

*Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art*  
PHIL 452/652 (3 credits)  
Syllabus  
Fall 2014  
Online Learning  
UNLV

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Wednesday 11 – noon  
(and by appt.)

### **Catalog Description**

- [The] study of aesthetic standards, the nature of art and artistic creativity, and the function of art in human experience.

### **Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

Students will:

1. Distinguish mere art appreciation from aesthetics and philosophy of art
2. Recognize claims of aesthetic value—both within artistic and non-artistic realms
3. Explain philosophically and historically important theories of aesthetic value
4. Compare/Contrast notions of beauty when applied to different kinds of experience
5. Classify aesthetic value (as subjective or objective) and defend this classification
6. Apply critical concepts to particular works or objects
  - a. Distinguish art from non-art
  - b. Explain/Judge value of works or objects
7. Explain the *Intentional Fallacy*

### **Required Text**

- *Reading Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*, Christopher Janaway, Blackwell (2006) [Available in the book store.]

### **Other Materials**

- There will be additional readings. These will be supplied through WebCampus. You should make sure that your library account is up to date.
- You will be required to watch a number of films. I will note the availability of these within the modules. Most are available for rent through iTunes or Amazon or HULU+ or Netflix. If they are available from the library, I'll note that in the module.
- There will be a link to audiovisual lectures at the beginning of each module.

### **Requirements**

- Private Writing (at least 10 Entries – Grading explained below)
- Blog/Discussion (10 Entries/20 Replies)
- 3 papers

## Grading Details

- Papers will receive a letter grade (w/o plusses or minuses). The average<sup>1</sup> of these three grades will be the base for your final grade in the class. Each paper will be between 6 – 10 pages for 452 and 8 – 12 pages for 652. Papers are graded across three dimensions: Content, Readability, Mechanics. The paper topics for the first paper will be released in about the third week of the semester. The paper topics for the second paper will be released in about the seventh week of the semester. And the paper topic for the final paper will be released in about the eleventh week of the semester.

**Content:** Define concepts, give explanations/argument, consider counter-evidence/arguments, interpret claims, etc.

**Readability:** Standard written English, Organization, Grammar, Spelling, Style

**Mechanics:** Assignment particulars, On Topic, Used Appropriate Readings, etc.

- Private Writing uses the *Journal* function of WebCampus. Although this is private in the sense that other students won't be able to read it, it is still formal writing insofar as I will read it. There will be more than 10 private writing assignments. Most will require about one page of writing on your part. It will be graded pass/fail. If you pass at least 10 of these, then your final grade is unaffected. If you pass between 8 and 10 of these, then your final grade will be lowered by one third of a letter. If you pass between 5 and 7 of these, then your final grade will be lowered by one letter. If you pass fewer than 5, you fail the course.
- Blog/Discussion uses the *Blog* functions of WebCampus. There will be more than 10 blog/discussion assignments. You must author at least 5 blog posts/entries. If you author fewer, you will fail the course. You must author 15 replies to separate blog entries. If you author at least 15, your final grade will be unaffected. If you author between 11 and 14 replies, your final grade will be lowered by an additional third of a letter. If you author between 8 and 10 replies, your final grade will be lowered by an additional letter. If you author fewer than 8 replies, you fail the course.

## Your Final Grade

- Your final grade is calculated by taking your base grade from your papers and subtracting any reductions that result from private writings, blogs, and replies.

## Important Note

- Although this is an online learning course, it is not *go at your own pace*. The private writing, blogs, and replies are to take the place of the classroom, but not to obviate your reliance on other students. The basics of each module will be available from the beginning of the semester. But the specifics will be made available at the instructor's

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<sup>1</sup> AAA = A, AAB = A-, AAC = B+, AAD = D, AAF = F, ABB = B+, ABC = B, ABD = D, ABF = F, BBB = B, BBC = B-, BBD = D, BBF = F, ACC = C+, ACD = D, ACF = F, BCC = C+, BCD = D, BCF = F, CCC = C, CCD = D, CCF = F, ADD = D, ADF = F, BDD = D, BDF = F, CDD = D, CDF = F, DDD = D, DDF = F, AFF = F, BFF = F, CFF = F, DFF = F, FFF = F. Order doesn't matter. Two As and a B in any order is a B-. Hence, this list covers all possible grades on the papers. [Note well that Ds and Fs are trumps.]

discretion. Each module should take about two weeks to complete. So, the topics for the private writing assignments, the blog entries and the wiki entries will be released about every two weeks. This will keep us all on roughly the same topics at the same time.

## **Modules**

If you print this syllabus, you can use the boxes as a checklist for each module.

### **Module 0: Course Syllabus and Intro to PHIL 452/652** [Complete by 8/28]

- Read this syllabus carefully. If you have any questions or concerns, raise them in the first private writing assignment (listed below).
- Listen/watch the audiovisual introduction [link available on WebCampus]
- Private Writing Assignment #1: After you've read the syllabus and watched the introductory lecture, briefly write a journal entry. Here are the questions to answer: What other philosophy courses have you taken? When did you take them? Where did you take them? Are you a philosophy major? In the introductory lecture I said that this course wasn't a course in art appreciation nor was it an art history class. What do you think the difference is between art appreciation and aesthetics/philosophy of art on the one hand, and art history versus aesthetics/philosophy of art on the other? What question or concerns do you have regarding the syllabus? [This is due by 8/28 @ 5pm.]

### **Module 1: Art as Criticism**

To get us started, we have a couple of short readings about the use of art as criticism. We will also watch and discuss a documentary about the back-and-forth between a certain kind of street art – tagging – and a mainstream reply – called *buffing* – and whether the critical concepts from the reading can make sense of this dialectical situation.

- Watch: Introductory Lecture on Art as Criticism [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: “Détournement as Negation and Prelude,” by SI 1959. [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: “Reusing Culture,” by Astrid Vicas *Yale Review of Culture*, v. 11, n. 2 (1998). [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: “Strikethrough,” by David Crowley, *Eye Magazine*. This isn't so much an essay as a review of an artist who is, apparently, using the concept of *sous rature* (this is usually attributed to Jacques Derrida who gets it from Martin Heidegger) in his work. I want you to speculate about what it means to cross out, erase, scratch away, or obscure part of an image or word or object in an artistic work. [Link on WebCampus]
- Blog Entry: (1) What is détournement? Do you think it is different from mere parody or satire? Explain briefly. OR (2) What is *sous rature*? Does the act of erasing, crossing out or obscuring a word, image, object, etc., add meaning? Explain briefly. Don't do both! Choose (1) or (2), write your entry ... HOWEVER, only the first five entries will

count, after there are five entries on *détournement* and five entries on *sous rature*, then you must reply to any of the entries. [Blog Post due by 9/5, replies due by 9/7]

- Watch *Vigilante Vigilante: The Battle for Expression*, directed by Max Good (2011). It is available instantly on HULU+ (free with your subscription) and for instant rental from iTunes (\$4.99HD/\$3.99SD) and on Amazon (\$3.99HD/\$2.99SD); this is also available as a video disk at the Law School Library – though I don't know whether undergraduates can check out material there. Grant that this is a fairly one-sided documentary. What I want you to think about are the methods used by the taggers, the buffers, and then finally, in the last few scenes, by the filmmakers. First, consider tagging as *détournement* – the reuse of cultural artifacts or concepts in a manner critical of the dominant/mainstream culture. There are at least two possible responses to *détournement* from the mainstream: (1) ignore it, (2) accept it and, thus, recuperate it. *Recuperation* is the act of readmitting a detoured artifact or concept (or method) back into the mainstream. Are the buffers detouring or recuperating or *erasing* in the sense of *sous rature*? *Sous rature* is the systematic strikethrough of words where the word is still visible and thus still flaunts with our understanding. Second, think about scenes from late in the movie where the filmmakers take the buffer's methods, but alter them by using color. Is this an act or *redetour* or *erasure* or ...?
- Blog/Reply Assignment. If you weren't one of the first five on either of the first blog posts, this is your chance to get your first post. (1) Are taggers *detouring* art or culture? Explain briefly. (2) Are buffers *detouring* tagging? Explain briefly. (3) Are buffers *recuperating* tagging? Explain briefly. (4) Are buffers *erasing* (*à la sous rature*)? Explain briefly. (5) Are the filmmakers *detouring* buffering when they buff with color (rather than grey)? Explain briefly. (6) Are the filmmakers *erasing* the buffering (*à la sous rature*) when they buff with color? Explain briefly. Answer only one of these questions. I'll take the first five posts on any answer. After that, you may respond to any of the posts. You are required to reply to at least one post that is not your own. [Posts are due by 9/10, replies by 9/12]

## **Module 2: Aesthetic Judgment**

In this module, we consider the apparent subjectivity of taste and how that might affect our judgment of beauty/ugly, etc.

- Watch: Introduction to Aesthetic Judgment [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: "On Taste," by Edmund Burke. [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: David Hume selection in our textbook.
- Read: Immanuel Kant selection in our textbook.
- Private Writing assignment [to be given on 9/7]
- Blog assignment [to be given 9/9]

### **Module 3: Aesthetic Value**

In this module we consider how art and artists might be valued. Is art, for example, necessary for a properly functioning society? Does art help illuminate truth? Is artistic activity rational?

- Watch: Introduction to Plato and the Arts. [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: Plato selection in our textbook.
- Watch: Introduction to Nietzsche, Art and Culture. [Link on Webcampus]
- Read: Nietzsche selection in our textbook.
- Read: “On truth and lie in the non-moral sense,” by Nietzsche. [Link on WebCampus]
- NOT REQUIRED – Watch: “A Room with a View,” a Merchant/Ivory film. Plato seems to regard art as destructive, at least morally speaking. In the film version of *A Room with a View*, Lucy Honeychurch, played by Helena Bonham Carter, is a musical savant whose abilities with music are greater than her abilities with living. There are a number of scenes that begin by emphasizing some relationship with art, but which end with unreasonableness on Lucy’s part. Is art all passion? Can it be rational? [Available on HULU+, Amazon, itunes, and Netflix; the library has a VHS copy...]
- Private writing assignment [Date TBD]
- Blog/Reply Assignment [Date TBD]

### **Module 5: Beauty in Art, Beauty in Nature**

In this module we examine the concept of beauty. Is the beauty of nature, for example, the same thing as the beauty of an artwork?

- Watch: Introductory Lecture on the Notion of Beauty [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: Carroll selection in our textbook.
- Read: Hepburn selection in our textbook.
- Read: G. Dickie: “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, v. 1, (1964), pp. 56-65. [Link on WebCampus]
- Watch: Lovely Lovely [Link on WebCampus]
- Private Writing Assignment: On *Lovely Lovely* [Date/Topic TBD]
- Watch: Why Beauty Matters [Link on WebCampus]

- Blog/Reply Assignment: on *Why Beauty Matters*. [Date/Topic TBD]
- Private Writing Assignment [Date TBD]
- Blog/Reply Assignment [Date TBD]

### **Module 6: Definitions of Art**

What is art? Does merely hanging something in a gallery make it art? Are, for example, Duchamp's *ready mades* art? Warhol's Brillo Boxes and soup cans? What about computer generated music? Paintings made by elephants? Children's paintings/songs/sculptures? Etc.

- Watch: Introductory Lecture on Definitions of Art [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: Collingwood selection in our textbook.
- Read: Dickie selection in our textbook.
- Read: "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," by Walter Benjamin [link on WebCampus]
- Watch: *My Kid Could Paint That*, directed by Amir Bar-Lev (2007). [Link on WebCampus; library has video disc]
- Blog/Reply Assignment. On *My Kid Could Paint That*. [Date/Topic TBD]
- Private Writing Assignment [Date TBD]
- Blog/Reply Assignment [Date TBD]

### **Module 7: Authors, Artists and Art**

Does the author's or the artist's intention matter for the interpretation/meaning of a work of art? This is, in some ways, a continuation of the discussion about the definitions or conceptions of art. The difference is that here we focus on interpretations/meanings of artworks.

- Watch: Introduction to Artists, Authors, and Art. [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: T. Adorno: "The Culture Industry Reconsidered," *New German Critique*, n. 6, (Autumn 1976), pp. 12-19 [translated by A. Rabinbach]. [Link on WebCampus]
- Private Writing Assignment. On *The Culture Industry Reconsidered*. [Date/Topic TBD]
- Read: Barthes selection in our textbook.
- Read: Danto selection in our textbook.
- Read: M. Foucault: "What is an Author?" [Link on WebCampus]

- Blog/Reply Assignment [Date/Topic TBD]
- Blog/Reply Assignment [Date/Topic TBD]
- There are a couple of computer-generated music sites as well as the *artwork* of an elephant that we'll reconsider in this module. I'll make links to these *works* available. What does it mean that someone *likes* a song that was wholly computer generated? Is the fact that a painting was painted by an elephant undermine its *expressive content*?

### **Module 8: Depiction in Art**

How does an artwork depict/express/represent a human form? How is it that we recognize a stick figure as human? Is there a *pictorial* language that artists use?

- Watch: Introduction to Depiction in Art. [Link on WebCampus]
- Read: Goodman selection in our textbook.
- Read: Wollheim selection in our textbook.
- Private Writing Assignment. [Date/Topic TBD]
- Watch: Video on Visual Ambiguity [Link on WebCampus]
- Blog/Reply Assignment. On *Visual Ambiguity* [Date/Topic TBD]

Final Paper is due on Monday of Finals Week!

### **Policies:**

**Appropriate Discussion Behavior** – Insofar as many of our interactions will take place on the discussion board in WebCampus, we will abide by the following policy. (1) Do not post any NSFW images. (2) Treat your fellow students (and your professor) with respect—both when you disagree with them and when you agree. (3) Do not use NSFW language in any posts. (4) Do not use racist sexist or any other –ist language that is likely to be judged offensive. Of course, these rules are subjective. If you feel like you don't understand the limits of appropriate behavior, you should make your queries to me privately. The policy will be enforced thusly: On a first transgression, the material will be removed and a private note will be sent to the offending party—this will inform the person that such material is inappropriate. On a second transgression by the same individual, the material will be removed, a private note sent to the individual, and the individual's final grade will be lowered by as much as two letter grades. On a third transgression, the student will fail the course.

**Academic Misconduct** – Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students

accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

**Copyright** – The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)** – It is important to know that over two-thirds of the students in the DRC reported that this syllabus statement, often read aloud by the faculty during class, directed them to the DRC office.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC-A), Room 143, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>.

**Religious Holidays Policy** -- Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the last day at late registration of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not be avoided. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.acalog.com/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=44&bc=1>.

**Tutoring** -- The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex, #22 on the current UNLV map. Students may learn

more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

**UNLV Writing Center** – *The following statement is recommended for inclusion in course syllabi:*

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance.

Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

**Rebelmail** – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's Official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu.

Note well: I take academic misconduct very seriously. Do not cheat or plagiarize. Any academic misconduct is grounds for failing the course. **ANY ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IS GROUNDS FOR FAILING THIS COURSE.**

The instructor reserves the sole right to alter this syllabus!