

Beauty Will Save the World

Preliminary Syllabus

When Solzhenitsyn and Dostoyevsky survived gulags they both affirmed: 'Beauty will save the World.' How can this be? 'Beauty' (as a word) has being, and it's related to other dynamic nouns, like 'truth,' 'forgiveness,' 'imagination,' 'peace.' As we enter into 'beauty' we'll be as imaginative as we are analytical. You'll each be asked to present a creative response to our readings, and to bring in examples of Arabic poetry, stories, or ideas compatible with the texts we're discussing. And, you're enjoined to create a scenario in which beauty saves a world: this can be an essay, a story, a poem, a video, a puppet show, a piece of art. Utopian thinking can have practical ramifications.

I. The Idea

Solzhenitsyn. Nobel Address: Beauty Will Save the World?

Dostoyevsky. From *Brothers Kamarazov*: "The Russian Monk."

How does this idea work? Where is beauty? What does it do?

Keats. "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

How can beauty be truth?

II. Erotic Beauty, Avoiding War

Book of Judith. (chapters 10-14): How many people don't die?

Book of Esther (excerpts) How effective is erotic diplomacy?

A short scene from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

III. Native American Wisdom

Storytelling Workshop: The Iroquois League Foundation Story.

Robin Wall Kimmerer. From: *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Iroquois Thanksgiving)

Navajo Night Chant.

In this session we'll chant, we'll sing, we'll embody the story. The power of beauty goes into hearts souls, body and mind.

Can beauty be a social structuring principle? What ecological benefits come from that? How is beauty both spiritual and material? Is beauty stronger than death?

IV. William Blake

Songs of Innocence & of Experience (5 poems)

Auguries of Innocence.

After reading Blake's words allowed we'll begin to imagine how all things interconnect, a web of beauty. Could aesthetics be more important than economics? Would that save the world?

V. Spiritual Materialism: Endurance, Forgiveness

Simone Weil. "Forms of the Implicit Love of God."

Langston Hughes, "Thank You Ma'am" (a very short story)

James Hubbell video: "Between Heaven and Earth" (art, architecture, sculpture). How does perception affect what we see? How do forgiveness and beauty interrelate? Why does Simone Weil think that humanity can be saved by aesthetics?

VI. 'The Beauty Salon':

You'll each present creative work, accompanied by a brief analysis of how your project relates to at least one of the texts we've considered. We'll end with a mosaic of insights imagining how the beauties we cultivate can and will uphold truth and wisdom. How can your work have practical implications?