

PHIL235: AESTHETICS

Tuesday/Thursday, 2:25-4:05

Bogar 107

Instructor

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Office hours: MWF 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

Course Description

We spend a lot of our time with the arts—we read novels and poetry, we watch movies and television, we go to art galleries and the theater. Some works of art are simply distractions from our own lives. But others (and not always the ones we expect) raise important philosophical questions:

- If I weave a basket, is it art? If so, is it art in the same way that the *Mona Lisa* is art? What is the difference between art and craft?
- Why is a perfect copy of a novel like *Lord of the Flies* a genuine instance of the novel, but a perfect copy of a statue like Michelangelo's *David* is only a reproduction?
- Why do we get sad, excited, and frightened by what happens to characters in shows like *Breaking Bad*? After all, don't we know the characters are *fictional*?

These questions and many others besides will serve to frame discussion in the class as we investigate theories of art and beauty from the Ancient Greeks to the present.

This course counts towards the Artistic Expression category for the central curriculum, with the following learning goals:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the essential elements that constitute the art(s) under examination
- Demonstrate an understanding of representative creative processes associated with the art(s) under examination
- Articulate an understanding of the relationship between art and its audiences and of the potential to sustain that relationship through an ongoing development of the life of the mind.
- Articulate an understanding of the ways in which art can serve as a medium for recognizing and understanding the diversities of human experiences.
- Identify aesthetic assumptions and traditions associated with the discipline and articulate an informed opinion of the art(s) under examination.

Text

We will be working from a draft of my forthcoming textbook, *Introducing Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (2012, Continuum). The text is available on my website, www.typtoken.com, under "courses".

Course Requirements

Your final grade will depend on the percentage you earn of the total points possible in the class: A+: 97-100; A: 94-96; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D-: 60-63.

Papers

You will have to write two 8-to-10-page papers during the course of the term:

- The first paper is due Tuesday, October 11, and is worth 20% of your grade. It must be written on a topic from Chapters 1-3 in the course text.

- The second paper is due Thursday, December 8, and is worth 25% of your grade. It must be written on a topic from Chapters 4-7 in the course text.

For each paper, you must refer to at least two primary sources—either philosophy articles or scholarly books. I would suggest referring to articles and books cited in your text and recommended at the end of each chapter. The Blough-Weis Library has a variety of print and microfilm holdings, and provides electronic access to a number of philosophy journals, including the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and the *British Journal of Aesthetics*.

Assignments submitted late without explicit extensions or authorized excuses will receive a penalty of one letter grade (10%) per day late.

Papers will not be accepted via e-mail or fax.

Exams

There are two exams for this course: a midterm exam worth 20% of your grade, and a final exam worth 25% of your grade. The midterm exam will be held in class on Thursday, October 13. The final exam will be held Tuesday, December 13, 3:00-5:00 pm.

Participation

The final 10% of your grade is your participation grade. Participation includes doing the assigned readings *before* the class in which the reading shall be discussed, taking active part in class discussion, and putting serious effort into your papers. Participation also includes attendance. For every class you miss without authorized excuse, your participation grade will be deducted 1 point (that is, 1% of your final grade, up to the 10% encompassed by the participation grade). See also “Classroom Courtesy” below.

Special Accommodations

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the university makes efforts to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To be considered for disability accommodations, the student should forward recent documentation of the disability to the director of the counseling center. Full information about the required documentation and steps for obtaining accommodations is discussed in the disabilities policy available at www.susqu.edu/counseling/disabilities.htm.

Classroom Courtesy

Please be courteous to your fellow students and avoid unnecessary disruptions. Arrive on time, leave on time, and *turn off your cell phone during class*. Note that if your cell phone rings during class, *I will answer it*. Laptops are permitted in class, but please do not abuse this privilege. Text-messaging is *not* permitted during my class. If I see you text-messaging during class-time, your participation grade will be deducted 1 point. This is your only warning.

Academic Honesty

I take incidences of academic dishonesty *very* seriously. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class. Any instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the university judicial board. It is your responsibility to read and abide by the university’s policy on plagiarism (<http://www.susqu.edu/studentlife/16594.asp>).

Course Schedule

Topic	Date	Readings	Assignments
Introduction	(Tu) Aug 30	<i>No Readings</i>	
Defining Art	(Th) Sept 1	Chapter 1, §§I-III	
	(Tu) Sept 6	Chapter 1, §§IV-V	
	(Th) Sept 8	Chapter 1, §§VI-VII	
	(Tu) Sept 13	Chapter 1, §§VIII-IX	
The Ontology of Art	(Th) Sept 15	Chapter 2, §§I-III	
	(Tu) Sept 20	Chapter 2, §§IV-V	
	(Th) Sept 22	Chapter 2, §§VI-VII	
Interpretation and Intention	(Tu) Sept 27	Chapter 3, §§I-III	
	(Th) Sept 29	Chapter 3, §IV	
	(Tu) Oct 4	Chapter 3, §§V-VI	
	(Th) Oct 6	Chapter 3, §§VII-VIII	
Midterm Review	(Tu) Oct 11	<i>No Readings</i>	Paper #1 Due
Midterm Examination	(Th) Oct 13	<i>No Readings</i>	
<i>No Classes</i>	(Tu) Oct 18		
Aesthetic Properties and Evaluation	(Th) Oct 20	Chapter 4, §§I-III	
	(Tu) Oct 25	Chapter 4, §§IV-V	
	(Th) Oct 27	Chapter 4, §§VI-VII	
Emotions and the Arts	(Tu) Nov 1	Chapter 5, §§I-II	
	(Th) Nov 3	Chapter 5, §III	
	(Tu) Nov 8	Chapter 5, §IV	
Art and Morality	(Th) Nov 10	Chapter 6, §§I-II	
	(Tu) Nov 15	Chapter 6, §III	
	(Th) Nov 17	Chapter 6, §IV	
	(Tu) Nov 22	Chapter 6, §V	
<i>No Classes</i>	(Th) Nov 24		
Aesthetics Without Art	(Tu) Nov 29	Chapter 7, §§1-II	
	(Th) Dec 1	Chapter 7, §§III-IV	
	(Tu) Dec 6	Chapter 7, §V	
Final Review	(Th) Dec 8	<i>No Readings</i>	Paper #2 Due

Final Exam scheduled for Tuesday, December 13, 3:00-5:00 pm.