

Skidmore College  
Department of Philosophy & Religion

PH 210: Aesthetics  
TU/TH 2:10-3:30

Spring, 2016  
Reg Lilly

***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

**January**

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

26 Introduction and Orientation

28 From Plato's *Republic*

**February**

2 From Aristotle's *Poetics*

- 4 From Hume, “Of the Standard” of Taste”
- 9 From Kant, “Analytic of the Beautiful” pp. 269-280,
- 11 From Kant, “Analytic of the Beautiful” pp., 280-296
- 16 Tolstoy, “What is Art?”
- 18 Dewey, “Having and Experience”; Gadamer, “The Play of Art,”
- 23 Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”
- 25 Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind” **(First Paper Assigned)**

## March

### THE PROJECT OF MODERNISM

- 1 Shiff, *Cezanne and the End of Impressionism*, CHs 1-5.
- 3 Bell, “Aesthetic Hypothesis”; Elliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” **(First Paper Due)**
- 8 Greenberg, “Modernist Painting”; Greenberg, “Collage”; Mattens, “The Aesthetics of Space: Modern Architecture and Photography”
- 10 Costello, “Greenberg’s Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory”; Lawson, “Last Exit: Painting”

## Spring Vacation

- 22 Hopkins, “Death of the Object: The Move to Conceptualism”
- 24 Barthes, “The Death of the Author”; Hirsch, “In Defense of the Author **(First Review Due)**
- 31 Hopkins, “Artist in Crisis: From Bacon to Beuys”; Danto, “Three Decades After the End of Art”

## April

### AFTER MODERNISM – THE POSTMODERN

- 5 Clark, “Farewell to an Idea”; Shapiro, “The Nature of Abstract Art,” **(Second Paper Assigned)**
- 7 O’Hara, “Personism. A Manifesto” 2pgs; Pollack, “Painting, Feminism, History”; Owens, “The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism” 10pgs. **(Second Paper Due)**
- 12 Jones, “From Body Art/Performing the Subject”; Fer, “Objects Beyond Objecthood”; Fendrich, “Why Paint a Painting at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”
- 14 Vance, “The War On Culture”; Vance, “Feminist Fundamentalism”; Butler, “Gender is Burning”
- 19 Piper, “Cornered”; Wright, “The Mythology of Difference”

21 Foucault, "This is not a pipe" 8pgs; Nancy, "The Image – The Distinct" 8pgs  
26 Deleuze & Guatarri, "Percept, Affect, and Concept"  
28 Nancy, "Painting in the Grotto"; "The Vestige of Art."

### **May**

3 Mitchell, "What do Images Want" Elkin, "Envoi" (Third Paper assigned)

8 Third Paper due and Second Review due

### ***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).
- 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 3:00-4:14; W 3:30-4:30; 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.

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.