

Matters of Attention

Draft Syllabus

An IHUM Graduate Seminar
Spring 2013
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Mondays, 10-1

Attention, regulating what enters consciousness, lies at the nexus of perception and action, aesthetics and ethics. This course will move from a history of changing ideas about attention, through current research, and on into the implications for seeing and experiencing as modes of being. Since works of art can be understood as reified requests for attention, we will take them as important case studies in the investigation of what attending has meant and can mean. Consideration will be given to the training and altering of attention, to spectacle and the manipulation of attention, and to the shifting economies of attention in the modern period. Some attention will be given to attention's dialectical antitheses: distraction, secrecy, and invisibility. Ultimately, we will seek to understand (and experience) the role of attention in both the cognitive and the affective domains.

Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*
Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*
Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*

Week 1 - Introduction & Orientation

No readings.

Week 2 - The Idea of Attention

Jonathan Crary, "Chapter 1: Modernity and the Problem of Attention" in *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, 1999, October Books/MIT Press, Cambridge.

William James, "Chapter 11: Attention" in *Principles of Psychology* (1890), New York: Dover, 1950.

Michael Posner, *Attention in the Social World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

James Perham Hylan, "The Fluctuation of Attention" *Psychological Review*, Vol. 2, No.2, March 1898.

Examine/ Be Aware of

Walter Pillsbury, *Attention* (1906), London: Sonnenschein, 1908.

Thodule Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention*, Chicago: Open Court, 1896

Lemon Uhl, *Attention: A Historical Summary of the Discussions Concerning the Subject* (A Dissertation), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1891.

Week 3 - Aesthetic Attention: Looking and Perceiving

Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Claire Bishop "Heightened Perception" from *Installation Art: A Critical History*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1996.

C. Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses: Historical Perception, Commensal Exchange, and Modernity" *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol 9, No. 2, Fall 1993.

Examine/Be Aware of

T. J. Clark, *The Sight of Death*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

John Dewey, *Art and Experience* (1934), New York: Perigee, 1980.

Week 4 - Instrumental Attentions: Affordances and Observations

Lorraine Daston, *Histories of Scientific Observation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

John J. Gibson, *An Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, New York: Psychology Press, 1986.

Examine/Be Aware of

Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Week 5 - Training and Altering Attention

Ignatious of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (1548), New York: Doubleday, 1964.

D. T. Suzuki, *The Training of a Zen Buddhist Monk*, (1934), New York: Cosimo, 2007.

Examine/ Be Aware of

Aldous Huxley, *Doors of Perception* (1952), New York: Thinking Ink, 2011.

Wallace, Alan B. *Balancing the Mind: A Tibetan Buddhist Approach to Refining Attention*, Ithaka: Snow Lion Publications, 2005

Week 6 - Absorption: Effortless Attention, Flow & Play

Brian Bruya, ed. *Effortless Attention: A New Perspective in the Cognitive Science of Attention and Action*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.

Brian Sutton-Smith, Chapter 10: "Rhetorics of Self" in *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

J. Bryce & J. Rutter, "Spectacle of the Deathmatch: Character and Narrative in First Person Shooters" in G. King & T. Krzywinska (Ed.s), *ScreenPlay: Cinema/videogames/interfaces*, London: Wallflower Press, 2002.

Week 7 - The Life of Things: Do Things Attend to Us?

Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," in Bill Brown ed. *Things*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics; Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, Chicago: Open Court, 2005.

Week 8 - Invisibility and Looking Away

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Rei Tarada, *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Examine/ Be Aware of

Veronique M. Fonti, *Vision's Invisibles, Philosophical Explorations*, Albany: State University of New York, 2003.

Week 9 - The Internet and the Attention Economy

Thomas Davenport and John Beck, *The Attention Economy*, Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 2001. (chapters one and two)

Michael H. Goldhaber, "The Attention Economy and the Net" *First Monday*
<http://firstmonday.org/article/view/519/440>, April 1997.

Richard Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Renée Ridgeway et al "Paid Usership" *Northeastwestsouth* <http://northeastwestsouth.net/paid-usership>, 2011

Week 10 - Spectacle and Entertainment

Crary, Johathan "Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory," *October*, Vol. 50. (Autumn, 1989), pp. 96-107

Debord, Guy, *Society of the Spectacle*, 1994, Zone Books, New York

Jonathan Beller,, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*, Hanover: Dartmouth University Press, 2006

Week 11- Agency: Attention in Action

Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Sherry Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory, Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006

Week 12- The Politics of Attention

Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secrets; How Technoculture Capitalizes Democracy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003

Boris Groys, *Art Power*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible (2000)*, New York: Continuum, 2004.

Examine/Be aware of:

Crispin Sartwell, *Political Aesthetics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.