Although punk seemed to be non- or even anti-aesthetic, it has paradoxically proven to be among the most significant artistic phenomena of the last half century. If the western aesthetic tradition is based in notions of beauty and conformity to accepted standards, this course will ask whether a movement or sensibility that prided itself on being ugly, offensive, and outlaw can be said to have an aesthetic – and if not, of what relevance is the aesthetic tradition to contemporary art? Of particular interest will be the politics of aesthetics, and the way punk provided a forum for the expression of racial, gender, sexual, and class difference outside the privileged position traditionally assumed by aesthetics. Readings will include classic texts in aesthetic thought and contemporary critical theory and sociology. These will be considered in dialogue with American, British, French, and German works of music, visual art, film, literature, graphic design, and fashion from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as earlier historical works that were significant influences on that generation.

In this course, we will seek to trace an understanding of the notion of aesthetics that allows for both historical transgressions and contemporary artistic practice. In so doing, we will engage with mainstream aesthetic norms and critical responses to them – through both close reading of texts and careful formal analysis of works of art. Finally, we will emphasize formal written response – in terms of ekphrasis, critical thinking, and structuring of arguments.

Reading assignments are mandatory for all students. Each week, a few students will be assigned to lead discussion of the readings. These short presentations (approx. 10 minutes) should provide basic context on the authors/texts, a summary of the main points and arguments – bearing in mind that all members of the class will have read the texts – and posit questions for group discussion. Images/audio/video are encouraged as appropriate.

Most weeks will also include listening assignments. CDs(!) are on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center on the second floor of Bobst Library.

Each student will choose, in consultation with the instructor, a topic to research over the course of the semester. The last several class meetings will be dedicated to student presentations of their research in progress (length tbd). The final paper will be 12-15pp., typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt., and must be properly footnoted. I prefer the Chicago Manual of Style, but other formats are acceptable so long as the citations are accurate and consistent.

Excused absences, extensions, and incompletes will be granted only upon the written advice of your doctor, psychologist, spiritual adviser, or dean. “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 Gallatin include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html.”

No phones at the seminar table, please. Laptops/tablets may be used to consult reading assignments during discussions. Any surfing, facebooking, texting, etc. will result in an immediate pop quiz for the entire class.

Course requirements:
1. Attendance and class participation = 30%
2. Two short response papers, 10% each
3. In-class research presentation = 20%
4. Final research paper = 30%
SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

Jan. 27: Introduction


Feb. 10: Punk Romanticism
First response paper due


Listen: Patti Smith, Horses and Easter

Feb. 17: Presidents’ Day: no class

Feb. 24: Punk Nihilism


Listen: Sex Pistols, Never Mind the Bollocks
Siouxsie & the Banshees, The Scream

Mar. 3: My (Class) War


Listen: The Clash, London Calling
Crass, Christ The Album
Mar. 10: Looking the Part


Listen: X-Ray Spex, *Germfree Adolescents*
Ramones, *Anthology: Hey! Ho! Let’s Go!*

Mar. 17: Spring break: no class

Mar. 24: No Future


Listen: X, *Los Angeles* and *Wild Gift*

Mar. 31: Punks on Film: Second response paper due


Films tbd

Apr. 7: Punk and the Other/Punk After punk
Tbd

Apr. 14: student research presentations
Apr. 21: student research presentations
Apr. 28: student research presentations
May 5: student research presentations
May 12: student research presentations

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE IN MY MAILBOX BY 5:00 ON FRIDAY, MAY 16.
PUNK PIX


PUNK STORIES


RESPONSE PAPER #1

Write a 2-3pp response paper that discusses the excerpts we read from *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and *Please Kill Me*. Neither text follows a straightforward, essayistic structure. What, then, do you think are the main points of each. What questions did they raise for you – in general, about art, about each other?

Hint: a useful introduction to Kant can be found here: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/
And here: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/

If possible, please email me your papers ahead of time, and I’ll take a few minutes next Monday to read/discuss some of your questions. If not possible, bring your hard copy to class.

Due by Monday, Feb. 10. Typed, double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman, please.