The Passions of the Mind: Affect, Literature, and Music in Europe, 1600-1800

I. Course Description
In this course we study relationships among affect, literature, and music in early modern Europe. We examine the ancient roots of early modern affective theories and contrast those theories with our own. We take as working hypotheses that what we now call “emotions” are primarily culturally determined and that social constructions of affect have varied over time. We pose three questions: (1) How did people in earlier periods understand their affective experiences? (2) How did they think that affect—called passions, affections, sentiments, feelings, or emotions—functioned in literature and music? (3) How were these affective and aesthetic beliefs manifested in literary and musical practices? We read theoretical and literary texts from the periods under study, as well as recent historical and analytical writings, and listen to musical examples. Topics include social constructionism, catharsis, the passions, the origins of opera, moral sentiments, sensibility, the emergence of the modern self, program music, and the roles of affect in ethics and rhetoric. Works by Aristotle, Cicero, Shakespeare, Monteverdi, Descartes, Dryden, Haywood, Francis Hutcheson, Richardson, Adam Smith, Mozart, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and others are studied. Note: Musical training is not a prerequisite for this course.

II. Course Format, Assignments, and Evaluation
Our weekly sessions will combine lecture and discussion of assigned readings. Students will be evaluated on class participation (20% of final grade), short writing assignments (20%), and a 20-page research paper (60%).

III. Readings
A. Available at NYU Bookstore:

B. Available from the Liberty Fund, Inc. [Search at http://www.libertyfund.org/]
[These texts may be ordered in paperback for $14.50 each or downloaded for free, in various e-book formats. Please download a PDF version so that we all share the same pagination.]
IV. Course Calendar

1/28 “Emotions History”: Language, Culture, and Human Nature

2/4 Early Modern Theories of the Passions (1)
Descartes. The Passions of the Soul (1649).

2/11 Early Modern Theories of the Passions (2)
Descartes. The Passions of the Soul (discussion continues).
Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica, 1a2ae, qu. xxii-xxx.
Dimit. Summary of Thomas Aquinas on the passions.
Burton. The Anatomy of Melancholy. Excerpt. Optional

2/18 The Passions in Classical Ethics, Rhetoric, & Poetics
Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics. Books I.1-4, 7; II; III.1, 5-7; IV.5, 6, 9.
Halliwell. “Appendix 5: Interpretations of katharsis.”

2/25 “What’s Hecuba to him?”
Shakespeare. Hamlet (1603/1604-5).

3/3 Early Modern Theories of the Passions (3)
Reynolds. A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man (1640).
“The Epistle Dedicatory”; “A Preface to the Reader”; Chapters 1-2, 5-7.
Senault. On the Use of the Passions (1649).
“The Authors Preface”; “A Table of the Several Treatises and Discourses”; Part I, Treatise 1, sections 1-3 (pp. 1-30); Part I, Treatise 2, sections 1-4 (pp. 54-79).
[Charlton]. The Natural History of the Passions (1674).
“Epistle Prefatory” (skim this); “Index of the Contents”; Section V – “Of the Passions in Particular,” Articles 1-16; Section VI – “Conclusion,” Articles 1-13.

3/10 The Birth of Opera from the Spirit of Poetry
Monteverdi. “Possente spirito.” L’Orfeo (1607).
Mozart. “Ah! Taci, ingiusto core.” Don Giovanni (1787).

3/17 No class: Spring Recess

3/24 The Natural Effects of Passion
Dryden. “Heads of an Answer to Rymer” (1677?). Works vol. 17. 185-93.
Dryden. All for Love (1678).
3/31 Dangerous Passions
Haywood. *Love in Excess* (1719).
Kranmick. “Locke, Haywood, and Consent.”
Lubey. “Eliza Haywood’s Amatory Aesthetic.”

4/7 The Rehabilitation of the Passions: The Moral Sense

4/14 Sensibility
Richardson. *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740).
Mullan. “Feelings and Novels.”
Yahav-Brown. “Reasonableness and Domestic Fiction.”

4/21 The Rehabilitation of the Passions: Moral Sentiments

4/28 The Gothic and Sentimental Novels: Terror and Pity Revisited
Harkin. “Mackenzie’s Man of Feeling: Embalming Sensibility.”
Gamer. “Gothic Fictions and Romantic Writing in Britain.”
Platzner, Hume. “‘Gothic versus Romantic’: A Rejoinder.” OPTIONAL
Crane. “Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the ‘Man of Feeling.’” OPTIONAL

5/5 The Romantic Expression of Feeling

5/12 Final papers due.