Spring 2011
New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study

First-Year Research Seminar: The Lure of Beauty (K10.0701.001)
Room 303, 194 Mercer Street

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Office Hours: Tuesday 730-830pm; Thursday 515-615pm; 730-830pm and by appt.

Course Description:

A century ago, beauty was almost unanimously considered the supreme purpose of art and even synonymous with artistic excellence. In the last decade, however, beauty came to be viewed as an aesthetic crime. Indeed, until very recently, artists were chastised by critics if their works seemed to aim at beauty. In the last decade, however, many artists, philosophers, writers – even evolutionary psychologists – have given beauty another look. What is beauty? Why is beauty so powerful? What attracts us to something beautiful? To address these questions, we will investigate the different ways in which philosophers, artists, writers, and psychologists have understood the term. Of critical importance is how, if at all, beauty fits into our lives and whether beauty is an objective feature of things or a more subjective feature determined by context. In addition to active class contribution, maintaining a blog, and writing frequent response papers, students are required to write two formal essays (3-5 pages) and a final research paper (8-10) pages. While developing an awareness of the writing process, students will work on building an argument, referring to other texts, using secondary material effectively, and mastering the mechanics of quoting, citing, and documenting sources.

Required Texts:


Grading Breakdown:

2 Analytical Essays (4 pages each; 15% each) 30%
Final (8-10 page) Research Paper 30%
Active Class Contribution / Short Response Papers 25%
Blog 15%

A Further Explanation of Requirements…

Analytical Essays (15% each; 30% total)

The two required analytic will each go through a full-period workshop which will provide you with a great deal of feedback before you begin to compose the final draft. Each essay should be 4 pages, typed, double-spaced and should follow MLA guidelines as documented in MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Ed (which we will review in some depth). Topics will be distributed well in advance of the paper due dates. Essays should be composed in Word, saved as a Word (.doc) document, and emailed to me on the dates specified below. Your essay will then be carefully reviewed and returned to you via email with extensive commentary and a grade. You may rewrite both of these essays as long as the rewrites are submitted via email by the last day of classes. If you choose to rewrite, it is highly recommended that we meet first.

The “Longer” (Research) Paper (30%)

The 8-10 page research paper will be based on a topic of your choice (related to the course content). Strict MLA citation protocol is required. As part of the process of writing the research paper, you will also be required to present a proposal to the class before your topic can be approved. Your proposal must include a clear description of the project: the issue(s) it will address, the methods used to do so, and a preliminary list of sources (minimum of five). Like the analytical essays, the research paper will go through a series of workshops in which you will receive pointed feedback from me as well as your peers. We will also visit the library for a research workshop. Much more specific information will be offered as we move closer to this assignment.

Active Class and Blackboard Participation – Short Response Papers (25%)

Active contribution to every class is absolutely critical. Always come to class prepared, having critically read and taken notes on the reading material. Before coming to class, you are required to post a ONE PAGE response to the reading for that day. These response papers must be posted to the Blackboard Discussion Board by noon on the day of the class for which it is due and will be used as the basis of discussion in class (one or two will be selected each day). More information on the specifications of the response papers will be given in class.

Regular attendance and lively participation is absolutely necessary in this course. Missing one or two classes is understandable. But if you are excessively absent (i.e. more than four times) this semester, your course grade will certainly suffer and, in extreme cases, you may even fail. If illness or other urgent matters require you to be absent more than twice, speak to your advisor and to me immediately. Perpetual lateness is also basis for penalty. I will count every three times late as one absence (perpetually coming late to class is very disruptive to the group dynamic). In the event that you are absent, you should email someone in the class to find out exactly what you missed in order that you do not fall too far behind. However, I cannot overemphasize the importance of being on time, present, alert, and active in class – both for your sake and for that of your classmates.
Blog (15%)

Students are required to keep a blog as a way of reflecting on the course readings and discussions. A minimum of three postings are due each week (extra credit for more).

Helping You

Besides the writing help that I can offer in class and in private conferences, the Gallatin Writing Program offers Peer Writing Assistants. You can make an appointment with a Peer Writing Assistant online at http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/writingschedule. There is also the NYU Writing Center (http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html). The Center staff is ready to assist any member of the NYU community with a writing project. The trained graduate student tutors are there to help you understand an assignment, develop a plan, offer suggestions about drafts-in-progress, or help you to learn to edit. Writing Center consultants do not themselves proofread papers, nor do they edit, but they will assist you in developing those skills. Consultations generally last thirty to forty-five minutes and initial appointments must be made in person.

Plagiarism

The University’s code of academic and personal conduct applies in all instances of plagiarism. You may find this code in your NYU Gallatin Bulletin, page 110. You can download the bulletin at: http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf

Tentative Class Schedule

(Readings assigned below are to be completed for class on the date listed)

1/25 Course Introduction and Writing Diagnostic. Introduction to Scruton’s Beauty
1/27 Scruton, Beauty (first half)
2/1 Scruton, Beauty (second half)
2/3 Plato, from Ion, Republic, and Symposium and White, “Love and Beauty in Plato’s Symposium” (reader)
2/8 Burke, from A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (reader)
2/10 Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (reader); First Essay Topics Distributed
2/15 Hume (continued)
2/17 First Essay Workshop
2/22 First Essay Workshop
2/24 Sheppard, “Art, Beauty, and Aesthetic Appreciation”; First Essay Due via email 11pm, Sunday, 2/26
3/1 Kant, from Critique of Judgment
3/3 Kant (continued)
3/8 Kant (continued)
3/10  Eaton, “Kantian and Contextual Beauty”; **Second Essay Topics Distributed**

3/15  **Spring Break**

3/17  **Spring Break**

3/22  **Second Essay Workshop**

3/24  Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*

**Second Essay Due via email 11pm, Sunday, 3/27**

3/29  Nehamas (continued)

3/31  Danto, from *The Abuse of Beauty* (reader)

4/5   Danto (continued)

4/7   Rhode, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law*

4/12  Rhode (continued)


4/19  Etcoff (continued)

4/21  **Research Paper Proposals/Presentations**

4/26  **Research Paper Proposals/Presentations**

4/28  **Research Paper Proposals/Presentations**

5/3   **Research Paper Workshop**

5/5   **Research Paper Workshop**

5/10  **Research Paper Workshop (Final Draft Due via Email, 11pm Saturday, May 14)**