The Social Life of the Senses across Cultures / La vie sociale des sens à travers des cultures

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Description

An intense new focus on the social life of the senses is sweeping the humanities and social sciences. The “sensory turn” began in the disciplines of anthropology and history in the early 1990s, and has since spread to archeology, sociology, geography, religion (the list continues). Sensory studies is the name commonly used to refer to this interdisciplinary area of research which takes the senses as both object of study and means of inquiry. Sensory studies involves a cultural approach to the study of the senses and a sensory approach to the study of culture.

In this lecture series, I will be focussing on the unique contribution of sensory anthropology to our understanding of the life of the senses in society, as distinct from the mental life of the senses, which is the province of psychology, though, as we we shall see, anthropology has a great deal to say about the latter topic too.

Rather than treat the senses individually, this lecture series will take a domain-based approach to the study of the sensorium. Following a general introductory lecture, we will explore the senses in the domain of art, the domain of medicine, and the domain of law, then conclude with an inquiry into the economy of the senses and the burgeoning phenomenon of sensory marketing.

Lectures will occasionally be supplemented by short (12-20 minute) video presentations

The required text for the course/lecture series is


Those attending the lectures are encouraged to read the prescribed pages or chapter beforehand

The lectures will be mainly in English. The audience is welcome to ask questions in French. The assignment may be written in English or French

The instructor will hold daily office hours. Time and location to be announced

The method of evaluation will be announced the first day of class.

See the next page for the course schedule and assigned readings.
Schedule

Lecture 1: Introducing Sensory Studies (March 12)
“Introduction: ways and meanings” in *Ways of Sensing* (pp. 1-13)
video : Dance and Human History

Lecture 2: Art and the Senses (March 13)
“Mixed messages: engaging the senses in art” in *Ways of Sensing*, ch. 1 (pp. 17-36)
video: Touching the Timeless, Millennium

Lecture 3: Medicine and the Senses (March 14)
“Sensuous healing: the sensory practice of medicine” in *Ways of Sensing*, ch. 2 (pp. 37-62)

Lecture 4: Law and the Senses (March 15)
“The Feel of justice: law and the regulation of sensation” in *Ways of Sensing*, ch. 4 (pp. 93-114, 118-122) and ch. 3 (pp. 74-81)
video: The Art of Living, Millennium

Lecture 5: Economy of the Senses and Sensory Marketing (March 16)
“Sense appeal: the marketing of sensation” in *Ways of Sensing*, ch. 5 (pp. 125-51), ch. 4 (pp. 114-118) and ch. 6 (pp. 170-174)