

Critical Art: The Philosophy of Modernism
SAIC ARTHI 4703-001 Fall 2008 MC 816 Fridays 1 - 4 PM
Instructor: Christopher Cutrone

9/12/08

Course title: Critical Art: The Philosophy of Modernism

Instructor: Chris Cutrone (e-mail: ccutrone@speedsite.com), office hours by appointment

Course description:

Several questions are paradigmatic for the study of 19th and 20th (and now 21st) Century art, including: How might we understand and explain modern art's increasingly radical practices? How does subjectivity become the critical object of diverse artistic practices? How does "art" itself emerge as a specifically modern and critical category of aesthetics? Readings range from late 18th - early 19th Century philosophers Kant, Schiller and Hegel, through Nietzsche's criticism of the values of social and aesthetic modernity (for which the opposition of Bizet's *Carmen* to Wagner's *Parsifal* reveals the crisis and bad faith), to 20th Century critics of modern art and society Lukács and Adorno, as attempts to grasp the emergence of modernism in art, the peculiarities of modern artistic practices and the critical possibilities of their subjectivity to the present. Poetry by Wordsworth and Celan provide framing and contrasting (early 19th and late 20th Century) examples for considering the subjectivity for modern art.


Course requirements and grading policy:

This is an advanced, discussion-based undergraduate and graduate course organized as a seminar that meets once per week. Attendance is mandatory; no unexcused absences are allowed.

This course is **Socratic** in method. Class participation consists of student **attendance** and **discussion**. Students volunteer for **10-15 minute** class **presentations** of the readings to lead discussion of them, consisting of **outlines** of the texts **to be handed out** in class, critical reactions beyond summary overview, and focusing on 2 or 3 passages from the text(s) to discuss in depth. Student presentation outlines will be emailed to me before class for photocopying. I will write my feedback to student presenters after class. All students will be expected to attend every class session and bring one or two written reaction questions for each of the assigned readings. Student reactions to the readings (presentations and reaction questions) will guide the class discussions.

The evaluation of student performance in the course will consist of 3 components:

1. Attendance and class discussion participation: **15%** (~1% per class session)
2. In-class presentations on readings (2 or more per student, depending on enrollment): **60%**
3. Writing assignments: **1** of 3 short papers (4-5 double-spaced pages or ~1,000 words): **25%**

Course readings: books  [* required / - recommended]

- * Kant, *The Critique of Judgment (CJ)* [Prometheus, 2000: ISBN 1573928372]
- Schiller, *Essays* (including *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, "Concerning the Sublime," etc.) [Continuum, 1993: ISBN 0826407137]
- Wordsworth, *The Prelude* [Penguin, 1996: ISBN 0140433694]
- or- *The Major Works* [Oxford, 2000: ISBN 0192840444]
- * Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* [Penguin, 1994: ISBN 014043335X]
- * Nietzsche, *Basic Writings (BW)* [trans. Kaufmann; Modern Lib., 2000: ISBN 0679783393]
- * Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* [MIT, 1974: ISBN 0262620278]
- Paul Celan, *Selections* (ed. and Introduction, "Polysemy without Mask" by Pierre Joris) [California, 2005: ISBN 0520241681]
- * Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory (AT)* [Minnesota, 1998: ISBN 0816618003]

Additional readings will be available at <http://docutek.artic.edu> (password: "critical"):  

Course schedule: Critical Art: The Philosophy of Modernism (Fall 2008), Fridays 1 - 4 PM
School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 112 S. Michigan Ave., room 816

Preliminary readings: Summer 2008

- 📖 Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795), and “Concerning the Sublime” (1801), in *Essays* [Continuum, 1993], 179-260, and 70-85
- 📖 Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (the 1798, 1799, and 1805 texts) [Penguin, 1996]; or, in *The Major Works* (including *The Prelude* [1805]) [Oxford, 2000], 375-590
- 📖 Paul Celan, *Selections* [California, 2005]

Week 1: Introduction: modernism and the social concerns of art for the present 8/29/08

- 📖🔗 Hamza Walker [profile of contemporary art curator in Aug. 2005 *Univ. Chicago Magazine*]
- * 📖🔗 Susan Buck-Morss, response to “Visual Culture Questionnaire,” in *October* 77 (1996)
- * 📖🔗 Robert Pippin, on Critical Theory, in *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2003)

[supplemental readings (1): Modernism and social modernity]

- 📖🔗 Robert Pippin, “What Was Abstract Art? From the Point of View of Hegel,” in *Critical Inquiry* 29 (Autumn 2002), 1-24 [1]
- 📖🔗 Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” in *Partisan Review* 7 (1940), 296-310; and “Modernist Painting,” in *Arts Yearbook* 4 (1961), 101-108 [1]
- 📖🔗 T. J. Clark, “Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art;” and Michael Fried, “How Modernism Works: A Response to Clark,” in *Critical Inquiry* v. 9 n. 1 (Fall 1982), 139-156 and 217-234 [1]

[supplemental readings (2): Postmodernism?]

- 📖🔗 Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity, An Incomplete Project” (1980), in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic* [Bay Press/New Press, 1999/2002], 3-15
- 📖🔗 Jean-François Lyotard, “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?” (1982), in *The Postmodern Condition* [Minnesota, 1984], 71-82 [1]

Part I. Emergence: the 19th Century Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche

Week 2: Modern subjectivity and art: Kant’s Critique of Judgment (1) 9/5/08

- * 📖 Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), 1-100 [2]

Week 3: Kant’s Critique of Judgment (2) 9/12/08

- * 📖 Kant, *CJ*, 101-228 [2]

Week 4: Kant’s Critique of Judgment (3) 9/19/08

- * 📖 Kant, *CJ*, 229-333 [and Appendix 334-429] [2]

Week 5: Art as reconciliation with “nature” and with humanity: the Romantics 9/26/08

- * 📖 Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794-95), in *Essays*, 86-178 [2]
- * 📖 Wordsworth, *The Prelude*: * “Was it for This” (1798), “The Two-Part Prelude of 1799,” and Books 1, 2, 4, and 8 [Penguin 1996], 3-7, 8-35, 36-101, 140-169, and 296-345 [1]
- 📖🔗 Wordsworth, selected shorter poems

[supplemental readings: Romanticism]

- 📖🔗 Novalis, *Hymns to the Night* (1797-1800) [trans. George MacDonald or Dick Higgins]
 - 📖🔗 Hölderlin, selected poems, in *Poems and Fragments* [trans. M. Hamburger; Anvil, 2004]
- >>> 1st paper (on Kant) due week 5 <<<

Week 6: Modernity and the transformation of art: Hegel on the “end” of art 10/3/08

- * 📖 Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (1820-29), 3-97; and * Pippin 2002 op. cit. [2]

Course schedule: Critical Art: The Philosophy of Modernism (Fall 2008), Fridays 1 - 4 PM
School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 112 S. Michigan Ave., room 816

Week 7: Discontents of modernity: Nietzsche (1), the problem of “cultural” origins 10/10/08

* 📖 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in *Basic Writings*, 17-144 [2]
Audio: Richard Wagner, “Isoldes Liebestod,” from *Tristan und Isolde* (1859/65)

Week 8: Nietzsche (2), the morality of “ascetic ideals” and the philosophy of art 10/17/08

📖🔊 Nietzsche, from “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” (1873) in *The Portable Nietzsche* [trans. Kaufmann; Viking/Penguin, 1976/82], 42-47

* 📖 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), in *BW*, 451-599 [3]

Week 9: Nietzsche (3), against the archaic: the dialectic of myth and enlightenment 10/24/08

* 📖 Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* (1888), in *BW*, 611-653 [2]

* 📖🔊 Adorno, “Fantasia Sopra Carmen” (1955), in *Quasi Una Fantasia* [Verso, 1998], 53-64 [1]

📖🔊 Adorno, “On the Score of Parsifal” (1956)

Audio/screening: Wagner, *Parsifal* (1882); Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, dir., *Parsifal* (1982);
Georges Bizet, *Carmen* (1875); and Otto Preminger, dir., *Carmen Jones* (1954)

Part II. Crisis: the 20th Century Lukács and Adorno

Week 10: The subject of modern society and the problematic relation of art to life: Lukács 10/31/08

* 📖 Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (1914), 29-153 [2]

>>> 2nd paper (on Schiller/Hegel/Nietzsche) due week 10 <<<

Week 11: “Late” modernity and art after the 20th Century: Adorno and Celan 11/7/08

📖🔊 Marcuse, “Preface: A Note on Dialectic” (1960), in *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* [Beacon, 1960], vii-xiv

* 📖🔊 Adorno, “Lyric Poetry and Society” (1956/57), in Bronner and Kellner, eds., *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* [Routledge, 1989], 155-171 [1]

📖 Pierre Joris, “Introduction: Polysemy without Mask,” in Paul Celan, *Selections*, 3-35

* 📖 Celan, poems, from *Atemwende* (1967) through *Zeitgehöft* (1976), in *Selections*, 97-145 [1]

Week 12: The history and future of modern art: Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (1) 11/14/08

* 📖 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), [325-331,] * Draft Introduction 332-359, * Art, Society, Aesthetics 1-15, * Situation 16-45 [and 45-100] [2]

Week 13: Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (2) 11/21/08

* 📖 Adorno, *AT*, [100-118,] * Enigmaticalness, Truth Content, Metaphysics 118-136, [136-163,] * Subject-Object 163-175, * Toward a Theory of the Artwork 175-199 [and 199-225] [2]

Week 14: [Thanksgiving break, no class session; please read ahead for Week 14] 11/28/08

Week 15: [Critique Week, possible extra class session; please read ahead for Week 16] 12/5/08

📖🔊 Adorno, “Vers une musique informelle” (1961), in *Quasi Una Fantasia*, 269-322 [1]

📖🔊 John Cage, “The Future of Music: Credo” (1937)

Audio: Richard Strauss, “Der Held,” from *Ein Heldenleben* (Op. 40, 1898); Satie, *Things Seen to Right and Left (Without Glasses)* (1914); Schönberg, *Erwartung* (Op. 17, 1909), *6 Little Piano Pieces* (Op. 19, 1911), and *Lichtspiel* [film] music (Op. 34, 1930); Webern, *5 Pieces for Orchestra* (Op. 10, 1913); Cage, *Williams Mix* (1952), and *Piano Concerto* (1957-58); Stockhausen, *Kontakte* (1959-60); and Ruzicka, *Sonata for Violoncello* (for Adorno, 1969)

Week 16: Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (3) 12/12/08

* 📖 Adorno, *AT*, * Society 225-261 [and 262-324]

>>> 3rd paper (on Lukács/Adorno) due week 16 <<<