

Philosophy of Art

HON 308/PHI 432 3 Credit Hours

Course Instructor: Laura Newhart (philosophy)

Eastern Kentucky University

Honors Program

Bonnie Gray, Director

Course Description: We will consider a number of questions of fundamental importance to aestheticians and philosophers of art such as “What is art?” “Are there objective standards for determining artistic value or is beauty in the eye of the beholder?” “What is the nature of creativity?” “What is/should be the relationship between art and morality and/or society?” We will be examining these questions from the specific perspectives of a number of major theories of art including mimetic theory, expression theory, formalism, and the institutional theory of art. We will conclude by considering possible answers to these questions in the future.

Texts

Higgins, Kathleen. *Aesthetics in Perspective*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1996.

Syllabus

Date	Topic
Beginnings	
10 Jan	Introduction to Course
12 Jan	“What is Art?” pp. 63-67; “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics” pp. 75-81
14 Jan	Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” pp. 31-43
17 Jan	No Class!! Martin Luther King, Jr. Day!!
19 Jan	Kant, “The Four Moments” pp. 44-53
21 Jan	Bullough, “Psychical Distance” pp. 164-167; Dickie, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” pp. 172-179
24 Jan	Plato, “Inspiration as Magnetism” pp. 278-281; Aristotle, “Constructing a Tragedy” pp. 282-283; Kant, “The Nature of Genius” pp. 284-286
26 Jan	Rilke, pp. 293-294; Truitt, pp. 295-301; Middleton, pp. 302-310
28 Jan	Experiencing Art Report #1 Due
Art, Truth, and Reality (Mimetic Theory)	
31 Jan	Plato, “Art and Appearance” pp. 114-121
2 Feb	Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” pp. 122-124
4 Feb	Lyons, “Paleolithic Aesthetics” pp. 125-131
7 Feb	Saito, “The Japanese Appreciation of Nature” pp. 140-147
9 Feb	Cage, “Experimental Music” pp. 148-151
11 Feb	Experiencing Art Report #2 Due
Should We Focus On Form (Formalism)	
14 Feb	“Should We Focus on Form?” pp. 318-320; Parker, “Aesthetic Form” pp.321-325

16 Feb	Fry, "The Limits of Formal Analysis" pp. 326-328
18 Feb	Hanslick, "On the Musically Beautiful" pp. 329-330; Levin, "Balanchine's Formalism" pp. 331-336
21 Feb	No Class!! Presidents' Day!
23 Feb	Eco, "Repetition and the Series" pp. 347-349; Miller, "Advertising-End of Story" pp. 350-357
25 Feb	Experiencing Art Report #3 Due
Art as Expressing or Arousing Emotion (Expression Theory)	
28 Feb	"Art as Expressing or Arousing Emotion" pp. 359-361; Tolstoy, "What is Art?" pp. 362-364
2 Mar	Bell, "Emotion in Response to Significant Form" pp. 365-367; Langer, "The Symbol of Feeling" pp. 369-370
4 Mar	Collingwood, "Expressing Emotion" pp. 371-376; Hospers, "The Concept of Artistic Expression" pp. 377-385
7 - 11 Mar	Spring Break!!! No Class!!!
14 Mar	Novitz, "Fiction, Imagination, and Emotion" pp. 386-390; Davies, "Why Listen to Sad Music...?" pp. 391-396
16 Mar	Kundera, "The Nature of Kitsch" pp. 397-398; Calinescu, "Kitsch and Hedonism" pp. 399-403
18 Mar	Experiencing Art Report #4 Due Distribution of First Short Paper Questions
The Institutional Theory of Art	
21 Mar	Danto, "The Artworld" pp. 68-74; Dickie, "Art as a Social Institution" pp. 82-87
23 Mar	Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics" pp. 88-97
25 Mar	Experiencing Art Report #5 Due First Short Paper Due
Art and Ethics	
28 Mar	"Art and Ethics" pp. 181-183; Nehamas, "Plato and the Mass Media" Bloom, "Music" pp. 190-194
30 Mar	Harries, "The Ethical Significance of Modern Art" pp. 195-204 Fuentes, "Words Apart" pp. 205-207
1 Apr	Gass, "Goodness Knows Nothing of Beauty" pp. 208-212
4 Apr	Mundy, "The New Critics" pp.213-221; Kuspit, "Art and the Moral Imperative" pp. 222-225
6 Apr	Gourevitch, "Behold Now Behemoth" pp. 226-232
8 Apr	Experiencing Art Report #6 Due
Art and Our Institutions (Art and Society)	
11 Apr	"Art and Our Institutions" pp. 235-236; Mattick, "Arts and the State" pp. 237-241; Vance, "Misunderstanding Obscenity" 242-245
13 Apr	Wolfe, "The Worship of Art" pp. 246-250
15 Apr	Young, "Destroying Works of Art" pp. 251-258

18 Apr	Stalker and Glymour, "The Malignant Object" pp. 259-264
20 Apr	Danto, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial" pp. 265-269
22 Apr	Experiencing Art Report #7 Due Distribution of Second Short Paper Questions
Challenges to the Tradition and Beyond the West	
25 - 29 Apr	Group Presentations
2 May	Final Exam Period! Second Short Paper Due

Grading Policies: Your grade for the course will be determined by:

1. 8 Experiencing Art Reports 40%
2. 2 Short Papers (5-7 pages each) 30%
3. Group Presentation 10%
4. Funding the Arts Project 20%

Experiencing Art Reports: Every other Friday will be devoted to applying the theoretical concepts of the past two weeks to specific works of art. You will identify a particular artwork and explain how it is an example of (or a challenge to) the theories we have studied in that time period. Or, as an alternative you can report on a current news item that is relevant to the weeks' theoretical content. Your artworks can come from any source, i.e., your own, a friend's, a museum, a gallery, popular culture, etc. Your report should be 1-2 pages double-spaced typed and should include a copy of the artwork. You will be expected to present at least one of these reports to the class. If you do not, 5 points will be deducted off of your total points for this assignment. Due dates for the Experiencing Art Reports can be found on the syllabus, and a sign up sheet will be passed around to schedule the in-class presentations. Each Experiencing Art Report is worth 5 points for a total of 40% of your final grade.

2 Short Papers: In each of the short papers you will answer a question distributed in class in a 5-7 page (1250 words) double spaced, typed essay. The questions are designed to challenge you to analyze, critique, and develop the relevant theories covered in class. The questions will be distributed a week before the papers are due. The first short paper will cover the material from the Beginnings section and the four theories of art. The second short paper will cover the material from the Art and Ethics, Art and our Institutions, and Challenges to the Tradition sections. It is due during the exam period. Each short paper is worth 15 points for a total of 30% of your final grade.

Group Presentation: Toward the end of the semester we will consider a number of challenges to the theoretical perspective of traditional Western philosophy of art. These challenges take a variety of forms and come from a number of sources which can be found in Parts III and IV of Higgins' text and include racism and sexism in the arts, popular culture, and non-Western views of art. The class will divide into six groups of three to four people, and each group will be responsible for choosing an article in this section and presenting it to the class. Each presentation should include a summary of the article, a discussion of interesting points in the article, and examples of artworks which illustrate the points. Prior to the presentations, each group will be asked to submit a proposal for their presentation including the title of the article you'd like to present, how the article presents a challenge to traditional views, and the reasons your group has for wanting to present it. The group presentation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Funding the Arts Project: Thanks to the generosity of the Honors Program, we have been given \$200 to contribute to a non-profit art organization in our area. In order to do this we must complete a number of tasks including identifying regional non-profit art organizations; interviewing, visiting, and inviting in-class presentations by these non-profit organizations, issuing and evaluating Requests for Proposals, and engaging in a deliberative group decision-making

process to select successful applicants and award the \$200. We will be breaking into small work groups to accomplish these tasks, and each of you will be expected to be actively involved in this project. You will also hand in two sets of Reflective Journal Essay Questions concerning your involvement in this project. One will be due before undertaking the project. The other will be due after the project is completed. Your participation in the Funding the Arts Project is worth 20% of your final grade.

Contact person: Laura Newhart, Laura.Newhart@eku.edu.