Beauty and the Beholder:

Francophone Arts and Literatures (19th-20th century)

**Course Number**: 50:420:391:01

Fall 2013

**Instructor:** Dr. Alisa Belanger

**Office Hours:** TBD

**Telephone:** (856) 225-6126

**Email:** alisa.belanger@rutgers.edu

**Course Description**.

This course will explore how aesthetics were re-conceptualized by major movements in 19th and 20th century Francophone arts and literatures. It will focus on the reception of innovative art forms by various “beholders,” ranging from critics to the general public, who have defined and analyzed beauty in different ways over time. In particular, we will examine how artists and writers moved away from writing about art or illustrating texts, toward a broader interdisciplinary reflection on how the visual and verbal combine in contemporary aesthetic experience. In this light, we will question the cultural shifts over the course of the 20th century known as the “linguistic turn” and the “pictorial turn.”

Students will analyze various genres (drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, film, installation art, etc.) by key figures in the artistic and literary fields (Hugo, Balzac, Rodin, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Léger, Picasso, Césaire, Sénac, Saint Phalle, Calle, etc.). Special attention will be paid to the social and historical contexts influencing collaborative groups (Dadaists, Surrealists, Cobra, Aouchem), as well as changing representations of gender, ethnicity, religion, and national belonging. How does the socio-historical context and subject position of the “beholder” influence his or her notions of beauty? How does art history and literary criticism broaden and deepen our understanding of aesthetics?

**Course Materials**.

Required: Museum visits: Philadelphia Museum of Art,

The Barnes Foundation, and The Rodin Museum

Recommended:MOMA!

**Learning Objectives**:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

* Identify major aesthetic movements of the 19th and 20th century
* Use critical analysis to examine visual and verbal arts, as well as their relationships
* Discuss these forms of cultural production using discipline-specific terminology
* Explain the specificity of the Francophone field of cultural production in global context
* Write research-based analysis of a work or group of works based on aesthetics and content

**Course requirements**:

Participation: 20%

Homework: 20%

Quizzes and Midterm: 20%

Analytical Papers (2): 20%

Research Paper: 20%

**Class Participation**.

Your attendance and *active*participation is critical in order to share another perspective with your colleagues. It is not only important for your participation grade (20%), but also for the dynamics of the class and your learning as a group.

You should arrive prepared to *participate actively* in discussion. I expect you to speak to each other as much as you speak to me. In particular, try to build on interpretations that we have developed in earlier meetings, as sustained discussion will allow you to draw deeper comparisons between works and develop a more coherent understanding of the material. I *will* call on you, guaranteed.

**Attendance Policy**.

For every four (2) times you arrive more than 5 minutes late to class, you will be assessed one (1) unexcused absence.  **After the first two (2) absences not justified by a note from the Dean of Students or a medical excuse signed by a doctor, your final grade will be reduced by 10%; thereafter, for each unjustified absence, it will be further reduced by another 10%.**

Any absence from a quiz or test must be documented by a medical excuse, or by a note from the Dean of Students in the case of a non-medical emergency.

**Quizzes and Midterm**.

You will receive verbal (quizzes) or written guidelines (midterm) describing each in-class assessment in advance. They will be posted on Sakai and discussed in class. All assessments will be cumulative.

**Papers**.

During the semester, you will write two papers and revise them based on my comments. Your final grade on each paper may improve or decline by up to 5% based on the quality of the revisions. Your papers should all be typed in double-spaced format on a computer with at least 1” margins on all sides and include a cover page with a title. I will not correct single-spaced work.

These papers will include two analytical papers on a selected topic (5-7 pages). In addition, you will write a final research paper on independent reading, based on resources offered to help you as well as those of your own choosing (7-8 pages). Detailed assignments will be posted on Sakai along with the grading rubrics used to evaluate them.

**Academic Integrity**.

All written assignments that you hand in for class must represent your own original work. You must credit every single thought or quotation taken from course materials and outside sources, including the Internet. Remember that websites do not automatically fall under the category of “general knowledge” and that I use Google, too! If you are uncertain how to cite a specific type of resource or have limited experience using references, **feel free to contact me for help at any time**.

Consequences for Academic Integrity violations have been outlined by Rutgers-Camden: <http://www.camden.rutgers.edu/RUCAM/Academic-Integrity-Policy.php>.

**Course Outline**

Week 1: Romanticism - Drawing

Class 1/ *Ut pictura poësis* - Historical conceptions of verbal-visual relationships

Class 2/ Writers as artists - Hugo’s sketches, text by author (TBD)

Week 2: Orientalism - Painting

Class 1/ Artists inspired by literature - Delacroix, The Death of Sardanapalus

Class 2/ Female subjects - Gustave Moreau, Salomé paintings; Flaubert, “Hérodias”

Week 3: Realism/Naturalism - Sculpture

Class 1/ Descriptive Writing - Balzac, “The Atheist’s Mass”

Class 2/ Monumental Art - Rodin, Statue(s) of Balzac; Rodin Museum

Week 4: Impressionism/Modernism - Criticism

Class 1/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (excerpts), “Correspondences”

Class 2/ Impressionists: Constantin Guys, Monet, Manet, etc. ; The Barnes

**Paper 1 Due**

Week 6: Simultaneism/Futurism - Architecture

Class 1/ The Eiffel Tower and World’s Fair (1889)

Class 2/ Apollinaire, *Caligrammes* (a few); Cendrars and Delaunay, *Prose of the Transsiberian*

Week 7: Dadaism / Cubism – Puns and Play

Class 1/ Dada poem(s)/ Marcel Duchamp and Robert Desnos - Rrose Sélavy

Class 2/ Fernand Léger and the Modern City (expo) at Philadelphia Museum of Art

Week 8: Dadaism/ Surrealism - Film

Class 1/ Léger, *Mechanical Ballet* (1924)

Class 2/ Cocteau, *The Blood of a poet* (1930)

Week 9: Surrealism - Artists’ books

Class 1/ Paul Eluard and Man Ray, *Facile* [in English translation](1935);

Eluard and Léger, *Liberty, I write your name* (1953)

Class 2/ Picasso, Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907), etc.

Aimé Césaire, *Lost Body* (excerpts and illustrations)

**Paper 2 Due**

Week 10: Surrealism/Post-surrealism – Words in/as Images

Class 1/ Magritte on the image-text relationship; Saussurian semiotics

Class 2/ COBRA as “transversal artists”; Dotremont (logograms)

Week 11: Postcolonialism - Recycling

Class 1/ Symbolism revisited - Arthur Rimbaud, “Vowels,” recycled by Jean Sénac

Class 2/ Surrealism reconsidered – Aouchem, art group in Algeria

**Research paper topic and outline due**

Week 12: Post-avant-gardes - Performance Art

Class 1/ Stéphane Mallarmé and Marcel Broodthaers, *A Throw of the Dice...* (1969)

W.J. T. Mitchel, *Picture Theory* (excerpts)

Class 2/ Yves Klein (Blue Women Art) and Niki de Saint Phalle (Shooting, Nanas)

Week 13: Postcolonial - Photography

Class 1/ Barthes, *Camera lucida* (excerpts), photographs

Class 2/ Women photographers : Hélène Amouzou, Patrizia Maimouna Guerresi,

Majida Khattari, Zineb Sedira, etc.

**Research Paper First Draft Due**

Week 14: (Post-)Feminism - Installation art

Class 1/ Louise Bourgeois; *Sainte Sébastienne II* from Editions Roselin

Class 2/ Sophie Calle and autofiction

Week 15: Final Presentations