

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2009-2010

Philosophy 3991F: German Aesthetics
(cross-listed as German 3301)

Fall Term 2011

W 1:30-2:30 F12:30-2:30

SH 3305

Instructor: Corey W. Dyck

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Philosophical interest in the nature and significance of art goes back (at least) to Plato and Aristotle, yet the term ‘aesthetics’ was first used to denote a distinct area of philosophical investigation by a German philosopher—Alexander Baumgarten—in the 18th century. Since then, German philosophers have been unique in devoting considerable attention to the topics of aesthetics, including the nature of aesthetic sensibility, the character of our judgments of the beautiful and the sublime and the origin and the significance of the art work itself. The course will trace the development of German aesthetics beginning with the early rationalism of Leibniz, Wolff, Baumgarten, Lessing and Mendelssohn. We will then consider the Kantian revolution in aesthetics with the 3rd Critique, and its development through Schiller. Finally, we will look at post-Kantian discussions in aesthetics, including some of the contributions of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

This course presupposes no previous familiarity with the authors or texts covered, nor does it require any background in art history.

TEXTS

*Required**

Moses Mendelssohn. Philosophical Writings. Cambridge UP, 1999.

Friedrich Nietzsche. The Birth of Tragedy. Cambridge UP, 2000.

J.M. Bernstein, ed. Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics. Cambridge UP, 2006.

(I will supply other readings by Leibniz, Mendelssohn, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger via WebCT.)

*NB: Students taking this class as German 3301 will be expected to consult German primary source material (and I will provide access to these)

Recommended

Fred Beiser. Diotima’s Children. Oxford UP, 2009.

OBJECTIVES

Students completing this course successfully will (1) be familiar with the thought of some of the most important philosophers of the 18th century (2) have demonstrated an ability to digest complex philosophical arguments and present them effectively, and (3) be able to write concise argumentative papers exhibiting research competence.

REQUIREMENTS

Participation	15%
Presentation*	15%
Short Expository Paper	30%
Argumentative Paper	40%

* NB: For those students taking this course as German 3301, the basis for your presentation will be an untranslated German text (which I will supply).

POLICIES

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes. The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus cannot be used as grounds of appeal.