

Seminar in Beauty Honors Program, Fall 2019

Instructors:

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Office hours:

Heather: Mondays 1-3, Tuesdays 2-3, Wednesdays 2-3 in ARTS 375
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In such ugly times, the only true protest is beauty.

---Phil Ochs

When I am working on a problem, I never think about beauty. I only think about how to solve the problem. But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong.

---R. Buckminster Fuller

I shall be pleading the cause of beauty before a heart which is as fully sensible of her power as it is prompt to act upon it, a heart which, in an inquiry where one is bound to invoke feelings no less often than principles, will relieve me of the heaviest part of my labors.

---Fredrick Von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1765

The Honors Seminars are designed to provide you with an interdisciplinary exposure to some of the fundamental ideas around which humanity's understanding of arts, sciences, and philosophies have developed. To that end, our goal is to expose you to:

- Readings, artwork, music, and conversations that have been critical to building these concepts and questions over the last centuries
- A classical education, which will prove interesting and ultimately useful no matter the course of study you choose for your major
- The skills necessary to understand, thoughtfully critique, and intelligently discuss complex material from diverse sources.

In our particular course, we will investigate and discuss the concept of beauty. What does it mean to say that something is beautiful, or to say that one finds something beautiful? Are judgments of beauty merely subjective, and if so, why are they so important to us? Should we be suspicious of other people's claims

about beauty, or of our own? Is beauty a sign of moral goodness, or of any sort of goodness? Is beauty worth pursuing? Is 'beautiful' still a useful term in the discourse of art criticism, or should it be jettisoned, as some writers have argued? How, if at all, does the human capacity to create or appreciate beauty relate to other character traits that have been classified as virtues?

We will investigate the concept of beauty from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Philosophy, art history, biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other academic fields all have important things to say about what beauty is, what it has been taken to be, and the roles that beauty plays and has played in human life.

CLASS FORMAT

On Mondays at 4pm, our course will meet in a large group. The structure of those meetings will vary, but will include elements of lecture, interviewing an expert, discussion panels, films, small group, and independent work. On Wednesdays at 4pm, *most of the time*, we will meet in our small groups (occasionally we will have a special event or speaker). The small groups will be primarily focused on open discussion of course material, writing assignments, short films, etc. In both small and large group you are expected to be an active, informed participant. This means coming prepared **HAVING DONE THE READING** and ready to contribute intelligently to course discussions.

DAILY INVOCATION

It is difficult
to get the news from poems,
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

---*William Carlos Williams*

As a moment of invocation and reflection, we would like to begin each class with a poem. We will bring the poems the first few days of class; after that, I will ask for each of you to take a turn bringing in **AND** reading aloud a published poem of the day. Recitation of poems from memory (10 or more lines) will reflect positively in your participation grade.

Please use the following websites for poetry ideas (if you have other ideas, please check in with Heather first)

<http://poems.com/>

<http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/>

<http://www.poets.org/>

<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

<http://www.poetryoutloud.org/>

<http://www.poetrytranslation.org/poems> (really good for poems from other languages!)

REQUIRED TEXTS AND SUPPLIES

- **Beauty Notebooks: DO NOT LOSE THESE! They will not be replaceable!** We are furnishing you with the materials for your Beauty Notebook. Do not purchase a notebook for our class at this time.

- **Set of colored pencils** (*kindly not pens, please, as they bleed on the page...*). If you think you will use them for other classes/drawing, invest in the Prismacolor, Lyra or Stockmar, pencils at Ellis Art Supply as they are totally worth it.
- **Coursepack, available at Mr. Kopy on 119 Main Street. Approximate cost \$60.00**
- **Approx. \$40-80 for Final Project supplies and approx \$10 for the 1-2 films at the Pageant**

DATES TO SAVE (IMPERATIVE!)

There are several dates you will need to save for our class, mandatory and non-negotiable. If you have class during this time, one of us will email your professor to make arrangements for your absence.

December 5th FINAL TIME: Final Project Gallery Opening, ARTS Building, Collaborative Space, 2nd floor, 6-8pm

Our class will be viewing 1-2 films at the Pageant Theatre, Dates TBA

GE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Student Learning Outcomes for our General Education program flow from the recognition of essential intellectual and practical skills that are the foundation of a high-quality General Education program. These include effective written and oral communication, critical thinking, and mathematical reasoning skills.

1. Critical Thinking: You will learn to:

- Identify issues and problems found in written texts and audio-visual media;
- Assess the relevance, adequacy and credibility of arguments and evidence used in reaching conclusions;
- Formulate and investigate questions raised by readings and draw well-reasoned conclusions about claims made therein.

2. Excellence in Written Communication: You will learn to *effectively* demonstrate the ability to formulate ideas through writing appropriate to the intended audience. **Expect to:**

- Read widely;
- Write often;
- Revisit multiple drafts of specific assignments;
- Actively participate in giving and receiving substantive peer commentary as you work;
- Incorporate instructor input into your final polished writing projects for the class;
- Use interesting, varied language, imaginative writing, and have a willingness to break from the rote formulaic approach to assignments.

3. Creativity: You will be expected to:

- Take intellectual risks

- Apply novel approaches to varied domains.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND WISHFUL OUTCOMES

Honors Beauty is intended to expose you to some of the diverse cultural, philosophical, scientific, and historical traditions that have helped shape the context in which humans have begun to understand and think about questions of beauty. Because our course in Beauty is in the Writing Intensive Area of the GE curriculum, it is intended to challenge you with university level writing, reading, and critical thinking. Our section of Honors will ask you to read and write *a lot*—to examine complex issues and questions that have relevance for the time in which we live. Higher education is a place for you to see yourself not only as a cog in the ever-turning wheels of work, family, school, finances, etc., but also to consider your role and responsibility to respond to the larger discussions and concerns of our time. Art, music, film, literature, poetry, and essays will all be considered for our study in this class. The reading will, on occasion, be difficult. It is important to not be afraid of the difficulty, but to imagine it as a challenge. Prepare to read deeply, write widely, and re-envision, re-imagine, and revise your work with attention to genre, form, content, voice, tone, audience, beauty, grace, and style.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Make Your Beauty Notebook

For Further Thought Essay (FFT) (up to 30 points each week)

Cultural Event Write Up (50 points each, 200 pts total/ 4 per semester)

Literature Paper (approx. 200 points)

Reading Quizzes (approx. 100 points)

Vocabulary (approx. 135 points, graded by small group leaders)

Beauty Seminar Project (approx. 200 points, graded by all group leaders)

Reflective Essay (50 points)

Attendance & Participation (approx. 100 points, graded by small group leaders)

BEAUTY NOTEBOOKS

You will make your own notebook (see DIY Beauty Notebook Assignment). You are highly encouraged to use your Beauty Notebook (BNB) for entries not directly connected to particular readings, recording and expressing your ongoing thinking about beauty, class notes (!) artwork, etc. Some of these informal entries may be prompted by in-class discussions. Others may be prompted by experiences unconnected with class, or perhaps by nothing at all. Thoughtfulness, risk, imagination, and effort will all be taken into account as commonplace entries are graded.

You should also use your BNB to jot down and develop your thinking about your end-of-semester project.

You will need to bring your Beauty Notebook to class *every day*, as we will make frequent checks to see that your work is both thorough and current. The writing and art assignments will be a large part of our assignment sequence throughout the semester. For readability purposes, please do not write with colored ink.

Your Beauty Notebook will be used for art activities in class, collecting artifacts of beauty and for your research and development (notes and sketches) of your final project, for your philosophical explorations of beauty, and a place for you to do the Vocabulary Assignment.

Your penmanship need not be remarkable, but it must be *readable!* We reserve the right to do a “send-back” with subsequent point deductions if the writing is impossible to read.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT ESSAYS

DUE Wednesdays Almost Weekly

1. On Friday, the week before this assignment is due on Wednesday, we will post a question FOR FURTHER THOUGHT.
2. Using ANY OF THE READINGS TO DATE, take 1-2 full journal pages (handwritten) to respond to this question.

WRITE UP of a CULTURAL EVENT

Films, Art Exhibits, Readings, Live Performances (written in your BNB, graded by small group leaders)

As an integral part of understanding beauty will come from experiences outside of the classroom, you will be expected to attend a minimum of THREE events. One must be a film from the Humanities Center Film Series or a gallery exhibition, one must be a talk, and one must be a live performance. *Due to problems in the past, these events must take place in Chico or surrounding communities.* This is a chance to learn your new home! You will be doing one to two-page write-ups for each event, in which you discuss some of the particulars of the event, analysis specific to our readings and discussions, elements you responded to, and so forth. *** See assignment for more info and SUGGESTED EVENTS TO ATTEND.

Due Dates: (to avoid all of us cramming at the end of the semester!)—see **Schedule** for due dates

Event #1: Week 7 Event #2: Week 14 Event #3: Week 16

***Event Write Ups MUST BE COMPLETED within a week of the event you attended. This means that the due dates above are the LATEST we will take these, but don't see a film October 1 and wait until midnight on the 17th to write about it!

THE LITERATURE PAPER ASSIGNMENT

You will be embarking on a reading and writing project shortly after the start of the semester. You will be reading a book from our amazing book list, and doing a shorter assignment and a longer assignment. This means you will need to finish the book you are reading by October 3rd. Book list is attached to the syllabus! You'll submit your choice by Sept 6 as a PARAGRAPH convincing me WHY YOU WANT TO READ THE PARTICULAR BOOK YOU HAVE SELECTED and listing one backup choice with reasoning. IN CASES WHERE TOO MANY STUDENTS CHOOSE THE SAME BOOK, I LOOK AT YOUR ARGUMENT FOR CHOOSING IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE TOP FOUR as I like to have a variety of books to read about at the end of the semester!

DUE DATES for LIT PAPER:

- Book Selection by September 19th
- Complete book by October 3rd
- Short Assignment Due on October 17th

- Longer Paper Due December 17th

READING QUIZZES

These will likely occur once a week, more frequently if we suspect you are not reading. Please make sure to have assigned readings done as stated in the schedule. Reading doesn't generally generate much understanding if you read superficially; it needs you to really pay attention. We will be talking some about reading strategies in class. Also, be prepared for the "Q" word. No matter how much you enjoy the material, you're more likely to keep up if there are regular quizzes on the readings. We reserve the right to give WEEKLY QUIZZES. *Quizzes and in-class writes cannot be made up due to absences!*

VOCABULARY: PROGNOSTICATOR FOR COLLEGIATE ACHIEVEMENT

Because vocabulary is so highly linked with academic success, you will be adding three words per week to your current lexicon. Studies show that one highly successful method to learning vocabulary is to create your own meaning for the word.

In the back of your Beauty Notebook (the last 8 pages or so) you will be taking space to generate a vocabulary list for yourself, centering on three new words from our readings/discussions/films per week.

This will total roughly 36 vocabulary entries by the end of the semester, worth three points each.

- You will write the word and illustrate its meaning. You can use the word itself as part of the illustration.
- You will write the origin of the word (Etymology)
- You will write a complete definition (a full sentence at least) from the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) <http://www.oed.com.mantis.csuchico.edu/> (please do not use other dictionaries; the OED is most complete)

Some students design the letters of the word in such a way that the letters themselves "show" the word's definition, others will draw a background picture that offers the meaning. You will be responsible for retaining the definitions of the words you have selected, and may be asked at the end of the term to define these words in a short quiz. The definitions will be color-illustrated with your pencils in order to best serve the memory.

THE BEAUTY SEMINAR PROJECT

As a part of the Honors community, you will be working on a project, either collaboratively or singularly, that artistically gives some rendering to some of the ideas that we have studied in our semester together. The project will consist of a written proposal, an aesthetic component for display, and an artist statement. **The projects will need to be completed by December 6th at the latest when they will go on display in Colusa Hall.** Details about this project are forthcoming, but projects will be graded on effort, seriousness, connection to course thematic, risk, and imagination.

See assignments for further details, including the **project proposal** and **artist statement**.

DUE DATES FOR BEAUTY SEMINAR PROJECT: see **Schedule** for due dates
Written Proposal Due Week 10

Beauty Project MOCK UP & material samples due Week 11

Artist Statement DRAFT due Week 12/4

Artist Statement FINAL due Week 15

Aesthetic Display FINAL due Week 15

A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Completed during finals week

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Students are **expected and required** to attend regularly and to participate in discussion. This course takes into account that there are many forms of participation, so considering factors such as attentiveness, lack of telephone/internet use in class, and engagement with the material will be measures of participation in addition to speaking in class and sharing ideas. Since one cannot participate when one is not present, there will be substantial penalties for missed classes.

Since a great deal of our thinking, writing, and discussion will occur in class, we expect everyone to be present and actively involved each day. This is not a lecture course, so your comments and questions to some extent determine the shape and direction of the course. As such, your attendance and participation is a significant requirement of this course. If you are not in class, you cannot participate, and if you are not participating, you are not completing course requirements. We ask that you arrive ready to work and to be a solid member of the class—merely showing up will not merit participation. If we have readings due, please plan to have read them and taken steps to understand them: identifying points you agreed or disagreed with, concepts that might help you in writing course papers, interesting points of departure for further research and reflection. Your final grade will reflect your level of engaged participation.

You are allowed three absences for the entire semester. This is not negotiable! Roll MAY be taken during each class.

If you incur more than three absences, your grade will drop a step with each subsequent absence (so from an A to an A-). At six absences, you will have missed a total of three whole weeks of class, and you will not be able to pass the course.

We do not differentiate between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. This is an important note. Unless you have a medically documented series of absences due to extreme circumstances (i.e., you are hospitalized), an absence is an absence. A lack of participation on your part, in group work or in class discussions, will round your final grade down, while engaged participation will round it up. **Three tardies and/or early departures will equal one absence.**

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ETIQUETTE

It is important that students feel free to express or bring up any idea they wish to discuss—including ideas that might be false, seem wacky, or possibly offend somebody. What matters is that you think it worth discussing. *The point of real dialogue and thought at the university level, especially in such a philosophical subject as beauty, is to try to get at the truth (or as near the truth as possible) and that will only happen if people are committed to free and open discussion.* The classroom, then, ought to be a

free speech zone—with one important exception: *No one, student or professor, may address another individual in an abusive manner or launch a personal attack.*

EMAILS

As we all teach many classes each semester, we receive *a lot* of emails. We would like to request that **ONLY** email us **AFTER** you have contacted at least two of your peers regarding your questions/assignments.

If you do not hear from us with an important assignment-related question within 48 hours, please resend the email in the event that it was lost.

Do not email us to tell us you will be absent from class unless you will be gone for more than two consecutive absences and you need help with work. Do not email us about your printer problems, or late work, or excuses. If you need us, find us in our office hours.

OFFICE HOURS

Please use them. Please! It is really important that you come by during the first few weeks of class and introduce yourself to us. This is your chance to share your concerns, your questions, your writing, stories about your roommates, exciting films, and entrepreneurial ideas. Bring your papers, your drafts, your notebook entries. I enjoy this time immensely! Take advantage of it. This is time we specifically set aside for helping you better understand everything from course expectations to dangling participles. If there is a long line of students, I reserve the right to restrict time and/or schedule appointments. I estimate that students who utilize office hours do about 20% better on assignments!

NOTE-TAKING

You will take notes with your hand! By hand! There are many studies that tell us how much more you retain if you take your own notes. If you have an accommodation for computer note taking, please send your ARC information to your Small Group Leader immediately.

READING

Reading! Do it. DOOO it. It is critical to your success in the class. All of the readings are chosen with purpose and a great deal of thought---this is why we don't use a standardized and impersonal textbook! Sometimes you will not love the reading we do. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger! Sometimes the reading will surprise you with how engaging and interesting it is—be open to that! Rather than avoid readings that seem difficult, we will develop strategies both in class and in our text for understanding the work. To this end, when you read, we highly recommend that you take notes in the margins, underline with your colored pencils, highlight.

WRITING AND REVISION

Successful writers are not the ones who write the best sentences. They are the ones who keep writing. ~ Bonnie Friedman

Writing is an extension of our thoughts and conversations; it is the place where we enter into debates and state our sense of the issues at hand. Our sense of things is always deepening and developing, and so should our writing. Plan to revise your work extensively during our time together with the aim of

creating work that is not only complete, but beautiful in form and thought. We will frequently read each other's writing and offer feedback and support. Students often feel as though they don't have the authority to comment on their fellow students' writing, but we will work throughout the course to show how, as writers, we don't need to be "experts"; we just need to be open to sharing ideas and reading with care.

A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined as "the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft" (<http://www.oed.com.mantis.csuchico.edu/>; accessed 31 July 2016). It is a complex subject, and ***YOUR ARE STRONGLY ADVISED*** to review the university policy at <http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml>. There are many kinds of plagiarism, which range from buying papers off the internet to improper paraphrasing of sources. The first kind is unacceptable for obvious reasons; if you plagiarize someone else's writing you will automatically fail the course and face possible expulsion from the university. The second kind is trickier, and we will briefly cover the art of paraphrase and citation in class. We are very, very, very cautious about plagiarism and treat it with the utmost of seriousness. If you feel at all confused, please schedule an appointment for office hours. A proactive stance will prevent the kind of desperation that plagiarism--or other forms of poor academic conduct--indicates. Please see the last pages of the syllabus for a more complete definition of plagiarism.

RULES TO LIVE BY

Our classroom is a community, one that will form from your attentions to each other and your work. To that end, here is **OUR CELL PHONE AND COMPUTER POLICY:**

WE DO NOT PERMIT CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS, OR OTHER DEVICES OF ANY SORT DURING OUR CLASS. PERIOD.

Was that clear? We hope so!!

This means that BEFORE YOU ARRIVE TO CLASS, you will store your phone, TURNED OFF and stored in your backpack/purse, etc. which will be zipped/closed and placed under your desk for the duration of the class.

This means that as soon as you enter the door of our classroom (large and small groups both) you will actually **TALK TO THE PEOPLE IN OUR CLASS** rather than your friends, family, etc. who are NOT IN OUR CLASS. Or, you can sit quietly and read. Or draw. You can braid daisies, or knit socks, or paint rocks, but you will not have your phone out in our classroom. Period.

If you are seen with your phone, and since we will know your names in short time, we will both A) ask you to leave class immediately for the day, incurring an absence, and B) will knock five points off your final participation grade.

If you have an emergency and may need to receive a text or call, notify us at the beginning of class. We can accommodate this on an as-needed basis.

FOUR CONVERSATIONS YOUR PROFESSORS DO NOT PARTICULARLY ENJOY

- 1) *I was absent. Did I miss anything?* (Um, when you weren't here, we all called it a day and went home! Silly! But check with a classmate or with me *during office hours* if you are behind!)
- 2) *Can I do extra-credit to make up for my absences and missing or substandard work?* (No! Usually professors would rather you work hard on the assignments still to come in the course—think onward and upward, and don't dig yourself into any dark and inescapable tunnels)
- 3) *I have always done well in my other classes. I feel I should be getting a good grade in this class, too.* (unfortunately, this argument is flawed for innumerable reasons). You're here on your own new merits—isn't that totally cool, though?
- 4) *I have a lot of work/extracurricular commitments/other classes. Can't you make an exception for my late work?* I'm usually so good at school! (Goodness, that's hard. We all go through busy times. But we do not adjust grades based on work that you *might* do if you weren't so busy! If something truly awful comes up, talk to us, but overscheduling yourself won't warrant major shifts in your class situation.

Trying to talk to your professors if we are setting up class at the beginning when we are trying to focus our energy on getting ready, or when we are clearly needing to depart from class at the end for other classes/ obligations in our day can be difficult for us. This is what our office hours are for!

GRADING POLICIES

NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED. PERIOD.

Work is late if not submitted at the *beginning* of class on the scheduled date.

Trouble with a computer or printer does not excuse late work.

DO NOT ASK for an extension. This really, really, really annoys us.

The Honors Program grades courses on an A through F scale.

Here are some associations for you with each stratum of grade:

A work: “A” work is generally associated with *exemplary, stellar, original, extraordinary, thought-provoking, engaged, of artisanal quality*. An “A” is *truly remarkable, shiny, graceful, boastworthy, and amazing*. In other words, you totally rock.

B work: “B” work is generally associated with *“above and beyond,” with some, but not all, of the above qualities, above average, to stand out on occasion, to be worthy of recognition*. You are, on occasion, *outstanding*, at other times, perhaps, *doing perfectly better than average*. **Newsflash! A “B” is a good grade.**

C work: “C” work is average. That means that you have done *competent work*. *You have done what has been asked of you, but rarely stretched toward something more*. You have, perhaps, *missed more class than you first intended*. Your work (not you, of course!) is *regular, ordinary, and meets minimum assignment criteria*. Remembering that a “C” is average is helpful. It means *everything is okay*.

D work: “D” work fails to meet the minimum criteria for the course. Perhaps on occasion, you did great work, when you did it. Perhaps you did only a handful of assignments. When you receive a “D,” it means that I cannot, in good conscience, tell my colleagues in other courses that you were ready or

willing to undertake more difficult reading and writing. A “D” can also indicate a lack of commitment to the attendance policy.

F work: A failing grade is just that---you failed! Perhaps you forgot you enrolled in the class? Maybe your work did not indicate that you were very present for the experience of reading and writing. Perhaps it was a very rough time in your life. Trying not to get an F is always a good idea. Remember, though, that it is your *work* that is being assessed—not you, not your potential, and not your past performance in other academic endeavors.

If you have concerns or questions about your grade, come to office hours. Come *before* things are dire, before the end of the semester, when it is often too late to make substantive improvement! If you notice a grade that you received is NOT posted on Blackboard, please call our attention to it!

An important note: Lately we have noticed a high increase in grade negotiations. Since we are meticulous and careful during the grading process, we very rarely, if ever, reconsider grades at the end of the semester. Please pay attention to your work and grades during the course of the semester and come to our office hours if you are struggling rather than try to haggle your way upward at the end of the term!

CHICO STATE NON-DISCLOSURE POLICY

The California State University System does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, color, religion, or national origin. The CSU complies with both the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the American Disabilities Act (1990). If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at CSU, Chico, please talk with me or call the Accessibility Resources Center (ARC) (x5959). For other concerns about discrimination or harassment, please talk with me, your advisor or department chair, or Student Judicial Affairs (x6897).

THE STUDENT LEARNING CENTER

The Student Learning Center provides an opportunity to talk with writing assistants about the work you are doing for this and other classes. They are located on the third floor of the new Student Services Building (SSC 340). You can reach them by phone, 530-898-6839, or by email: slc@csuchico.edu