ*

5) W Oct. 2: Overview of 19th-20th century art history, with focus on “art for art’s sake”, “modern art”, the “end of art”, and the waning prominence of “beauty”

Reading:

Arthur Danto, TBA

Alexander Nehamas, TBA

6) W Oct. 9: Aesthetic attitude?

Readings:

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

George Dickie, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude”

7) W Oct. 16: Formalisms

Readings:

Clive Bell, from *Art*

Noel Carroll, “Clive Bell’s Aesthetic Hypothesis”

Clement Greenberg, TBA

F Oct 18 midterm essay due by midnight

[fall break: Oct. 21-27]

8) W Oct. 30: A pernicious category?

Readings:

Pierre Bourdieu, from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*

A. W. Eaton, “‘A Lady on the Street but a Freak in the Bed’: On the distinction between Erotic Art and Pornography”

9) W Nov. 6: Politics, ethics, and aesthetics intertwined

Readings:

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W. E. B. du Bois, from *Darkwater*, and “Criteria of Negro Art”
Paul C. Taylor, from *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*

10) W Nov. 13: Everyday aesthetics
Yuriko Saito, TBA

11) W Nov. 20: Body aesthetics
Reading:
Sherri Irvin, “Resisting Body Oppression”

12) W Nov. 27: environmental aesthetics
Reading TBA

13) W Dec. 4: Relational Aesthetics
Readings:
Claire Bishop, from Introduction to *Participation*
Nicolas Bourriaud, from “Relational Aesthetics”
Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”

14) W Dec. 11: final essay presentations

F Dec. 20 **final essay due by midnight**