

Syllabus: Aesthetics: History and Contemporary Continental Theory

(appropriate for a 300 or 400-level course)

Prof. Jacob Rump

Course Description

What is the relationship between art and reality? Is there such a thing as objective judgment regarding what is beautiful, or is all artistic appreciation a matter of individual, subjective taste? Are some art forms better or more important than others? How has technology affected our relationship to art? How does our interaction with the world through our bodies, senses and feelings differ from our interaction by means of cognition and concepts? What counts as art at all? Does it have to be beautiful? Does it have to represent something about reality? This course will examine these and related questions through the study of philosophical texts in the field of aesthetics. In the first half of the course, we will survey some classic texts in the history of Western aesthetic theory, focusing especially on ancient mimetic theory and the birth of modern aesthetics in the 18th and 19th Centuries. In the second half of the course, we turn to 20th and 21st century work in aesthetic theory, focusing on works in the Continental (German and French) tradition. Throughout the course, we will make reference to specific works of art—including works chosen by students—to enrich our discussions and illustrate central ideas.

Texts

The following books are required for the course:

- Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, Ed. Steve M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (London: Blackwell, 2007)
Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. Trans. Bernard Bosanquet (New York: Penguin Books, 1993)
The Continental Aesthetics Reader, 2nd ed., Ed. Clive Cazeaux (New York: Routledge, 2011)

All readings not from these texts will be made available online as PDFs.

Assessment

Attendance, participation, and VoiceThread response posts:	10%
3 short papers (5-6 pages)	each 25%
VoiceThread Facilitation	15%

Grades will be posted via Blackboard. Students will receive letter grades for each form of assessment, weighed according to the percentages above to reach the final course grade according to the following scale

93-100 = A	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	63-66 = D
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-
87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	0-59 = F

Class Participation and Discussion

The class will be conducted primarily as a group discussion. After some short remarks to introduce the material and to situate it in context, I will begin by posing a few general questions, or by calling on someone to summarize the issues and arguments he or she found most interesting in that day's reading. While questions for clarification of the text are always welcome, students are also expected

to raise issues to be discussed, and to respond to and constructively build off of the comments of one another. Reasoned disagreement and rigorous (but courteous) debate are encouraged. The ideal participant in class discussion will further the dialogue by offering his or her own views, with reference to the text, and listening to others with an open mind, in order to help us all arrive at a more nuanced and thoughtful understanding of the topics under discussion.

Papers

Three times during the semester, for each unit of the course except the one for which you will be the VoiceThread facilitator, you will write a short paper of approximately 5-6 pages investigating and reflecting upon a specific issue of your choosing relevant to our discussions from that section of the course. The papers should evidence philosophical *reflection* and *original thought*, not mere textual summary, but should incorporate ideas from at least two texts from the corresponding section. *Each paper should be submitted no later than one week after the last day of discussion of material from the corresponding section of the course.* Note that all three papers will be given equal weight, and there will be no final paper or exam (though students submitting a paper for section four may submit it during the final exam period, in accord with the deadline as stated above). I am happy to read drafts of thesis statements, or to discuss other questions related to your papers during office hours or by email, but *I will not respond to such requests sent less than 48 hours before the paper is due.*

VoiceThread

We will be continuing our conversations outside of class through a course VoiceThread. VoiceThread is a web-based discussion board (linked through Blackboard) that allows you to post typed responses or recorded video or audio comments and to engage with the posts of your colleagues. Postings will serve as another form of engagement with the texts and ideas from the course and with each other, and as a record of our out-of-class conversations.

A) Facilitation Post

Each student will be required to record a *facilitation post* (4-5 minutes) in video format *once* during the semester, in accordance with the sign-up sheet posted on Blackboard. These video posts will include discussion of the day's reading as well as 2-3 examples of works of art (images of paintings and sculptures, short excerpts from poetry, films or musical works, etc.) selected by you, to help illustrate ideas from the readings. Since they will also help to set the stage for our class discussions, facilitations must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the class in which we will be discussing the reading covered in the post.

B) Response Posts

In addition, each student is required to make at least one response post (1-2 minutes or 100-250 words; video, audio, or text, as preferred) per week, *including the week in which she/he is providing the original post.* Additional details of the project, specific procedures for posting, sign-up sheet for presentation posts, grading rubric, etc. will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class at the beginning of the semester. We will begin using the VoiceThread the week of xx/xx.

A Note on Philosophical Reading and Using Texts in Class

Your task in this course will not be “cramming” or memorization of material. Reading, thinking about, and discussing philosophical issues (both in class and in your VoiceThreads and papers) will be your main task, and you are expected to devote a significant amount of time to carefully reading

the assigned material, and to come to class with the issues in mind and the text(s) in hand. The reading of philosophical texts is a skill that must be developed. The texts we will study are extremely challenging, and should be read slowly and carefully, pencil in hand. It will benefit you both in this class and in your future studies to get in the habit of taking notes as you read, either in the margins, in a notebook, or on a computer. Always remember that these are primary texts in philosophy, not textbooks: the main goal of this course (and of philosophical work in general) is *thinking* about the issues, *not* memorizing and regurgitating course material. A large part of philosophy—and especially aesthetics—is the thought and reflection which the readings evoke, so leave yourself some time after reading to think about what you've read before our discussion (i.e. don't attempt to finish the reading as you walk into class), and don't be afraid to discuss these issues with friends and colleagues outside of class.

Disability Assistance

[*substitute alternate disability policy*] It is the policy of Emory University to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you have or think you may have a condition or disability such that the requirements of this course present a problem, please contact the Office of Disability Services (110 Administration building; 404.727.6016; <http://www.ods.emory.edu>) and make this known to your instructor in person as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

Presenting the ideas or words of someone else as your own—intentionally or not—constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism on assignments, and cheating in any form, will result in an F on the assignment, and repeated offenses will result in an F in the course. We will discuss basic citation practices in class early in the semester.

Reading Schedule:

I. Origins of Aesthetics in Ancient Mimetic Theory and Medieval Thought

Suggested overview reading: Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts (I)”

meeting 1	course introduction; syllabus;
meeting 2	Plato, selections from <i>Phaedrus</i> (reserves) and <i>Symposium</i>
meeting 3	Plato, selections from <i>The Republic</i>
meeting 4	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>
meeting 5	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , continued
meeting 6	Medieval Thought on Art: selections from Augustine, Aquinas (reserves), Bonaventure

II. Origins of Modern Aesthetics: Taste, Aesthetic Judgment, and Romanticism

Suggested overview reading: Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts (II)”

meeting 7	Hume, <i>Of the Standard of Taste</i>
meeting 8	Burke, selections from <i>A Philosophical Inquiry into our Ideas on the Beautiful and the Sublime</i>
meeting 9	Kant, selections from <i>The Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (I)
meeting 10	Kant, selections from <i>The Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (II)
meeting 11	Kant, selections from <i>The Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (III)
meeting 12	Schiller, <i>Aesthetic Letters</i> (selected letters)
meeting 13	Hegel, <i>Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics</i>
meeting 14	Hegel, <i>Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics</i> , continued
meeting 15	Hegel, <i>Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics</i> , continued
meeting 16	Discussion/catch-up/ review day

III. 20th Century Continental Aesthetics: Modernism, Phenomenology, and Hermeneutics

Required film screening/ viewing party: Fritz Lang, *Metropolis*

meeting 17	Benjamin, <i>The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i>
meeting 18	Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i>
meeting 19	Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i> , continued
meeting 20	Gadamer, selections from <i>Truth and Method</i>
meeting 21	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Eye and Mind</i>
meeting 22	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Eye and Mind</i> , continued

IV. Later 20th Century and Contemporary Continental Aesthetics: Poststructuralism, Feminist Theory, and Affect

Optional film screening/ viewing party: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*

meeting 23	Barthes, <i>The Death of the Author</i>
meeting 24	Derrida, <i>The Parergon</i>
meeting 25	Derrida, <i>The Parergon</i> , continued
meeting 26	Liotard, <i>The Sublime and the Avant-Garde</i>
meeting 27	Kristeva, <i>Approaching Abjection</i>
meeting 28	Deleuze and Guattari, <i>Percept, Affect, and Concept</i>
meeting 29	Ahmed, “Happy Objects”