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.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS:**

1. To consider some of the key texts of modern western aesthetics – and their negation
2. To examine in depth the historical moment of the 1970s, its particular aesthetic formation, and its relationship to past artistic paradigms
3. To practice critical reading of texts, as well as close analysis of artworks (including visual art, music, literature, film, and design)
4. To emphasize formal written responses that draw upon both interdisciplinary scholarship and primary artistic sources across media

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reading assignments are required for all students. Each week, a few students will be assigned to lead discussion about the readings. Written scripts (approx. 10 min, 5pp. typed/double spaced) will be turned in for feedback. Presentations should provide basic context, a summary of the main points and arguments – bearing in mind that all members of the class will have read the assignments – and questions for group discussion. Images/audio/video are encouraged as appropriate; I strongly recommend investing in a flash drive.

Most weeks will also include required listening/viewing assignments. Books marked “LOOK” are on reserve at the Bobst circulation desk. CDs are on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center on the second floor of Bobst.

Each student will choose a topic to research over the course of the semester. The last few meetings will be dedicated to presentations of students’ research in progress (5-10 min). The final paper will be 10-12pp. (typed/double-spaced) and properly footnoted. I prefer Chicago Manual of Style, but other formats are acceptable so long as the citations are accurate and consistent.

Attendance is mandatory. Each student may have one excused absence; this is intended for seniors who are scheduling their colloquia, but no questions will be asked. Additional excused absences, extensions, and incompletes will be granted only upon the written advice of your doctor, psychologist, spiritual adviser, or dean. Absences WILL count against your final grade!

No phones or laptops at the seminar table, please. Any illicit texting, etc. will result in an immediate pop quiz for the entire class.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


2. Readers: available for purchase at Unique Copy Center, 252 Greene.
Final grades will comprise:
1. Attendance, class participation, and leading discussion = 35%
2. Three short papers, 10% each
3. In-class research presentation = 15%
4. Final research paper = 20%

“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.”

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

Sep. 14
Introduction

Sep. 21
What Is Art? What Is Punk?


Sep. 28
Jesus died for somebody's sins, but not mine: Punk Romanticism


LISTEN: Patti Smith, Horses (1975) and Easter (1978)
Oct. 5
Waiting for the communist call: Dada & Détournement

Short paper #1 due.


LISTEN: Sex Pistols, Never Mind the Bollocks (1977)
Crass, Christ The Album (1982)

Oct. 12 NO MONDAY CLASS. CLASS IS ON TUESDAY THIS WEEK!

Oct. 13
We will teach our twisted speech to the young believers: Dialectical Negation(s)


LISTEN: The Ramones, Ramones (1976)
The Clash, London Calling (1979)

Oct. 19
Whilst finishing a chore, I asked myself what for: Punk Nihilism


LISTEN: The Stooges, Raw Power (1973)
Siouxsie & the Banshees, The Scream (1978)
Oct. 26
Exhibition is the name/Voyeurism is the game: Looking the Part
Short paper #2 due.


X-Ray Spex, *Germfree Adolescents* (1978)

Nov. 2
We’re desperate! Get used to it!: Punk Postmodernism

Nov. 9
I’m the fucking son of a superman: Punk Genders
LISTEN: The Slits, *Cut* (1979)
Nov. 16
I can lick your face, I can bite it too: Punk on Film

**Short paper #3 due**

Films tba

Nov. 23
The only world that ain’t dull is your own: Punk and the “Other”

[handout]


LISTEN: Death, …*For the Whole World to See* (1975)

Nov. 30
How to sell a contradiction: New Wave, No Wave, Postpunk


LISTEN: Josh’s mixtape

Dec. 7: research presentations

Dec. 14: research presentations

Papers will be due in my mailbox by 5pm on Dec. 21.