

Inescapable Beauty Elusive Sublime

<http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/IBES/>

Syllabus (FALL)

This is the *general* syllabus. Corrections, changes, amendments, and details can be accessed via the program web site (url above).

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"The work of art ... is essentially a question, an address to the responsive heart, an appeal to affections and to minds." –Hegel

"Everything goes past like a river and the changing taste and the various shapes of men make the whole game uncertain and delusive. Where do I find fixed points in nature, which cannot be moved by man, and where I can indicate markers by the shore to which he ought to adhere?" –Kant

This two-quarter program is designed for intermediate or advanced artists and philosophers. Students will choose to emphasize one of two areas, either 2D studio work or the critical application of philosophical theory. In addition, we will all participate in lectures and seminars. All students will undertake extensive reading in philosophy and aesthetics, as well as explore the visual arts in this context, and all students should be prepared to do upper-division work in critical thinking, reading, and writing. Seminar readings will inform our understanding of aesthetic theories. Writing projects and art workshops will encourage students to explore their own creativity. Students will be expected to pursue their personal work while participating in interdisciplinary critiques.

Together, we will undertake an artistic and philosophical inquiry into the beautiful and the sublime. What is the role of beauty in our creative and intellectual life? How do we experience the sublime? How have these experiences been historically documented and challenged? We will be exploring these concepts not only in connection with works of art, but it is with the work of art that we will most directly experience beauty as an occasion for reflection, and as a demand for thought and engagement. Further, we will ask whether the sublime is something that can be represented at all in art, and whether the attempts to do so gave rise to a certain line of modernist works.

We will approach these and other related questions through an in-depth study of aesthetics. Indeed, the "work" of art is, by some accounts, work that we as viewers must undertake and finish, or if not finish, at least continue. It is in response to this demand for serious but enjoyable engagement that we will pursue a deeper understanding of the concepts of beauty and sublimity, by philosophical and artistic analysis and through practice.

Students will register in either two-dimensional visual art or advanced philosophy in relation to the primary focus of their inquiry. 2D students will focus on aesthetic theories of beauty and the sublime while sustaining a rigorous studio practice in whatever media they choose to work. The philosophy students will do similarly ambitious work in philosophical aesthetics, with readings likely to include Kant, Hegel, Greenberg, Adorno, and Danto, with special emphasis on the relationship between criticism and philosophy.

MEETING SCHEDULE (Philosophy Focus):

MONDAY:	10:00 to 12:00 1:00 to 3:00	SEMII E3107 & E3109 (reading groups) SEMII E3107 & E3109 (seminar)
WEDNESDAY:	9:00 - 11:00	SEMII D2107 & D2109 (writing groups)
THURSDAY:	10:00 - 12:00 2:00 - 4:00	SEMII A1107 (lecture) SEMII C3107 & C3109 (seminar)

MEETING SCHEDULE (Studio Focus):

MONDAY:	10:00 to 12:00 1:00 to 3:00	Arts Annex Studios 2101 or critique) Arts Annex Studios 2101 (open studio)
WEDNESDAY:	9:00 - 11:00	Arts Annex Studios 2101
THURSDAY:	10:00 - 12:00 2:00 - 4:00	SEMII A1107 (lecture) SEMII C3107 & C3109 (seminar)

PROGRAM CONSTITUTION: All students are required to adhere to the program constitution (read: Covenant). Materials for the program constitution will be developed collectively during one of our initial group meetings, given final shape by Matt and Kathleen, and put forward for ratification thereafter.

FIELD TRIPS: Yes, we will be going on some field trips... Let's talk about it.

SEMINAR: General seminars on our common readings will be comprised of students from both sections (philosophy and studio). It is mandatory that you arrive at seminar on time, in a waking state, well-prepared with a marked up copy of the text (we suggest underlining and marginal notes rather than highlighter) and three articulate, thoughtful, important and typed questions to hand in.

NOTE FOR STUDIO ART STUDENTS: Notions of beauty, which we'll first encounter with Plato's Phaedrus, and the sublime, a concept we'll meet with Immanuel Kant, formed the cornerstone of romanticism and arguably the cornerstone of modernism. Starting in the mid sixties and continuing through the early nineties, ideas of beauty and the sublime not only fell out of fashion but became incredibly unfashionable. This shift didn't effect sculptural practice nearly as much as it did painting and photography. Now, much contemporary art has taken a cue from sculptors and installation artists, many image makers (photographers, film and video makers, digital artists, etc...) have returned to trying to deal with these issues. Among other things, works informed by an amalgamation of Romanticism and Postmodern Critical Theory have emerged at the forefront of this reinvigorated interest. The pho-

tographs of Hiroshi Sugimoto and Jeff Wall, The video installations of Bill Viola, and the films of Lars Van Trier and Matthew Barney are among many examples of this rebirth

In this program we will focus on the development of a two quarter long series of individual projects relating to (however obtusely) an in-depth exploration of artistic practice that has been influenced by both historical and contemporary aesthetic theory. By supplementing your individual studio work (both short term assignments and longer individual projects) with presentations, readings, seminars, and critiques, students will visualize more cohesive themes throughout their work.

This program is designed as an advanced studio art program. The premise is that you are a serious artist with a strong dedication to your studio practice. If this statement frightens you, come see me. Somehow you got yourself here, now lets work together to develop your studio practice. Though technical concerns are an issue in any course taught in studio art, this program is structured primarily as an investigation of specific conceptual themes and technical concerns will not be the main focus. Work in any medium, from video and film to painting, drawing, and sculpture will be given equal consideration. My main concern throughout the class is that you consider both the technical and conceptual aspects of what you are doing and try to push them further than you'd think they could go. Of course, I will be at your service to assist you in generating provocative works of art. -Matt

NOTE FOR PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS: In order to get a fuller sense of what our separate work will look like, please see the Moodle site. In general, each of you will be asked to write and heavily revise two papers in the first quarter (second quarter assignments will be announced later), as well as taking on a variety of public roles in the program, ranging from providing historical introductions to the authors of our primary texts, acting as research assistants for our secondary texts, and co-leading philosophy seminars. Depending on interest, we might also "throw" a philosophy conference next quarter.

The additional readings you will be doing all relate, some very closely and others more tangentially, to the primary and common readings. My aim has been to balance exciting extensions of our common inquiry with more intensive analysis. The readings are both big and heavy, but I think the commitment we're making is going to pay big dividends. -Kathleen

TEXTS: A list of required texts is below. A reading schedule follows. Occasionally, required readings will be distributed as photo copies or electronic documents. The general premise of the reading schedule throughout the program follows a (somewhat) chronological sequence of the development of ideas relating to aesthetics throughout history. We have arranged the program this way to create a solid foundation from which we can address more contemporary issues. The diligent work we do in the fall should pay off as we approach more current readings in the winter.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

FALL: On Ugliness (Eco), Continental Aesthetics (Kearney, Rasmussen), Sustaining Loss* (Horowitz)

WINTER BREAK: Geek Love (Dunn)

WINTER: Uncontrollable Beauty, (Beckley, Shapiro), Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime (Gilbert-Rolf), Sticky Sublime (Beckley)

*Sustaining Loss is only required for students in the philosophy focus

READING SCHEDULES:

CA = Continental Aesthetics

OU = On Ugliness

BCS= Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime

Week 1, 29 September - 5 October; For Thur seminar:

Plato's Phaedrus (.pdf)

(OU) Introduction and Ch 1: Ugliness in the Classical World

Week 2, 6 October - 12 October; For Thur seminar:

Aristotle's Poetics (.pdf)

(OU) Ch 2: Passion Death Martyrdom

Week 3, 13 October - 19 October; For Thur seminar:

Hume "Of the Standards of Taste" (.pdf)

(OU) Ch 3: The Apocalypse Hell and the Devil

Week 4, 20 October - 26 October; For Thur seminar:

(CA) Kant; The Critique of Judgement

(OU)Ch 4: Monsters and Portents

Week 5, 27 October - 2 November; For Thur seminar:

(CA) Kant: The Critique of Judgement

(CA) Schiller: Letter of an Aesthetic Education of Man

(OU) Ch 5: The Ugly , the Comic, and the Obscene

Week 6, 3 November - 9 November; For Thur seminar:

(CA) Hegel: Lectures on Aesthetics

(OU) Ch 6: The Ugliness of Woman from Antiquity to the Baroque Period

Week 7, 10 November - 16 November; For Thur seminar:

(CA) Coleridge: Biographia Literaria

(BCS), Intro I, II

(OU)Ch 7: The Devil in the Modern World

Week 8, 17 November - 23 November; For Thur seminar:

(BCS), III, IV

(OU) Ch 8: Witchcraft, Satanism, Sadism

Week 9, 24 November - 30 November; For Thur seminar:

(BCS), V, VI, VII

(OU) Ch 9: Physica curiosa

Week 10, 1 December - 7 December

(OU) Ch 10: Romanticism and the Redemption of Ugliness

Winter Break: December 20th to Jan 4th; Katherine Dunn, Geek Love

ADDITIONAL READINGS: (Required only for students with a philosophy focus)

6 October - 12 October, Week 2, For Mon seminar:

"Introduction" in Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life*. (link)
and Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality" (link)

13 October - 19 October, Week 3, For Mon seminar:

"Tragic Recognition: Action and Identity in Antigone and Aristotle" (link)

20 October - 26 October, Week 4, For Mon Seminar:

Carroll, N. "Hume's Standard of Taste" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Winter, 1984), pp. 181-194 (locate using JSTOR) and Kulenkampff, J. "The Objectivity of Taste: Hume and Kant" in *Noûs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, On the Bicentenary of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement (Mar., 1990), pp. 93-110 (locate using JSTOR)

27 October - 2 November, Week 5, For Mon Seminar:

Chapter 2, "Culture, Necessity, and Art: Kant's Discovery of Artistic Modernism" in Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life*.

3 November - 9 November, Week 6, For Mon Seminar:

Brooks, L.M., "Sublimity and Theatricality: Romantic "Pre-Postmodernism" in *MLN (Modern Language Notes)*, Vol. 105, No. 5, *Comparative Literature* (Dec., 1990), pp. 939-964 (find in JSTOR)

10 November - 16 November, Week 7, For Mon Seminar:

Chapter 3, "Art as the Tomb of the Past: The Afterlife of Normativity in Hegel" in Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life*.

17 November - 23 November, Week 8, For Mon Seminar:

Freud, "The Uncanny" (pdf)

24 November - 30 November, Week 9, For Mon Seminar:

Chapter 4, "Pompeii Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Death and Form in Freud" in Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life*.

Week 10, For Mon Seminar:

Chapter 5, "The Tomb of Art and the Organon of Life: What Gerhard Richter Saw" & "Conclusion" in Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art & Mournful Life*.

NOTES: