

Skidmore College
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Syllabus

PH 210: Philosophy of the Arts
Reg Lilly

Spring, 2013
T/R 2:10-3:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to philosophical thinking about art. Art, as an activity and a domain of objects 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 contemporary condition of the arts today that make understanding (and sometimes enjoying) art particularly difficult.

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 very likely 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 Nature of Art, ed. Wartenberg

Neill Compilation

Hopkins Compilation

Gaiger Compilation

Other texts will be assigned.

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1/22: Introduction

Historical Texts

1/24: TW, pp. 1-26: Plato, + (Neill, pp. 466-75, Plato)

1/29: TW, pp. 27-37: Aristotle; Nietzsche, pp. 83-97

- 1/31: TW, pp. 38-50: Hume
 2/5: Neill, pp., 269-280: Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful"
 2/7: Neill, pp., 280-296: Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful"
 2/14: Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" (handout)
 2/19: TW, pp. 145-160: Heidegger,
 2/21: TW, 161-169: Benjamin; pp. 197-203: Adorno (**First Paper Assigned**)

Formation of Modernity

- 2/26: Shiff, *Cezanne and the End of Impressionism*, CHs 1-5.
 2/28: TW, p. 98-106: Tolstoy; pp. 133-144: Dewey (**First Paper Due**)
 3/5: Neill, pp. 53-58: T. S. Elliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent";
 3/7: TW, pp. 114-120: Bell; Neill, pp. 111-117: Greenberg "Modernist Painting" ; (**web site**)
 Greenberg, "Collage") (**First Review Due**)

Spring Break

- 3/19: Gaiger, *Modernism and the Crisis of Modernism*, pp. 7-22: Fry, Giedion-Welcker, Goldwater, Cheney, de Koonig.
 3/21: Hopkins, pp. 67-93, "Artist in Crisis: From Bacon to Beuys"
 3/26: TW, pp. 206-216, Danto; Danto, "The End of Art" and (**handout**)

Modernity and After

- 3/28: Gaiger, *Modernism and its Crisis*: Shapiro, pp. 22-31; (**Second Paper Assigned**)
 4/2: Hopkins, pp., 161-195, "Death of the Object: The Move to Conceptualism,"
 4/4: Gaiger, *Performance of Identity*, pp. 225-248: O'Hara, Pollack, Owens.
(handouts) (Second Paper Due)
 4/16: Gaiger, *Performance of Identity*, pp. 249-286: Jones, Fer
 4/18: Kocur, *Culture/Identities/Political Fields*, pp. 123-141: Vance, Vance
 4/23: Kocur, *Culture/Identities/Political Fields*, pp. 166-186: Butler, Piper
 4/25: Kocur, *Culture/Identities/Political Fields*, pp. 187-204: Wright
 4/30: TBA (**Second Review Due**) (**Third Paper Assigned, Due 5/7 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). Your subject line should be "Last name – Paper #X"
- 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 it be deemed appropriate.

OFFICE HOURS:

T/R 12:00-1:00; W 10:00-11:00; and by appointment (Ladd 218). Phone: x5406; 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.