

070.674/408 – CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Spring 2010, 400 Macaulay Hall, Fridays 1:30 – 3:50 PM

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Office hours Tue 1:30-3:30

Introduction. This course seeks anthropological ground for an impersonal and asubjective philosophy of creative expression, that is, for a way of grappling with the emergence of newness – in both conceptual and empirical terms – without falling back upon the subjective intentions of its authors or makers. Our path throughout the semester tacks back and forth between philosophical and anthropological engagements with a series of related problems. On the one hand, we trace a lineage of thought – Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitehead, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze – that finds creative invention always at work in a world of ceaseless becoming. On the other hand, we examine the expressive activities of “artists” – broadly conceived – in a variety of milieus, confronting their working intuitions with the unpredictable lifeworlds they engage. Each of these pairings proposes a related, but slightly different, response to the question of *what* art may be taken to express: a condition of immanence, vitality of life, flux of time, openness of thought, texture of a world, movements of affection. Throughout the semester, we will explore creative interiority and creative exteriority as inextricably bound up with each other in mutually expressive relations. We will also consider, at many turns, anthropological thought and practice as a creative pursuit.

Coursework. All required texts will be made available either at the campus bookstore, or directly to you by me. Reading will be moderate, 120 – 150 pages per week. Each week, you are expected to make some kind of engagement with the text at hand – written, visual, or otherwise – which you will be required to share with the entire class no later than each Thursday by midnight. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to contribute a more extensive project for evaluation; choice of medium is again your own, as long as it may be seen to “express” the concerns of the course.

Schedule

Immanence

February 5
Baruch de Spinoza, *The Ethics*

February 12
Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason*

Life

February 19
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, selections

February 26
Kenneth George, *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld*

Time

March 5
Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, selections

March 12
Jean Rouch, *Cine-Ethnography*, selections

Thought

March 26
Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*

April 2
Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*

World

April 9
The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting, selections

April 16
Francois Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form, Or On the Nonobject Through Painting*

Affection

April 23
Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*

April 30
Jennifer Biddle, *Breasts, Bodies Canvas: Central Desert Art as Experience*