

Department of Social Sciences and Critical Studies
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Pratt Institute
Fall 2011

Course Syllabus

Aesthetics

PHIL 265, Section 2, Credits: 2 or 3
Thursday 5-7:50pm in ISC Building 101A

Instructor: Eric Godoy Email: egodoy2@pratt.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 4-5:00pm, or by appointment, in DeKalb 418

Description

Aesthetic concepts and the logic of aesthetic judgment are discussed in this course. We'll review eight topics, each centered around a question or questions about aesthetics. These topics include: the subjectivity/objectivity of judgments of taste; the role of emotions in art and beauty; aesthetic experience as a way of knowing the world; interpreting art (inter- and intra-culturally); the aesthetic elements in education, politics, and morality; whether an artist's gender or sexuality affect our taste or notion of genius; and finally, questions about popular art, technology and originality. Despite my best attempt to thematically group the topics covered, there will be noticeable overlap between topics.

No specific section is dedicated to defining art. However, attempts at such a definition are certainly scattered throughout the course. With each author, it will be good practice to highlight his or her definition of art, or to make the definition explicit where it is only implicit.

Finally, this is a course on philosophical aesthetics, *not* a course on art history or the different schools of art. No assumptions will be made about familiarity with either of these bodies of knowledge. We will deal with latter only insofar as it helps us understand the former. The authors we read will often draw from specific works of art, and we too should look for examples to share when they illustrate, critique, or otherwise engage the readings. Although art will often take the spotlight for examples of aesthetics experience, we should remember that it certainly doesn't exhaust this category.

Objectives

The goal of this course is to improve your critical reading and expression skills, to introduce you to seminal texts and arguments in aesthetic philosophy, and to make them pertinent to contemporary knowledge. You will learn to read difficult philosophical texts, use their vocabularies, and dissect their arguments. In turn, you will be able to competently discuss these ideas and defend your readings, both orally and in a clear expository writing style. It is my hope that the ideas discussed in this course will be something you can bring to your creative work—artistic, academic, or otherwise.

Requirements and Evaluation

Readings Two required texts are listed below (available at the Pratt Store) and I have posted some course readings on LMS. The course calendar indicates (in parentheses) the source of each reading (either Ross, Freeland, or LMS). You should complete the assigned readings before each class, take detailed notes, think of questions to raise during discussion, and bring a printed copy of the readings to class with you each week. Please plan ahead to print the readings that are

online. Computer malfunctions will not excuse you from this requirement. When possible, please consider using the double-sided printing option.

1. Ross, Stephen, ed. *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*. 3rd sub-edition. New York: SUNY Press, 1994. (ISBN-13: 978-0791418529)*
2. Freeland, Cynthia. *But Is It Art? An Introduction to Art Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002. (ISBN-13: 978-0192853677)

Notebooks At the end of each class, you will hand in a typed, one-page summary of your reading notes. These “notebooks” should highlight the key points of each author read that week, including any questions that you thought of while reading. Ask yourself, how do the arguments presented in each piece agree with or disagree with other authors (from this week or past weeks)? Notebooks don’t have to be written in formal prose—outlines and bullet points will be fine—but make sure that I can understand and follow your thoughts. During class, you should use your notebooks (along with your personal notes and course readings) to help you add to our discussion. You can and should make additions or adjustments in class, but you will not get credit for a notebook that you composed entirely during class. I will return collected notebooks each week. If you are not present for class, you will not get full credit for your notebook that week. Notebooks more than one week late will not receive credit.

Brief Presentations One brief presentation is required, but you can do up to two more for extra credit. Take about five minutes to discuss one of the assigned readings (other than the chapters from Freeland). You should include more detail than you give in your notebook, but your aim is the same: highlight the main points, what you thought was interesting about the reading, and any questions it raises. Your goal is to get the discussion going for the week. Always end your presentation with some questions for the class. You may use any medium and method for your presentation that you like. Just be sure to bring some kind of handout for the rest of the class so that we can follow along with you. Sign up in advance (at least two weeks) for your presentations. No more than one person may present on any single author for the week. Obviously, you should not miss class on the day that you sign up to give your brief presentation. Late presentations will not be permitted as each week we’ll move on to new reading.

Illustrations Everyone must give at least two illustrations, but you can do up to four more for extra credit. Since we will be talking about art quite often in the course, it will be helpful to bring in works of art that were not discussed in the reading that helps to illustrate, challenge, or criticize the author’s point. Other aesthetic objects, descriptions of an aesthetic experience (such as a museum visit, a film or play, a personal experience, etc.) will work as long as they help illustrate the readings. Spend a few moments explaining how your illustration does this. Bring a short write-up (about 300 words) of your thoughts to hand in at the end of class. You cannot get credit for more than one illustration each week.

Midterm Essays At least one week before the midterm is due, I will post essay topics (most likely relating to the course topics). Respond to these topics by drawing from the course readings. You should write in clear, academic prose. Your essay should be at least 900 words if you are taking the course for two credits and at least 1,250 if you are taking the course for three credits. See “academic standards” section below about plagiarism, internet sources, and the use of the writing center. **Midterm essays are due at the beginning of class on October 27th.** You must email me an electronic copy (either .doc or .pdf format) AND hand in a hard copy by the deadline to be on time. Late essays will lose 10 points for each week they are late, rounding up. For example: if you hand in your essay anytime after the beginning of class on October 27th and beginning of class on November 3rd, you will lose 10 points from your grade.

* There are multiple editions of this book. If you choose to purchase it online or anywhere other than the Pratt Store, be sure you buy this edition published in 1994.

Final Essays This will follow the same format as the midterm essay, but this one will be longer: 1,250 words for those registered for two credits and 2,500 for those registered for three credits. **Final essays are due by 5pm on Friday, December 16th.** Place a hardcopy in my mailbox on the third floor of Dekalb and send an electronic copy via email. **I won't accept late final essays** because I won't have adequate time to review them before I must submit your final grade to records.

Participation Since we meet only once each week, it is extremely important that you attend every session, arrive on time, and actively contribute to the class. This means you should come prepared with your readings, notebooks, personal notes, and questions. You should be ready to discuss the texts. During class, you should take notes, raise questions, and participate in discussions. You also should follow all course and university policies discussed below. Class may include short writing exercises, group work involving specific sections of the text, brief quizzes, or group discussion. I will base your evaluation on how well you can demonstrate your understanding of the text, your ability to engage its ideas, and communicate that insight to the rest of the class. There is no way to make up the in-class assignments if you miss them.

Grading I calculate your final grade based on the following breakdown and grade scale. Note that it is possible to get extra credit (up to 10 points). If you miss participation points, or if you get a lower score on an exam than you'd like, you can make up for it up by giving extra presentations or bringing in extra illustrations. There is no extra credit beyond this. Plan ahead.

<u>Breakdown</u>		<u>Final Grade</u>			
<i>Participation</i>	20%	A	100-93	C+	79-77
<i>Notebooks</i>	15%	A-	92-90	C	76-73
<i>Brief Pres.</i>	10%	B+	89-87	C-	72-68
<i>Illustrations</i>	5%	B	86-83	D	67-60
<i>Midterm</i>	20%	B-	82-80	F	59-0
<i>Final</i>	30%				

Policies

Academic Standards Students must adhere to all institute-wide policies listed in the Bulletin under "Community Standards" and which include policies on attendance, academic integrity, and plagiarism. You may access information regarding these policies on the Academic Senate website (<http://www.prattsenate.org/learning/academic.htm>). Please read these standards and be sure you understand them. We will review them during the first day, but if you have any further questions, please ask. Note that I am very strict regarding plagiarism. I subscribe to an anti-plagiarism screening service. **I do not make a distinction between accidental and intentional plagiarism. I refer any and all instances of plagiarism to the appropriate disciplinary channels.** All websites used for research in this course must be recommended or approved. For instance, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is highly recommended, while *Wikipedia* unacceptable for academic work. I may refuse to accept your work if you use an unapproved resource.

Writing Center I strongly advise you to make an appointment with the writing center before handing in the final draft of your essays. I will grade essays more favorably if you have the writing tutor email me describing your session. Be sure he or she includes the date of your visit, the stage of the draft that was reviewed—rough, middle, or late—and what was discussed during the session.

Disabilities Those who require accommodations for disabilities should speak with the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. Contact Mai McDonald, *Disability Services*

Coordinator, in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Main Building, Lower Level: 718-636-3711. If you have any other concerns, you should talk to me as soon as possible.

Classroom Be present, on time, prepared to discuss the readings, alert, respectful of others, and involved in the class activities. Do not use laptops or phones in class. Texting in class will drastically lower your grade. Please use the scheduled break to check your phone, grab a drink, and take care of any other matters.

Difficulties with requirements Deadlines and other course requirements are announced at the beginning of the term. If you foresee a problem meeting any of the requirements, notice a scheduling conflict, are having trouble following the lectures and readings, or are having any other difficulties, then you should **come see me as early as possible**.

Course Calendar

INTRODUCTION

1. Thursday, 9/1

- Review of syllabus, introduction to class, assignment of presentations
- "Introduction" (Freeland)
 - "Introduction" (Ross)

I. IS IT JUST BEAUTIFUL TO ME? AESTHETIC JUDGMENTS AS OBJECTIVE OR SUBJECTIVE

2. Thursday, 9/8

- Ch. 1, "Blood and Beauty" (Freeland)
- Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (Ross)

3. Thursday, 9/15

- Ch. 2, "Paradigms and Purposes" (Freeland, 30-48)
- Bell, *Art* (Ross)
- Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, "First Book" (Ross, 98-113, but skip §17)

4. Thursday, 9/22

- Ch. 2, "Paradigms and Purposes" (Freeland, 48-59)
- Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, "Second Book" through §57 (Ross, 113-36)
- Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, "Kant's Doctrine of Taste and Genius" (Ross, 350-6)

II. WHY DO WE ENJOY TRAGEDIES? THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT OF ART

5. Thursday, 9/29

- Aristotle, *Poetics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* (Ross)

- Aristotle, "The Emotions Proper to Tragedy" and "Emotions and Music" (LMS)
- Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* and "Attempt at Self-Criticism" (Ross)
- Langer, *Feeling and Form* (Ross)

III. CAN KNOCK-KNOCK JOKES TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE WORLD? ART AS A WAY OF KNOWING

6. Thursday, 10/6

- Ch. 6, "Cognition, Creation, Comprehension" (Freeland, 148-61)
- Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Ross)
- Tolstoy, "What is Art?" (Ross)
- Cohen, "Jokes" (LMS)

7. Thursday, 10/13

- Ch. 6, "Cognition, Creation, Comprehension" (Freeland, 162-76)
- Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Ross)
- Goodman, "When is Art" and *Languages of Art* (Ross)

IV. ALLOWING THE WORLD TO WORLD: HOW CAN ART AND NATURE PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO BEING QUA BEING?

8. Thursday, 10/20

- Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (Ross)
- De Warren, "Off the Beaten Path: The Artworks of Andrew Goldsworthy" (LMS)
- In class: viewing of *Rivers and Tides*

V. CAN WE INTERPRET ART FROM OTHER CULTURES, JUST OUR OWN CULTURE, OR NEITHER?

9. Thursday, 10/27

Midterm Essays Due

- a. Ch. 3, "Cultural Crossings" (Freeland)
- b. Appiah, "The Postcolonial Aesthetic" (LMS)
- c. Danto, "The Artworld" (Ross)

10. Thursday, 11/3, 24

- a. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, "Foundations of a Theory of Hermeneutical Experience" (Ross 365-77)
- b. Baxandall, "Truth and Other Cultures" (LMS)
- c. Sontag, "Against Interpretation" (LMS)

VI. CAN BEAUTY LEAD US TO THE TRUE AND THE GOOD? ART, MORALITY, EDUCATION, AND POLITICS

11. Thursday, 11/10

- a. Plato, *Republic* and *Symposium* (Ross)
- b. Kant, "§59. Beauty as a Symbol of Morality" (Ross, 136-8)
- c. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (LMS)
- d. Lucht, "Does Kant Have Anything to Teach Us about Environmental Ethics?" (LMS)
- e. In class: viewing of *Art from a Changing Arctic*

VII. WHO COUNTS AS AN ARTIST? GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND ART

12. Thursday, 11/17

- a. Ch. 5, "Gender, Genius, and Guerilla Girls" (Freeland)
- b. Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" (Ross)
- c. Chadwick, "Women Artists and the Institutions of Art" (LMS)
- d. Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" (LMS)
- e. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (LMS)
- f. Strong, "The Dissenting Art of Delmas Howe" (LMS)

13. Thursday, 11/24

Thanksgiving Break (no class)

VIII. I AM T-PAIN: HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY CHANGE AND CHALLENGE ART? IS THERE SERIOUS AND POPULAR ART? DOES ART OR GENIUS REQUIRE ORIGINALITY?

14. Thursday, 12/1

- a. Ch. 7, "Digitizing and Disseminating" (Freeland, 177-87)
- b. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility" (Ross)
- c. Adorno, "On Popular Music" (LMS in three parts)

15. Thursday, 12/8

- a. Ch. 7, "Digitizing and Disseminating" (Freeland, 187-205)
- b. Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (LMS)
- c. Kvifte, "Digital Sampling and Analogue Aesthetics" (LMS)
- d. Know Your Meme, "Auto-Tune" (LMS)
- e. In class: viewing of *Everything is a Remix*

16. Thursday, 12/15

Work on Final Essays (no class)

****Final Essays due 12/16 by 5pm****