

## Lesson Plan: Aesthetics

### **Goals:**

- Students will consider whether there are objective, universal, or static standards for beauty and try to articulate them. Otherwise, they will consider the conditions that mediate perception of beauty in different people, at different times, in different contexts, etc.

### **Icebreaker:**

- Have students list one or two songs they find most beautiful (philosophy journal or silent time, 1-2 minutes)
- We will share songs, make quick playlist, and play in background; ask students to say why they find their song(s) beautiful

### **Activity: Music**

- For each song, have students indicate whether or not they find it beautiful and tally
- If students can all agree on a song, have them try to articulate what they find beautiful about it—lyrics, structure, melody, themes, mood, feelings it provokes in the listener, complexity, consonance/dissonance?
- Otherwise, have students explore the different factors that may influence their impression of songs' beauty

### **Alternate Activity: Architecture**

- Present pictures of buildings in two categories: modernist and more classically “beautiful”
- Ask students to discuss which they find beautiful and identify patterns
- Is there a building they can all agree is beautiful?

### **Discussion questions:**

- What factors affect what we think is beautiful? Our culture, our community, our life experiences, our emotions, our mood? Media? Argument?
- Does our perception of what is beautiful change from day to day?
- Is there anything that is objectively beautiful? Can we agree on a piece of art that is beautiful? What are its characteristics? Harmony, symmetry, vibrancy, discord, chaos, confrontation, irony? What emotions does it evoke?
- Whose opinion matters? The artist? The viewer? An ‘expert’? Does intention matter?
- Does ‘technique’ matter?
- Is something beautiful only for a certain audience or in a given context? Perhaps a historical context (e.g. Dada)?
- Who decides what is beautiful across different contexts, institutions? Who should?

**Props:**

- Pictures of classic works of architecture, modernist and classical, taken from *Current Affairs* article