Spring 2013
New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
First-Year Research Seminar: The Lure of Beauty (FIRST-UG.701.1.001)
GCASL – 58 Washington Square South – Room 274
Tuesdays & Thursdays 6:20PM-7:35PM

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 5pm-6pm; 7:30pm-8:30pm; by appt.

Course Description:

From antiquity until the twentieth century, beauty was almost unanimously considered the supreme purpose of art and even synonymous with artistic excellence. Over the course of the last century, however, beauty came to be viewed as little less than an aesthetic crime. In the last decade and a half, however, many artists, philosophers, writers, cultural historians, and psychologists have given beauty another look.

What is beauty? Why is beauty so powerful? What attracts us to something or someone beautiful? To address these questions, we will investigate the different ways in which philosophers, artists, writers, cultural historians, and psychologists have probed the issue. 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 contributing regularly and actively to class discussions and activities, students will be required to compose frequent responses and reflections, write two formal essays (4-5 pages each), present a research proposal, and complete a final research paper (8-10) pages.
Required Texts:

CD-ROM containing miscellaneous course readings (distributed by instructor)


ISBN 978-0385479424

Nehamas, Alexander. *Only A Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*
ISBN 978-0-691-14865-6


ISBN 978-0-674-06631-1

Grading Breakdown:

Active Class Contribution 20%

Online Responses and Reflections 20%

3 Essays (4-5 pages each; 10% each) 30%

Final (8-10 page) Research Paper 30%

Active Class Contribution (20%)

Always come to class prepared, having critically read and taken notes on the reading material.
Regular attendance and lively participation – whether it be during regular class discussions or
during specific class activities (such as individual free-writing, peer review workshops, etc.) – is
absolutely necessary

Missing one or two classes is understandable. However, 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
overstress the importance of being on time, present, alert, and active in class – both for your sake and for that of your classmates.

**Online Responses and Reflections (20%)**

Students are required to regularly post informal responses and reflections to various prompts on our “NYU CLASSES” discussion forums – sometimes before discussing readings in class, sometimes afterwards, and sometimes both. These postings are meant to give you the opportunity to reflect on, process, and expand on the content of class discussions and readings. You will be encouraged to raise questions that you might like to pursue in one of the more formal writing assignments. Ideally, these postings will help you to formulate a research problem that you can then pursue as your final project.

**Analytical Essays (15% each; 30% total)**

The two required analytic essays will each go through a full-period workshop utilizing various activities (including, but not limited to, peer review) which will provide you with a great deal of feedback before you begin to compose the final draft. Each essay should be 4-5 pages (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 – as well as more specific directions and grading criteria – 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 the instructor by the specified deadlines. Your essay will then be carefully reviewed and returned to you via email with extensive commentary and a grade. *You may rewrite either/both essay(s) as long as (1) the original essay(s) is/are submitted on time and (2) the rewrite(s) is/are submitted via email no later than 11pm, 5/9. If you choose to rewrite an essay, it is required that we meet to discuss it first.*

**Research Paper (30%)**

An 8-10 page research paper is required. The paper will utilize at least five secondary sources and be based on a research problem you develop in conjunction with the class and instructor. Like the shorter essays, the research paper will go through a series of workshops in which you will receive pointed feedback from the instructor as well as your peers. As part of the process of writing the research paper, you will also be required to make several short presentations to the class. More specific information about both the requirements of the research proposal and the research paper will be given later in the term. [*Note: Your research proposal presentation grades will be incorporated into your overall research paper grade.*]
Additional Assistance

In addition to the assistance offered by the instructor, the Gallatin Writing Center (located in Room 423) is a superb resource. Upper-level Gallatin students are employed as Peer Writing Assistants and are trained to help other students at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming about a subject to clarifying a thesis to organizing the structure of an essay. For more information and to make an appointment with a Peer Writing Assistant see: http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html

Plagiarism

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction in accordance with the Student Discipline Rules of the Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Plagiarism includes the following: using a phrase, sentence, passage, image, graph, table, sound recording, art work, or any other type of creative or intellectual material from another work without proper citation; paraphrasing words or ideas from another work without attribution; reporting as your own research or knowledge any data or idea gathered, reported, or developed by another person; submitting as your own work anything produced by another. Plagiarism does not only apply to written or recorded work, but also to intellectual property such as computer programs, oral presentations, and artistic work including choreography, stage blocking, and music. Note that plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity are matters of fact and not intention, and apply to all material submitted as a Gallatin student. In other words, regardless of whether they are deliberate or accidental, all violations are subject to potential disciplinary action. In all cases and when in doubt, students should consult with their instructor regarding acceptable forms of documentation and citation, collaboration, and exam preparation. In accordance with the University Policy on Student Conduct, Gallatin reserves the right to review and act upon violations of rules of conduct or non-academic policies of the University and/or to refer such matters to NYU’s Office of Community Standards. Where a student’s conduct on campus constitutes violations of both University rules and public law, he may be subject to both University discipline and public sanctions.

Class Schedule

1/29 Course Introduction

I. Beauty: An Introduction

1/31 Scruton, Beauty: A Very Short Introduction

2/5 Scruton, Beauty: A Very Short Introduction (cont.)
II. Beauty: A Philosophical Perspective

2/7  Plato, from *Ion, Republic, and Symposium* (CD READING 1)

2/12 Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (CD READING 2)

2/14 Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (CD READING 3)

2/19 Sheppard, “Art, Beauty, and Aesthetic Appreciation” from *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Arts* (CD READING 4); Kant, from *Critique of Judgment* (CD READING 5)

2/21 Kant, from *Critique of Judgment* (cont.); Baudelaire, from “The Painter of Modern Life” (CD READING 6); Essay 1 Topics Distributed

2/26 Essay 1 Workshop

2/28 Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (continued); Essay 1 Due via Email 11pm, 3/4

3/5 No Class

3/7 No Class

III. Beauty: An Art Historical Perspective

3/12 Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*

3/14 Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (cont.); Danto, from *The Abuse of Beauty* (CD READING 7-12)

3/19 No Class

3/21 No Class

IV. Beauty: An Intercultural Perspective

3/26 Sartwell, *Six Names of Beauty*

3/28 Sartwell, *Six Names of Beauty* (continued); Essay 2 Topics Distributed

4/2 Essay 2 Workshop
V. Beauty: A Literary Perspective

4/4 Wilde, *The Uncensored Picture of Dorian Grey*; **Essay 1 Due via Email 11pm, 4/5**
4/9 Wilde, *The Uncensored Picture of Dorian Grey*

VI. Beauty: An Evolutionary Perspective

4/11 Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*
4/16 Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*
4/18 Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty*

VIII. Beauty: A Research Question

4/25 Research Paper Workshop: From Topics to Questions; **Presentation of Research Topic & Question**
4/30 Research Paper Workshop: From Questions to Problems; **Presentation of Research Problem**
5/2 Research Paper Proposals/Presentations: From Problems to Sources/Engaging Sources; **Presentation of Annotated Bibliography**
5/7 Research Paper Workshop: Page 1-2 Due
5/9 Research Paper Workshop: Pages 1-4 Due
5/16 Research Paper Due via Email 11pm