The Gallatin School of Individualized Study  
New York University  
Spring 2014

SENSATION! AFFECT, the BODY, and the MARKET (IDSEM-UG1733)  
Monday, 3:30 - 6:10 PM  
BOBST LL141

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Office Hours: Monday 11AM-12:30PM; 3-3:30PM

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" by asking the following questions: What are the connections between the impressions received by our senses and “sensational” events or experiences? How does bodily feeling translate into received opinion? And how does the market shape the reactions of our very senses? 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, experienced, and utilized.

COURSE OBJECTIVES  
Our goal this semester is to account for the various meanings and uses of “sensation,” to consider the ways in which sensation can underpin and undermine the marketplace, sometimes simultaneously, and to investigate the cultural construction of sensation as a product and an experience. We will focus on examining how sensation functions within a variety of texts and on using sensation as a lens through which various texts might be studied.

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

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.


**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. You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting.

**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](http://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
In preparation for each of our course meetings, you will need to post a brief (200 or so words) response to the assigned materials. The response might take the form of a reflection on a particular textual moment, or it might be structured as a series of inquiries or concerns you would like to take up in the course of our class discussion. You must post your response to NYU Classes by 9PM on the Sunday before we meet. It is your responsibility to become familiar with all submitted reflections as part of preparations for class.

You will also take turns leading our discussions of the assigned materials. On those days when you initiate and direct the class conversation, you will post in a two-page close reading of a particular textual moment.

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.”

Finally, you will also be responsible for two formal essays. You will have the chance to articulate your own topics for the papers, the first of which will be three-to-five pages, and the second, six-to-eight. 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.

Your final course grade will be based on:
- Participation: 15%
- Responses + Discussion Leading: 20%
- Presentation: 15%
- Essays: 50% total

COURSE SCHEDULE
Depending on the pace we establish, this schedule is subject to change with notice.

Monday, January 27
INTRO

Monday, February 3
*The Woman in White* [“The First Epoch”; “The Second Epoch” (up to “June 20th”)]
Alexander McQueen, *VOSS* (CLASSES)

Monday, February 10
*The Woman in White* [“The Second Epoch” (from “June 20th”); “The Third Epoch”]
“Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection” (CLASSES)

Monday, February 17
President’s Day
Monday, February 24
*A Natural History of the Senses* [“Smell”; “Touch”]
Martynka Wawrzyniak, “Smell Me” (CLASSES)

Monday, March 3
*A Natural History of the Senses* [“Taste”; “Hearing”; “Vision”]
John Cage, “4’33’” (CLASSES)

Monday, March 10
*Against Interpretation* [“Against interpretation”; “On style”; “Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition”; “One culture and the new sensibility”]
Marina Abramović, “The Artist Is Present” (CLASSES)

**FIRST PAPER DUE**

Monday, March 17
Spring Recess

Monday, March 24
*The Pleasure of the Text*

Monday, March 31
*Against Nature* (CLASSES)
*A Natural History of the Senses* [“Synesthesia”]
“Everyday Fantasia” & Maureen Seaberg, “Ghost in the Machine” (CLASSES)

Monday, April 7
*Brand Sense*
Please bring in an example of an ad/product that relies on “sensory marketing”

Monday, April 14
*Customer Sense*
“Selling Sensation: The New Marketing Territory” (CLASSES)

Monday, April 21
*Film Theory*

Monday, April 28
*The Tactile Eye*
Ian Hague, “Beyond the Visual: The Roles of the Senses in Contemporary Comics” (CLASSES)

Monday, May 5
In-Class Film Screening

Monday, May 12
CONCLUSIONS
**SECOND PAPER DUE**