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Fall 2015

### Course Syllabus (FA15) COLI 211 Literature & Psychology: "Material Aesthetics"

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**Course Description:**

An examination of questions concerning aesthetic experience from the standpoint of the structural and functional logics of the capitalist mode of production

**Credit Distribution Fulfillments:**

This course fulfills the SUNY Binghamton General Education "Composition" and "Humanities" requirements. The University's guidelines regarding these categories are as follows:

**Category 1: Language and Communication:** *Composition (C)* courses require a process of revision and a minimum of 20 pages of expository prose. At least 50 percent of the course grade is based on student writing.

**Category 4: Aesthetics and Humanities:** *Humanities (H)* courses enhance students' understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.

**Course objectives and learning outcomes:**

Our shared objectives are (1) to recognize handicraft as the indispensable condition of possibility for the emergence and maintenance of the capitalist mode of production, (2) to consider the aesthetic and transformative nature of handicraft productive activity and, (3) to think and write through aesthetic theory and handicraft-artistic practice. To this end, the student is tasked with developing a final seminar paper that demonstrates a unique understanding of topics addressed during of the semester.

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**Course requirements and grading:**

- (1)** Five (5) 2-page response papers **(25%)**
- (2)** One 10-page final paper to be developed in consultation with instructor in Weeks 11-13  
**(Draft + Revision = 60%)**
- (3)** One 10-minute presentation of final paper draft **(15%)**.

These exercises are designed to enable students (1) to recognize and respond to authors' main and sub-arguments, (2) to generate questions and make observations to facilitate class discussions, and (3) to self-assess understandings of the texts and develop theses for the final paper. All submitted papers are to be typewritten in MLA format using double-spacing, 1-inch margins, and 11- or 12-point font. All papers are due to the instructor at the beginning of the class session for which they are assigned. Students in need of writing assistance are invited to visit the University Writing Center at LN 2412.

**Expectations and responsibilities:**

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and ready to discuss the texts assigned for the day. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own academic success and to support that of their colleagues, thereby promoting the success of the course as a whole. Active participation will facilitate these goals. Students will be allowed one (1) absence during the semester; absences beyond this limit will result in the reduction of the final grade by one half grade-point per absence (for example, a grade of A for the course will be reduced to A-, and so on. The same policy will apply to late submissions of papers and other assignments). **New York State and Binghamton University academic standards require students to spend at least 9.5 hours per week preparing for 4-credit courses meeting bi-weekly in Fall and Spring Semesters, bringing the individual student's per-course work time on all assignments to a minimum of 12.5 weekly work hours, including class time.**

\*The use of laptop computers will be permitted for note taking only; please silence these and other electronic devices before the start of class.

\*Please privately inform the instructor of any special learning needs you may have no later than the day of the Course Add/Drop deadline.

A note on academic integrity:

Plagiarism consists in the unacknowledged use of another person's work. Students enrolled in this course are required and expected to do their own work. Instances of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, will be addressed in accordance with University policy.

Students found to have engaged in plagiarism in this course will receive an F for the assignment(s) in question. Students in need of clarification of the University's policy on academic integrity should review it online at the following link, listed under the heading, "Rules Governing Academic Life": [http://buweb.binghamton.edu/bulletin/program.asp?program\\_id=103](http://buweb.binghamton.edu/bulletin/program.asp?program_id=103)

A note on the readings:

The following is a list of texts required for the course and available for lease or purchase from the University bookstore; all other readings will be available on Blackboard. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the reading schedule on short notice and as deemed appropriate.

**Texts for Purchase or Lease (Texts marked with an asterisk are optional but recommended):**

*Art as Experience*, John Dewey

*Capital, Volume 1*, Karl Marx

*If on a winter's night a traveler*, Italo Calvino

*In Praise of Shadows*, Junichirō Tanizaki

*Necessity of Art*, Ernst Fischer

*Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*, Leonard Koren

\**Elements of Style*, William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White

\**MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Ed. Joseph Gibaldi and Phyllis Franklin

\**Rhythm Science*, Paul D. Miller (AKA DJ Spooky, That Subliminal Kid)

**PART 1: DIALECTICS, LABOR, AND THE COMMODITY-FORM**

**Week 1**

M 08/31: Introductions; *Statement of the Problem*; No Assigned Readings

W 09/02: Mao Tse-Tung: "On Practice"  
Calvino: *If on a winter's night a traveler* (Self-directed reading to be completed by the end of Week 5)

## **Week 2**

**M 09/07:** **No Classes: Labor Day**

W 09/09: Tse-Tung: "On Contradiction;"  
Karl Marx: "Alienated Labour;"  
----"Needs, Production, and Division of Labour"  
**Response Paper #1 Due**

**F 09/11:** **Course Add/Drop deadline**

## **Week 3**

**M 09/14:** **No Classes: Rosh Hashanah**

W 09/16: Marx, Frederick Engels: "Wage-Labour and Capital;"  
Marx: Capital, Vol. 1, Introduction, 11-59

## **Week 4**

M 09/21: Marx: Capital 1, Introduction, 60-88; Preface to the First Edition and Postface to the Second Edition, 89-103; Preface to the English Edition, 109-113

**W 09/23:** **No Classes: Yom Kippur**

## **Week 5**

M 09/28: Marx: Capital 1, Chs. 1-2 "The Commodity"; "The Process of Exchange," 125-187;  
Guy Debord: The Society of the Spectacle, Chs. 1-3: "Separation Perfected;"  
"The Commodity as Spectacle"; "Unity and Division within Appearances;"  
Film: The Society of the Spectacle, Dir. Debord (1973) (YouTube)

W 09/30: Marx: Capital 1, Chs. 6-7 "The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power;"  
"The Labour Process and the Valorization Process", 270-306;  
Herbert Marcuse: "Liberation from the Affluent Society"  
**Response Paper #3 Due**

## **Week 6**

M 10/05: Marx: Capital 1, Chs. 11-13, "The Rate and Mass of Surplus Value;"  
"The Concept of Relative Surplus Value"; "Co-operation", 417-454

W 10/07: Marx: Capital 1, Ch.14, "The Division of Labour and Manufacture", 455-491  
**Response Paper #4 Due**

## **Week 7**

M 10/12: Marx: Capital 1, Ch. 15: "Machinery and Large-Scale Industry", 492-564;  
Film: The Most Beautiful, Dir. Akira Kurosawa (1944)

## **PART 2: MATERIAL-AESTHETIC THEORY, ARTISTIC PRACTICES & INTERVENTIONS**

W 10/14: Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"  
**Response Paper #5 Due**

### **Week 8**

M 10/19: Martin Heidegger: "The Question Concerning Technology" (1977); Heidegger: *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1975), Ch. 2, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 17-87;  
Haruki Murakami: "Tony Takitani", Trans. Jay Rubin (2002);  
Film: *Tony Takitani*, dir. Jun Ichikawa (2004)

W 10/21: Junichirō Tanizaki, Trans. Thomas J. Harper: *In Praise of Shadows* (1977);  
Edmund Burke: *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Selections TBD

### **Week 9**

M 10/26: Leonard Koren: *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* (2008);  
M.C. Richards: *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*, Ch. 1, "Centering as Dialogue", 9-32; Toshiko Takaezu: "A Thrown Form" (1975);  
Video: *Toshiko Takaezu: Portrait of an Artist* (YouTube)

W 10/28: Ernst Fischer, Trans. Anna Bostock: *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (1970), Chs. 1-2, "The Function of Art"; "The Origins of Art";  
Richards: *Centering*, Ch. 2, "Centering as Transformation", 33-56,  
Video: *Lee Kang-Hyo: Onggi Master* (YouTube)

**F 10/30: Course Withdrawal Deadline**

### **Week 10**

M 11/02: Fischer: *The Necessity of Art*, Ch. 3, "Art and Capitalism";  
The Situationist International, Unsigned: "The decline and fall of the spectacle-commodity economy" (1966); Larry Neal: "The Black Arts Movement" (1968); Huey P. Newton: "intercommunalism: February 1971", in *The Huey P. Newton Reader* (2002, SSP), 181-199

W 11/04: Fischer: *The Necessity of Art*, Ch. 4, "Content and Form" (up to "The Magic Cave");  
Guy Debord: "Toward a Situationist International" (1957); Lorna Simpson:  
Video installations: "Chess" (2013); "Call Waiting" (1997); "Corridor" (2003)

### **Week 11**

M 11/09: Fischer: *The Necessity of Art*, Ch. 4, "Content and Form" (finish);  
Video: *Masters of Photography: Diane Arbus* (YouTube); Video: *Mary Ellen Mark: There is nothing more extraordinary than reality* (YouTube)

**Final Paper Consultations**

W 11/11: Fischer: *The Necessity of Art*, Ch. 5, "The Loss and Discovery of Reality";  
**Final Paper Consultations**

**Week 12**

M 11/16: John Dewey: *Art as Experience*, Chs. 1-2, "The Live Creature"; "The Live Creature and 'Ethereal Things'"; *Assembly of Revolutionary Artists of Oaxaca*; De La Rosa; Schabl: *Getting Up for the People* (2014, PM), Introduction: Manifesting Visual Rebellion; "Pa'l Pueblo/For the People"; "Stand Up, Speak Up", 1-15; 69-106  
**Final Paper Consultations**

W 11/18: Dewey: *Art as Experience*, Ch. 3, "Having an Experience"; Ch. 4, "The Act of Expression"; Gerlaine Kiamco: "Revolutionary Doesn't Always Mean Armed Struggle: Identity and Art in ASARO" (Online)  
**Final Paper Consultations**

**Week 13**

M 11/23: Dewey: Ch. 5, "The Expressive Object"; Ch. 6, "Substance and Form"; Kitarō Nishida, Trans. William Haver: *Ontology of Production* (2012), "Expressive Activity", 35-63  
**Final Paper Consultations**

W 11/25: **No Classes: Thanksgiving**

**Week 14**

M 11/30: **Presentations**  
**Final Paper draft due in class.**

W 12/02: **Presentations**

**Week 15**

M 12/07: **Presentations**

W 12/09: **Presentations**

**Week 16**

\*M 12/14: **Last day of classes. Final papers due in class.**