

OF BEAUTY AND VIOLENCE

Fall 2022

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Lecture: Tuesdays 2:30-5:20pm

Office: Chester New Hall 502
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Course Description

What is the place of beauty in human experience and how does it find articulation in words? Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course explores the unexpected expressions and uses of beauty in a variety of social and ethnographic contexts marked by violence. We trace the potential of beauty to act at times as a counterweight to violence, sociopolitical crises, and marginalization, but also how it may be used to deepen already existing power structures. This is a writing-intensive course aimed at developing students' ethnographic writing skills.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of historical debates about the place of beauty in human experience
- Reflect on the place of beauty in your own life
- Think critically about the relationship between beauty and violence in cross-cultural perspective
- Apply the ethnographic sensibilities of anthropology to thinking about the place of beauty in precarious contexts

Required Materials and Texts

Biehl, João, and Torben Eskerod. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. University of California Press, 2013.

Available Here: https://campusstore.mcmaster.ca/cgi-mcm/ws/txsub.pl?wsTERMG1=224&wsDEPTG1=ANTHROP&wsCOURSEG1=3LL3&wsSECTIONG1=DAY%20C01&crit_cnt=1

All other readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

Weekly lectures will be held in person in KTH 104. Classes will be a mix of lecture-based content and class discussions. These discussions will be based on the assigned readings/content for the week.

Course Evaluation – Overview

Regular and thoughtful participation in class discussion – 20%

Assignment #1: Reflection – 20%

Assignment #2: Ethnography – 25%

Final project plus presentation – 35%

Course Evaluation – Details

Regular and thoughtful participation in class discussion – 20%

Please come to class prepared for a vigorous discussion of the weekly readings. You will need to have access to a printed or electronic copy of the readings during class. Every class session will be a combination of lecture and discussion, and it will be the responsibility of each of you to contribute

Assignment #1: Reflection, 20% of grade, October 4th, 2022 – the first assignment will broadly engage with a personal experience of a sight of beauty and its importance to you, in conversation with the course readings.

Assignment #2: Ethnography plus Fieldnotes, 25% of grade, Fieldnotes (5%) due October 27th

Ethnography (20%) Due November 10th 2022 – you will be asked to observe and make ethnographic fieldnotes on exhibit, exhibition, display etc. that encompasses a certain phenomenon of beauty enmeshed in violence. These notes must be based strictly on your observation of the exhibit and may **not** include

observations of people. You must engage in detail with beauty and violence looking at colors, sounds, or textures etc. Then you will incorporate the fieldnotes into a paper that engages with the readings we've done until then.

Final project plus presentation - 35% of grade total. Presentation (10% of grade) in Week 10 or 12; final project (25% of grade) due December 8th, 2022. Ideally, I would like you to have a topic you are interested in working on from the beginning of class or are inspired to pursue one through the readings and first assignments. It can start out by being very broad: painting, dance, poetry, music, photography, theater, etc. Eventually, you would have to narrow it down. You can begin exploring aspects of your final project in the first couple of assignments; or you may choose the first assignments to be independent of the final project. You will be expected to do a short presentation on the final project in Weeks 11, 12, 13, 14. While the first two assignments are written, I also welcome and encourage final projects that use a variety of genre and mediums –standard research paper (10 pages), ethnography, blog, project proposal, poem, painting, short story, short movie, theater play script, etc. Given the nature of the topic – beauty, – which as we will discuss, is sometimes seen as “beyond words,” it is only appropriate for the final project to make creative use of a variety of mediums of expression. I encourage you to meet with me well in advance to discuss the project and determine its parameters.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (September 6th)

Introduction

Week 2 (September 13th): Beauty

Sontag, Susan. “An Argument about Beauty.” *Daedalus* 131, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 21–26

Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton University Press, 2013. (Excerpts)

Week 3 (September 20th): Violence

Farmer, Paul. "On suffering and structural violence: A view from below." *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996): 261-283.

Das, Veena. “The Event and the Everyday” (1-17) and “Boundaries, Violence, and the Work of Time” (79-94) in *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*

Week 4 (September 27th): Beauty, Conflict, and Memory

Saunders, N. (2003). *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (1st ed.). Chapter 2 “What is Trench Art”

Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust. Shelly Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Ed.) Chapter 7 *Caught By Images: Visual Imprints in Holocaust Testimonies*, Ernst Van Alphen pg97-113

From *The New York Times*: An Orchestra Supports Ukraine, and Reunites a Couple Parted by War:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/arts/music/ukraine-war-orchestra-refugees.html?smid=em-share>

Week 5 (October 4th): Politics: Assignment 1 Due 11:59pm

The photos that have defined the war in Ukraine:

<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2022/05/world/ukraine-war-photographers-cnnphotos/>

Mikkelsen, S., & Kornfield, S. (2021). Girls Gone Fundamentalist: Feminine Appeals of White Christian Nationalism. *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 44(4), 563–585.

Week 6 (October 11)

Reading Week: No Class

Week 7 (October 18th) Biopolitics

Jarrín, Alvaro. "Towards a biopolitics of beauty: Eugenics, aesthetic hierarchies and plastic surgery in Brazil." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 24, no. 4 (2015): 535-552.

Lieu, Nhi T. 2011. *American Dream in Vietnamese*, University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 3: Pageantry and Nostalgia: Beauty Contests and the Gendered Homeland pg.88-107

Week 8 (October 25) Ethics- No In Person Class:

Fieldnotes Due 11:59 pm.

The Salt of the Earth / Le sel de la terre. 2014. Mongrel Media Inc. (1h 50min)

https://media3-criterionpiccom.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/htbin/wwform/006?T=MON2028&ALIAS=MON2028_EN.KF&M=0_hc5_wdwph&DSTYLE=0#multimedia_resources_MON2028

You will be required to submit a short-written reflection on the film. More details on Avenue to Learn

Week 9 (November 1st) Protest and Social Change

Readings: Pérez-Rosario, V. (2018). On Beauty and Protest.

Note: Please listen to the following songs and take notes ready to discuss their meanings and historical context. It is strongly encouraged that you take a few minutes to read up on each song to help you understand when they were written and why. Consider not only the historical context but also the life of the artist and how their own personal experiences with beauty and violence might have led them to create these songs.

(Audio) "Strange Fruit" Billie Holiday 3min 3 sec https://search-alexanderstreet-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Crecorded_cd%7C713894

(Audio) "We Shall Overcome" (sung by Pete Seeger) 4min 42sec

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kfo_W73n0hE

(Audio) "Mississippi Goddam" Nina Simone. 4min 41sec

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ25-U3jNWM>

(Audio) "The Times They Are a-Changing" Bob Dylan 3min 14sec

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90WD_ats6eE

(Audio) "Zombie" The Cranberries- 5min 7 sec

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ejga4kJUts>

(Audio) "The Unknown Soldier" The Doors 3min 22sec

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LSCoBk8hgU>

Week 10 (November 8th) Abandonment

Assignment 2 due November 8th 11:59 pm

Vita part 1

Week 11 (November 15) Student Presentations

Vita Part 2

Week 12 (November 22) Student Presentations

Vita Part 3

Week 13 (November 29) Student Presentations

Vita Part 4

Week 14 (December 6th) Student Presentations
All Final projects due by December 6th 11:59 Pm

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All work will be submitted electronically to Avenue To Learn drop box. Please submit all written work in PDF or Word format prior to the posted deadline. All written work is subject to evaluation for originality. This course uses an evaluation service provided by Turnitin.com.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Turning assignments in late will lead to a cascading problem for yourself, and your instructor. However, I understand that we are all dealing with pressures that go beyond the classroom. If you need extra time to complete an assignment, please contact me by email at least 48 hours before the assignment is due (not counting holidays and weekends). Failure to do so will result in 10 percentage points off your assignment grade per each calendar day or part thereof if the assignment is late. Assignments will not be accepted after 7 calendar days beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Social Sciences.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Attending class and actively participating is an essential component of your grade. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. If you know that you will not be able to attend class due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, please notify me prior to class to avoid the absence affecting your grade.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class.
2. Return of materials to students during office hours.
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail.
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ADVISORY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**. It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”: <https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=9020#requests-for-relief-for-missed-academic-term-work>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors. The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.