COURSE DESCRIPTION
The OED defines "sensation" as “an operation of any of the senses,” but also as “an exciting experience.” This course explores the cultural resonance of "sensation" and considers the connections between the impressions received by our senses and “sensational” events or experiences. How does bodily feeling translate into received opinion? How do the market and marketing shape the reactions of our very senses? And what do aesthetics, psychology, and marketing have to do with the making of sensational phenomena?

We will consider the various meanings of “sensation” in literature and art, taking on the issues of affect, scintillation, and outrage, while investigating the various personal and social meanings ascribed to sensational books, art exhibits, and other popular trends. Our main concern will be with how titillation, captivation, shock, and disgust are produced, shaped, and experienced.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Our goal this semester is to consider how “sensation” is defined, understood, approached, and treated, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which the concept informs literature and art and the ways in which it is constructed as a product and an experience. Ultimately, students will be able to use the idea of sensation as a lens for approaching a variety of texts, as well as contextualize sensation within other socio-cultural phenomena.

REQUIRED TEXTS
All texts have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway).

- Cretien van Campen, *The Hidden Sense*, The MIT Press, 2010
- David Howes, *Empire of the Senses*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2005
• Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, Picador, 2001

All other readings will be made available via NYU Classes (indicated as CLASSES on the schedule).

**OPTIONAL TEXTS**
We will be working with portions of some of these texts; assigned excerpts will be posted on NYU Classes or be made available as handouts. Others will be assigned in full, but are, when noted, available in online versions. Still others, you may simply find illuminating of some of the issues we will touch on. Should you wish to purchase these works, copies have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore.

• Andre Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, U of Michigan P, 1969
• Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, Vintage, 1989
• Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust*, SUNY P, 2003

**COURSE POLICIES**
It is essential that you attend class regularly, arrive promptly, and submit all work on time. If you suspect you might need an extension, please let me know well ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out about any work you may have missed; exchanging contact information with a classmate is thus advised. Please keep in mind that more than two unexcused absences will have an adverse effect on your grade; so will persistent lateness.

Participation is an important part of your course grade. Please come to class prepared to ask questions, to comment, to fully engage. A note about classroom decorum: good faith and good humor toward your colleagues in the classroom are of the utmost importance. This certainly does not mean that disagreements are discouraged: debate is expected, but nitpicking ought to be kept to the bare minimum. And please remember that personal attacks and intimidation are never, ever acceptable.

You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting. This course presumes close reading, both in your individual preparation and in classroom discussion. This means you must have the text in front of you in order to meaningfully participate in our class conversation.

Please make sure to turn off all cell phones before class begins. (Seriously.) And, for the sake of furthering a collegial atmosphere in this class, which is, after all, a seminar, please do not use laptops in the classroom. On those days when the assigned reading is posted on NYU Classes, you may use a tablet, but please be advised that phones cannot be used as readers.

REMEMBER: Any and all work you hand in this semester must be your own. Whenever you use someone else’s words or ideas, you must cite them properly. Per official school policy: “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, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy: www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I am glad to meet with you to discuss all assignments or any other aspect of the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Although everyone is expected to take active and meaningful part in our class conversations, each of you will have the chance to facilitate our discussions by taking on a specific role. The Discussion Leaders, as that title suggests, will bring in discussion questions and topics and spearhead the discussion. In advance of the meeting for which you serve as a Discussion Leader, you will need to post a list of your proposed questions/concerns/points to the relevant Forum on NYU Classes, no later than a full 24 hours before class. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the posted discussion questions and topics as part of preparations for class. The Illustrators will bring in an object for us to discuss in relation to the readings. This object may be an image, a sound recording, a device, or anything else you see fit to bring in to illuminate the readings and offer way of thinking about the assignments beyond the assignments themselves.

On those days you are not serving as Discussion Leader or Illustrator, I ask that you post a brief (200 or so words) response to the assigned materials. The response should reflect on a particular textual moment, theorizing it in terms of your evolving understanding of “sensation.” You must post your response to NYU Classes by 9PM on the Sunday before we meet.

Each of you will be presenting on a topic related to our course’s theme in the course of the semester. In conjunction with your presentations, you will turn in an annotated bibliography and a four-page exploration of the key issues pertinent to your presentation. The bibliography and discussion must be submitted, by email as a PDF attachment, no later than 3PM on the date due; the file name must be “LastName FirstName PresentationTitle.”

You will also be responsible for a formal essay of eight to ten pages. You will have the chance to articulate your own topic for the paper, though I will also offer some possible starting points. All papers must be submitted, by email as PDF attachments, no later than 3PM on the date due; the file name must be “LastName FirstName EssayTitle.” PLEASE NOTE: Late papers will be marked down half a grade for each day after the due date.

Finally, you will undertake a final project, which might take a “creative” form, using the ideas we explore in the course of the semester as a starting point.

Your final course grade will be based on:

- Participation: 15%
- Discussion Leading: 15%
- Objects: 10%
- Presentation: 15%
- Essay: 25%
- Final Project: 20%
COURSE SCHEDULE [Depending on the pace we establish, this schedule is subject to change with notice]

Monday, September 8
INTRO

Monday, September 15
from The Woman in White [CLASSES]
Alexander McQueen, VOSS [CLASSES]
In-Class Screening: The Woman in White

Monday, September 22
A History of the Senses [Part I; Part IV; “Prospects”]
The Empire of the Senses [Introduction; “Historicizing Perception”; “Sensation in Cultural Context”;
“Aestheticization Takes Command”; “The Senses Disordered”]
Olafur Eliasson [CLASSES]
Yayoi Kusama, Fireflies on the Water [CLASSES]

Monday, September 29
Sensation: The New Science of Physical Intelligence
John Cage, 4’33” [CLASSES]

Monday, October 6
Against Interpretation [“Against interpretation”; “On style”; “Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition”;
“One culture and the new sensibility”]
Victor Shklovsky, “Art As Device” [CLASSES]

Monday, October 13
Fall Recess

Monday, October 20
The Pleasure of the Text
Camera Lucida

Monday, October 27
The Hidden Sense
The Man Who Tasted Shaper [Part Two]
from Speak, Memory [CLASSES]
Meret Oppenheim, Obejct [CLASSES]
FIRST PAPER DUE

Monday, November 3
The Forms of the Affects [Preface; Chapter One; Chapter Five; Chapter Seven; Chapter Nine]
Marina Abramovic, The Artist Is Present [CLASSES]

Monday, November 10
Against Nature
Rebecca Horn, Body Sculptures [CLASSES]
Monday, November 17
*Brand Sense*

“Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection” [CLASSES]
Please bring in an example of an ad that relies on “sensational” marketing

Monday, November 24
*Customer Sense*

Please bring in an example of a product that relies on “sensational” marketing

Monday, December 1
*Sensorium* [Introduction; Abecedarius]
*The Body in Pain* [Introduction; “Pain and Imagining”]
Stelarc [CLASSES]
Orland, Carnal Art [CLASSES]

Monday, December 8
*Perfume*
Martynka Wawrzyniak, “Smell Me” [CLASSES]

Wednesday, December 10 [classes meet on a Monday schedule]
In-Class Film Screening
FINAL PROJECT DUE