AH2200E General Description: Why are theory and history essential to the study of the Arts and Humanities, and why do they remain vital to the study of culture in an increasingly complex global situation? This course surveys contemporary theories and historical approaches that inform research in the Arts and Humanities: Classical Studies, English, Film, French, Linguistics, Modern Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, Philosophy, Visual Arts, Writing, and Women’s Studies. We will examine how theoretical and historical approaches intersect across fields, as well as how specific fields deploy theory and history to different ends when interpreting texts, objects, and contexts. The course is structured as a selective but representative series of class modules, which will change from year to year depending the research interests of Fellows teaching in SASAH. Each module will target a specific area of historical study and/or cluster of theoretical interests. Through both course- and self-directed study, students will be encouraged to transport the historical and theoretical concerns of their home department and degree and to undertake assignments that address how theory and the study of history impact knowledge and events beyond the classroom.

This year’s focus: In Fall 2016, Prof. Mary Helen McMurran will lead a seminar with students to ask: What is beauty? What is the experience of the aesthetic? Exploring the works of philosophers, artists, poets, and critics, we will grapple with themes of absorption, contemplation, subjectivity, and disinterestedness. We will also practice contemplation— ‘mindfulness techniques”-- in class and in viewing artworks.

Participation 15%
Exhibition review 5 pgs 20%
McIntosh Gallery online contribution 10%
In-class essay test 20%
Final Essay or Creative Project (with critical reflection) 35%
Schedule

TBA: Artist Visit with Jamelie Hassan

Week 1
Plato, from The Republic*

Week 2
Plato cont’d
Jean Baudrillard, from The Precession of Simulacra

Week 3
Gallery Visit Preparation: Portraiture from Rembrandt to Cindy Sherman
Oxford Art Online Reference “Portraiture” and “Self-Portraiture”
Lauren Cornell, “Self Portraiture in the First-Person Age”

Week 4
McIntosh Gallery Visit Portraits: Self and Other (it’s complicated)
Peter Schjedahl exhibition reviews

Go again to see the exhibit on your own within the week.
Students are asked to create content (their own portraits perhaps) and commentary for a complementary virtual exhibition hosted on the McIntosh Gallery website.

Week 5
Michael Fried, From Absorption and Theatricality*
Exhibition review draft due; bring printed draft to class workshop

Week 6
Immanuel Kant, from Critique of Power of Judgment

Revised exhibition review due. Upload to OWL

Complete creative content and commentary for McIntosh exhibit

Week 7
Kant cont’d

Week 8
Charles Baudelaire, Painter of Modern Life*

Week 9
Friedrich Nietzsche, Dionysian Vision of the World
Robert Morris, “Dark Passage”*
Essay/Project topics and preparation

Week 10
Nietzsche cont’d
In-class essay test on theories from Plato to Nietzsche (open book)

Week 11
Elaine Scarry, On Beauty and Being Just*
Essay/Project topics and preparation

Week 12
Rainer-Marie Rilke, selected poems*
Essay/Project topics and preparation

Week 13 Conclusions

Andy Warhol, Details of Renaissance Paintings (Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 1482), 1984
Required texts:

The remainder of the course texts are PDFs available on OWL. * indicates those I will print for you. You are required to print the others and bring to class. In addition, purchase:

Policies

No laptops allowed in class. No tablet or cell phone use during class.

All written work will be submitted electronically only on OWL. Your will is also submitted to turnitin, the plagiarism checking site.

Plagiarism is a serious breach of academic honesty and punishment will be as severe as possible. Papers will be submitted using WebCT OWL and will go through the plagiarism checking software turnitin.com. Students are required to pass both term work and the final examination in order to receive credit for any course in the Department of English.

See: http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrad/info-for-students.html#plagiarism

Late papers are unacceptable, except in extenuating circumstances. No work will be accepted after the end of classes.

Your final grade will be adversely affected by more than two absences this term.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation as soon as possible.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.