

Skidmore College
Department of Philosophy and Religion

Fall, 2011
TUTH 2:10-3:30

PH 210: Aesthetics
Prof. Reg Lilly

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to philosophical thinking about art. Art, as an activity and a domain of objects that has had an important, though historically variable place in the world of philosophy.

The artworld is extremely diverse, and it is impossible to survey the variety of artforms much less the highly nuanced thinking that has been dedicated to them. This course will focus on an important aspect of the philosophy of art: beginning with basic and formative readings in the early history of the philosophy of art, we will focus on the diasporadic condition of the arts today that make understanding contemporary art particularly difficult. We will pay special attention to two essential issues: the status and role of the 'artist' in art and the nature of the 'work.'

Our focus during class periods will be first to come to terms with the ideas presented in the readings, and then to discuss their implications. Therefore, although I will certainly have something to say each class, the emphasis is on discussion. Students are especially encouraged to immerse themselves in the arts and to **think** about them, and to introduce relevant works of art into the class discussion.

This syllabus will undoubtedly be modified as the class progresses. Therefore, it should be taken as a good, but approximate indication of the course of the course.

LEARNING GOALS

- Think critically, creatively, and independently about art and philosophy
- To learn how to recognize, analyze, construct and criticize arguments.
- Become familiar with and learn to use concepts fundamental to the philosophy of the arts
- Read, analyze, and apply philosophical texts
- Communicate effectively
- Become conscious of one's own aesthetic and philosophical beliefs

REQUIRED TEXTS:

--*The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern (PA)*, ed. A. Neill & A Ridley
--*Theories of Contemporary Art (CA)* ed. Richard Hertz
--Selected Readings (handouts)

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

9/8 : Introduction

Historical Texts

9/13: PA, pp. 6-23, Plato, "The Ion"; Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

9/15: PA, pp. 466-483, From Plato's *Republic*

9/20: PA, pp. 488-505, From Aristotle's *Poetics*

9/22: PA pp. 254-268, Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste"

9/26: Solomon Residency: TBA

9/27: PA pp. 269-280, Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful"

9/29: PA pp. 280-296, Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful"

10/4: PA, pp. 75-81, Gadamer, "The Play of Art"

10/6: Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" (handout) **Tang Museum: Carly Busty,**

10/11: Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (handout) **(First Paper Assigned)**

Art and Subjectivity

10/13: Shiff, *Cezanne and the End of Impressionism*, CHs 1-5.

10/18: PA, pp. 506-521, Tolstoy, "What is Art?" Dewey, "Art as Experience" (handout)

10/20: PA, pp. 98-117: Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis"; Greenberg, "Modernist Painting"
(First Paper Due)

10/25: PA, pp. 374-90, Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"; Barthes, "The Death of the Author"

10/27: PA, pp. 390-413, Hirsch, "In Defense of the Author"; Wollheim, "Criticism as Retrieval"

11/1: PA 53-58; T. S. Elliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; Levinson, "Messages in Art" (handout)

11/3: PA, pp 415-45 Baxendall, "Intentional Visual Interest: Picasso's 'Portrait of Kahnweiler'"

11/8: PA 457-65, Sontag, "Against Interpretation"; **(First Review Due) (Second Paper Assigned)**

Postmodernism and The End of Art

11/10: Danto, "The End of Art" and "Works of Art and Mere Real Things," (handout)

11/15: Shiff, "Art and Life: A Metaphoric Relationship"; Butterfield, "The State of the Real and Reshaping the Shape of Things" (handouts) **(Second Paper Due)**

11/17: Levin, "Farewell to Modernism" (CA pp. 1-9); Rosenblum, "Andy Warhol: Court Painter to the 70s"; (handout) Rose, "American Painting: The Eighties" (CA, pp. 17-30).

11/22: Lawson, "Last Exit: Painting" (CA 79-91); Schjeldahl, "Death and the Painter," CA 123-131)

Thanksgiving

11/29: Ratcliff: "The Marriage of Art and Money"; Kraus, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum" (CA 269-298.)

12/1: Jones, "Postmodernism, Subjectivity, and Body Art: A Trajectory" (handout)

12/6: **TBA**

12/8: **TBA (Third Paper Assigned, Due 12/13 at 12:00)**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) There are **three papers** of 5 pages (1250+ words) each. These must be submitted as an email attachment in Rich Text Format (rft).

2) Also required are **two 'reviews'** of approximately 400 words. Students should read Philip Yebawubem *How to Look at Modern Art*, pp. 27-76 before writing their review. These may be completed at any point during the semester; however, there are absolute "due dates" for each

review. The guidelines for writing a review are included in this syllabus.

3) Participation in class discussion is expected.

4) Attendance in class is required; absences and latenesses will lower one's grade.

GRADES:

Each of the three papers are worth 25% of the final grade.

Each of the two reviews are 10% each of the final grade.

Participation counts for 5% of the final grade

CAVEAT

This syllabus is well-considered plan for the course of the semester; however, modification may be made should they be called for.

OFFICE HOURS:

TU 2:00-3:00-4:30; W 1:30-4:00; and by appointment (Ladd 218). Phone: 5406; email: rlilly

Questions In Art Criticism

Art critics help viewers perceive, interpret, and judge artworks. Art critics and art historians share a strong interest in constructing meaning from artworks. While critics tend to focus more on modern and contemporary art from cultures close to their own, art historians tend to study works made in cultures that are more distant in time and space.

Your reviews should be of works in two different media. Every attempt should be made to include a reproduction of the work under review.

Review*

1. **DESCRIPTION:** What do I see? (feel, hear, smell, taste)?
 - a. **Subject Matter:** Does the artwork depict anything? If so, what?
 - b. **Medium:** What tools, materials, or processes did the art maker use?
 - c. **Form:** What elements did the maker choose and how did the maker organize the elements?
2. **INTERPRETATION:** What is the artwork about?
 - a. **Interpretive Statement:** Can I express what I think the artwork is about in one sentence?
 - b. **Evidence:** What evidence inside or outside the artwork supports my interpretation?
2. **JUDGMENT:** Is it a good artwork?
 - a. **Criteria:** What criteria do you think are most appropriate for judging the artwork?
 - b. **Evidence:** What evidence inside or outside the artwork relates to each criterion?
 - c. **Judgment:** Based on the criteria and evidence, what is your judgment about the quality of the artwork?

* based roughly on Terry Barrett's Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary, Mountain View, CA., 1994; summary of Getty Institute.