

# Topics in Aesthetics: On Beauty and Ugliness

Art History 3031 01

3 Credit Hours

MW 4:00-5:20 EB 217

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Office Hours: Fridays 3:00 to 5:00, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Baty House

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Art History 3701 traces notions of beauty and ugliness in Western thought from the Greeks to the present. Throughout the centuries the topic of aesthetics has been widely debated and extremely controversial. This has been especially so in determining the ideal proportions of the human body, and this subject is addressed regularly throughout the lectures and class dialog. This course chronologically reviews various philosophical and theoretical debates concerning aesthetics. It considers artists and artworks that have contributed to the aesthetic dialog of their time.

## REQUIRED TEXT

History of Beauty, Umberto Eco

On Ugliness, Umberto Eco

Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, Immanuel Kant

A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Edmund Burke

## RECOMMENDED TEXT

The Little, Brown Handbook, Aaron Fowler

## HANDOUTS AND/OR TEXTS ON RESERVE

Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine, Barbara Marie Stafford

Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery, Sander Gilman

## COURSE OUTLINE

Greek Notions of Beauty and Ugliness

Proportion and a Lack Thereof

Notions of Beauty and Ugliness in the Middle Ages

Men and Women: Acceptable Features and the Beauty Myth

Mannerism, Baroque, and Neoclassicist Aesthetics

Enlightenment Notions of Purity

The Sublime

Romanticism and the Beauty of Ugliness

Aesthetics in Modern Art

Demonizing/Animalizing the Stranger

Degenerate Artists and the Nazi Aesthetic

Physiognomy and Phrenology

Contemporary Perspectives: Ugliness Today and Beauty in the Media

Aesthetic Surgery

The Uncanny

## DETERMINING THE FINAL GRADE

Your attendance will be factored into the determination of the final grade. In addition to this, I will be taking your class participation into consideration. It doesn't take me very long to learn who you all are, who's attending to class business and who is not. That will also be reflected in your grade. For example if, at the

end of the semester, you are right on the border between two grades, I would be inclined to give you the benefit of the doubt if you were a regular participant in class discussion. Of course I will also take into consideration the quality of that class participation. I will be evaluating your examinations according to not only how much factual data you provide, but how well you express that information. I am interested in seeing you think expansively rather than reductively. The same is true of the way in which I will evaluate your research paper. In order to help you understand my criteria for grading, I have attached a copy of the statement of Liberal Arts Learning Outcomes and our Assessment process. Please read this carefully. Your grade in this course is based on two take-home essay exams and a research paper.

15-source Bibliography:	20 points
600-word Research Paper Description:	15 points
Mid-Semester Essays:	50 points
First Draft of Research Paper:	100 points
Class Presentations:	50 points
Second Draft of Research Paper:	65 points

**Total Points Available: 300 points**

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. See above, Determining the Final Grade.
2. Attendance.
3. Punctuality.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to a professional and educational setting and demonstrate collegial support of their peers. Students are required to observe the student code of conduct, which includes an anti-discrimination statement and no harassment policy. Please refer to your student handbook for more information.

**GRADING SCALE:** 90 – 100% = A    80 – 89% = B    70 – 79% = C    60 – 69% = D    0 – 59% = F

A: The writing demonstrates a detailed understanding of the subject matter. Amply exceeds the minimum word requirement. Little or no grammatical or spelling errors. Use of language is thoughtful and demonstrates a passion for the topic at hand.

B: The writing demonstrates a detailed understanding of the subject matter. Exceeds the minimum word requirement. Little or no grammatical or spelling errors.

C: All word minimums have been met. Very few grammatical and spelling errors. Generally understands the subject matter.

D: Falls short of the minimum word requirement. Grammar and spelling are questionable, and so is the understanding of the subject matter.

F: Falls woefully short of the minimum word requirement. Grammar and spelling are extremely poor. Clearly demonstrates a lack of understanding of the subject matter.

### EXAMINATIONS

Mid-semester- 1800-word minimum take-home essay:

Discuss various notions of the Sublime. This essay should include, but not be limited to, a section that compares and contrasts Immanuel Kant's Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. It should also include references to prior historical aesthetic beliefs. Include at least six examples of artwork made before 1900 and discuss their relationship to beauty and sublimity.

### RESEARCH PAPER

You will be writing a research paper that is a minimum of 4000 words. The idea of this paper is to help you, through an intensive investigation of one particular theme, to develop a more sophisticated understanding of notions of beauty and ugliness as they are evidenced through artwork, as well as to become more fluent in research skills. In choosing your topic, be creative. Choose carefully, because you'll be spending a fair amount of time on this paper and you'll want someone or something about which you can get passionate. Hopefully this topic will be one that contributes to your work in studio, though it may or may not immediately manifest itself.

Please note: Include illustrations. You may also download images from Artstor and other sources on the internet. PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST CITE THE SOURCES OF YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS AS FAITHFULLY AS YOU CITE ALL OTHER SOURCES.

Your paper must be a minimum of 4000-words, double spaced, with full Chicago style notation and Bibliography. This bibliography must include a minimum of 10 sources, of which there should be a mixture of books and articles. Internet sources are permitted, but only for academic journals who publish their articles online. Wikipedia is NOT an academic source and will not be accepted. Instructions on how to cite websites are included in the Little, Brown Handbook.

I expect you to generate your paper in a typed format, using 1" margins and a 12-point Times New Roman font, both in hardcopy and digital pdf. And you will use the Chicago Style of notation and I will not accept any other form. Please present your papers UNSTAPLED and in a MANILA ENVELOPE.

I expect you to do a SPELLING AND GRAMMAR CHECK before handing in your papers.

Please note: I am happy to meet with you as you research and write your paper. If you are struggling with content, form or both, I am happy to help and would be pleased to read a draft if you wish. Also don't forget, the ARC can help with writing issues.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Please be sure to turn off all cell phones or other such devices before class starts. Please email me no later than the start of class time on the day of the absence, if you must be absent. If you attain more than three unexcused absences your grade will be lowered. Excessive tardiness will also lower your grade.

### **KCAI Attendance Policy**

The general attendance policy is in place because students are responsible for the entire content of the courses, including required portfolios and examinations. An absence from a regularly scheduled class or studio session is defined by a student not attending a scheduled class time and/or missing a significant portion of any class time (as defined by the instructor). If absences meet or exceed 15 percent of the class meetings in any one semester, the student will be subject to a reduced final full letter grade. The use of attendance in grading, up to that point, is at the discretion of the instructor. If absences reach 20 percent of the class meetings in any one semester, the student will fail the course (if absences are excused, the student may be eligible for a withdrawal from the course).

"Excused absences" include absences due to illness of the student, illness of an immediate family member for whom the student must care, death of an immediate family member, religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during class), or representation of KCAI in an official capacity. Students seeking an excused absence must provide documentation to the ARC to substantiate the excuse. The ARC will notify instructors that the documentation is on file. Students with excused absences are responsible for completing all course requirements as outlined by the instructor.

1 credit hour		3 credit hours		5 credit hours		6 credit hours		9 credit hours	
1x/wk		1x/wk	2x/wk	1x/wk	2x/wk		2x/wk	3x/wk	4x/wk
2.4 classes		2.4 classes	4.8 classes	2.4 classes	4.8 classes		4.8 classes	7.2 classes	9.6 classes
Morning/afternoon sessions w/ lunch break:				4.8 sessions	9.6 sessions		9.6 sessions	14.8 sessions	19.2 sessions

20%

1 credit hour		3 credit hours		5 credit hours		6 credit hours		9 credit hours	
1x/wk		1x/wk	2x/wk	1x/wk	2x/wk		2x/wk	3x/wk	4x/wk
3.2 classes		3.2 classes	6.4 classes	3.2 classes	6.4 classes		6.4 classes	9.6 classes	12.8 classes
Morning/afternoon sessions w/ lunch break:				6.4 sessions	12.8 sessions		12.8 sessions	19.2 sessions	25.6 sessions

## NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who have documented disabilities and are eligible for accommodations must provide documentation of the disability to Kathy Keller, Disabilities Coordinator in the Academic Resource Center before accommodations can be provided. All requests are confidential.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY

**Academic Dishonesty is defined as follows:**

- A.) The copying of another student's work or the use of unauthorized notes and materials during examinations,
- B.) Plagiarism, or the presentation of either the written or visual work of others (including that of other students), as one's own
- C.) Plagiarism is a serious offense in the academy, as well as illegal in the context of our nation's copyright law. As such, it is important to know what plagiarism is in both one's studio- and liberal arts work. According to the Modern Language Association, plagiarism is "the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own." In other words, plagiarism is the use of not just words but ideas borrowed from someone else without crediting the source. Students are required to learn the arts-standard, Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for citing sources referenced in their own work, and must follow them carefully in their research and writing projects.

Students are also expected to be honest in their studio practices, particularly since the practice of appropriation is such an important strategy in art history. Though they might appear to be similar, plagiarism and appropriation are actually two very different practices. While it is true that appropriation involves taking possession of something often without permission—which for the visual artist usually means taking an image—it is also true that an appropriated image isn't passed off as the original production of the appropriating artist. Indeed, the appropriation artist wants the viewer to recognize that an image has been utilized and referenced. (An artist who appropriates an image inevitably wishes to comment upon the original source in some way, usually as a critique, parody, or homage—all of which happen to fall under the realm of "fair use" in copyright law.) As such, appropriation is actually more like citing a source than plagiarizing it. All academic dishonesty is taken as an offense against the Institute and may result in penalties assessed by the faculty member teaching the course in which the offense has occurred and the Judicial Board, up to and including expulsion.

When a faculty member has reason to believe that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred, s/he will inform the student/s involved, the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the course is offered, and the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the student is majoring. The faculty member will forward a report in writing to the Dean of Student Life for presentation before the KCAI Judicial Board. The Judicial Board will interview and/or receive written statements from the student accused of academic dishonesty prior to making any determination.

Once a determination has been made that an offense did occur, faculty members maintain the right to assign a failing grade to the student. (Faculty members shall articulate their basic grading policy concerning academic dishonesty in their syllabi.) Additional penalties, up to and including expulsion, will be determined by the Judicial Board working in tandem with the faculty member who reported the offense.

### **Cheating/Unauthorized Assistance**

It is inappropriate for students to provide or receive unauthorized assistance during an examination or for other assignments. For example, the use of cheat sheets, copying from another individual's paper/examination is in violation of the KCAI student code of conduct.

## **LIBERAL ARTS LEARNING OUTCOMES**

#1: demonstrates the ability to express thoughts clearly and effectively.

#2: has the ability to analyze and critically assess issues and ideas.

#3: has the capacity to address art, artistry, and aesthetics from a position of cultural, historical, political and philosophical awareness and understanding.

### **Learning Outcome #1: demonstrates the ability to express thoughts clearly and effectively**

1. possesses a linguistic fluency evidenced by a grammatical ease and a mature vocabulary that avoids mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, usage, and syntax
2. produces a clear and defensible thesis
3. supports the thesis with evidence
4. understands what constitutes evidence by relying on the specific and the concrete, rather than on the vague and the abstract
5. provides adequate transitions to move from one point to the next
6. avoids all use of meaningless phrases, ready-made phrases, clichés, euphemisms, elevated diction, meaningless non sequiturs, logical fallacies, and other methods that cloud, rather than clarify thought
7. considers the audience, who may or may not be familiar with or interested in the content of the material being discussed
8. employs literary devices such as image and metaphor, dialogue and simile, making every effort to clarify thought so that the audience may attain and retain the writer's meaning and intention more readily and effectively

### **Learning Outcome #2: has the ability to analyze and critically assess issues and ideas**

1. distinguishes sense from nonsense, in their own assertions, as well as in others
2. acknowledges, tolerates, and is able to represent fairly, opposing positions
3. able to evaluate sources: aware of the difference between primary and secondary sources, university and commercial presses, a university web page, a government web site, a nutty internet site, a popular magazine article like Time, a scholarly journal, a proceeding, a first-person narrative, a dissertation abstract, etc.; has a sense for when the nutty web site can be as useful in an argument as a scholarly tome
4. recognizes the difference between paraphrase, accurate and inaccurate quotations, and plagiarism
5. able to cite sources correctly, using the Chicago Manual of Style format

### **Learning Outcome #3: has the capacity to address art, artistry, and aesthetics from a position of cultural, historical, political and philosophical awareness and understanding**

1. able to identify influences on their own work and processes of individual artists, movements, and aesthetic theories
2. able to identify influences on their own work and processes from a political, cultural, and historical perspective

3. achieves a mature conceptual reach in their assertions
4. demonstrates a deep and wide creative reflection of relevant research
5. able to determine the information requirements for the research question, problem, or issue and then be able to locate and retrieve the relevant information, using the technological tools needed for accessing information
6. able to pose interesting, intelligent and relevant questions
7. acknowledges the intrinsic value of knowledge, as well as know-how by incorporating what they have learned in their liberal arts classes into their studio work
8. able to engage an audience, with reason, information and insight.

**Week 1            January 27 & 29**

- Tuesday- Review: syllabus, course description, texts and authors  
Powerpoint Presentation: Paper Topics  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Introduction and Chs. 1 and 2, pp 7-58. On Ugliness, Introduction and Ch. 1 pp 8-42.*
- Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Beauty and Ugliness in Ancient Greece.  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch. 5, pp 131-153, On Ugliness, Ch 4, pp 107-130.*  
In-Class Writing: To What extent is Beauty Cultural? Universal?

**Week 2            February 3 & 5**

- Tuesday- Discussion: Apollonian and Dionysiac Beauty  
Ppt Lecture: The Beauty of Monsters. Monsters and Portents.  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch 3, pp 61-98, Ch 4, pp 99-130. On Ugliness, 152-157. <http://www.ntnu.no/gemini/2000-06e/32-34.htm>.*
- Thursday- Music: Bach, Sonic Youth.  
Ppt Lecture: Beauty as Proportion and Harmony. Light and Color in the Middle Ages. Caricature.  
*Reading Assignment: On Ugliness, Ch 5, pp 131-151, History of Beauty, Ch 6, pp 154-175.*

**Week 3            February 10 & 12**

- Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: The Ugly, the Comic, and the Obscene. From the Pastourelle to the Donna Angelicata.  
*Reading Assignment: On Ugliness, 6, pp 158-167, History of Beauty, Ch 7, pp 176-192, History of Beauty, Ch 8, pp 193-213.*
- Thursday- Ppt Lecture: The Ugliness of Woman from Antiquity to the Baroque Period.  
Magic Beauty between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. Ladies and Heroes.  
Discussion: Gender Politics  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch 9, pp 214-264, On Ugliness, pp 168-177.*

**Week 4            February 17 & 19    *Paper Description due: 600-word minimum***

- Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: From Grace to Disquieting Beauty. Mannerism and the Baroque.  
*Reading Assignment: On Ugliness, Ch 9, pp 241-269, History of Beauty, Ch10, pp 237-274.*
- Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Physica Curiosa, Reason and Beauty.  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch 12, pp 299-328, On Ugliness, Ch 10, Romanticism and the Redemption of Ugliness, pp 271-310.*

**Week 5            February 24 & 26**

- Tuesday- Lecture: Romantic Beauty. Romanticism and the Beauty of Ugliness.

*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch 11, pp 275-298, Observations, pp 1-42.*

Thursday- Ppt Lecture: The Sublime. Introduction and Notes on the Translation of Kant's Observations.  
Exercise: Identifying Kant's notion of the sublime within artworks  
*Reading Assignment: Observations, 45-116*

**Week 6      March 3 & 5**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Kant's Observations.  
*Reading Assignment: A Philosophical Enquiry, pp 11-79*  
Exercise: Identifying Kant's notion of the sublime within artworks  
Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Burke's Enquiry.  
*Reading Assignment: A Philosophical Enquiry, pp 83-161*  
Exercise: Identifying Burke's notion of the sublime within artworks

**Week 7      March 10 & 12 \*\*\*Mid-semester\*\*\***

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Burke's Enquiry.  
Exercise: Identifying Burke's notion of the sublime within artworks  
Thursday- ***Mid-Semester Take-Home Exam Essays Due***  
Video: Cara Walker  
*Reading Assignment: Body Criticism, pp 84-103.*

***Spring Break March 14-22***

**Week 8      March 24 & 26**

Tuesday- Discussion: The Calculation of Incongruity.  
*Reading Assignment: History of Beauty, Ch 16, pp 401-412, On Ugliness, Ch 13, pp 365-390.*  
Thursday- Ppt Lecture: From Abstract Forms to the Depths of Material.  
*Reading Assignment: On Ugliness, Ch 7, 178-201.*

**Week 9      March 31 & April 2**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: The Devil in the Modern World.  
Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Degenerate Artists and Nazi Aesthetics. The Avant-Garde and the Triumph of Ugliness.  
*Reading Assignment: Reading Assignment: Body Criticism, 103-120.*

**Week 10      April 7 & 9**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Physiognomy.  
Discussion: Physical and Moral ideals in contemporary times.  
***First Draft Due: 3000-word minimum.***



*Reading Assignment: Making the Body Beautiful, Preface and Ch. 1 pp xvi-xxii and 3-41.*

Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Judging by Appearances.  
*Reading Assignment: On Ugliness, Ch 11, pp 311-332 and Ch 14.  
www.carajudea.com*

**Week 11 April 14 & 16**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: The Uncanny. The Ugliness of Others.

Discussion: Cara Judea

Thursday- Visiting Artist: Cara Judea

*Reading Assignment: Making the Body Beautiful, pp 144-156, On Ugliness, Ch 15., pp 421-440, History of Beauty, Ch 17, pp 413-430.*

**Week 12 April 21 & 23**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Greek Ideals. Ugliness Today. The Beauty of the Media.

Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Diane Arbus

**Week 13 April 27 & 29**

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Joel-Peter Witkin

*Reading Assignment: Making the Body Beautiful, 319-328.*

Thursday- Ppt Lecture: Post-Aesthetic Bodies. Featured Artist: Orlan

**Week 14 May 5 & 7 *Second Draft due: 4000-word minimum.***

Tuesday- Ppt Lecture: Post-Aesthetic Bodies. Featured Artist: Orlan

Discussion: Aesthetic Surgery

Thursday- ***Class Presentations***

**Week 15 May 12 & 14**

Tuesday- ***Class Presentations***

Thursday- ***Final Take-Home Exam Essays Due***

***Class Presentations***

Paper Topics and/or Keywords

Greek Statuary  
The Beauty of Light and Color in the Middle Ages  
Medieval Architectural (chimeras, gargoyles, etc.)  
Italian Renaissance Aesthetics  
    Grotesque/Grottesche  
    Proportion  
    Architecture  
Leonardo da Vinci  
Michelangelo  
Antonio Tempesta  
Raphael  
Hieronymus Bosch  
Pieter Brueghel  
Mannerist Aesthetics  
Baroque Aesthetics  
Rococo Aesthetics  
Francisco Goya  
Physiognomy and Phrenology  
Romantic Aesthetics  
Victorian Aesthetics  
Jacques Callot  
Johann Heinrich Fussli  
Olilon Redon  
James Ensor  
Max Ernst  
Arno Brecker  
Degenerate Artists and the Nazi Aesthetic  
Francis Bacon  
Joel-Peter Witkin  
Hans Bellmer  
John Coplans  
Orlan  
Aesthetic Surgery  
Genetics  
Madonna and Child  
Aesthetic Components of Design  
Men and Women: Acceptable Features and the Beauty Myth  
Idealized Bodies  
Venus/Adonis  
Kings & Queens  
Enlightenment Notions of Purity  
Diane Arbus  
Joel-Peter Witkin  
Jenny Saville