

PHILOSOPHY OF ART

DR. CHRISTOPHER BARTEL

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
PHL 2013 — FALL 2009
T.TH: 3:30 – 4:45
GREER HALL 118
<http://asulearn.appstate.edu>

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OFFICE HOURS: M.W.F: 10:30 – 1:00

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a general introduction to the philosophy of art. We will examine philosophical problems regarding our thinking about the arts, in particular the ways in which we appreciate, criticize and understand works of art. The only prerequisite of the course is that you have some opinions about and acquaintance with arts. This course satisfies three General Education Aesthetics Perspective credits for either the “Analyzing Style and Form” or the “Traditions and Innovations” themes.

B. CORE TEXTS:

1. Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, eds. (1997). *Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown, eds. (1997). *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
3. Yasmina Reza (1994). *Art*. Trans. Christopher Hampton. London: Faber and Faber.

C. RECOMMENDED TEXTS (NOT REQUIRED):

1. Arthur Danto (1981). *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
2. E. H. Gombrich (1960). *Art and Illusion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
3. Jerrold Levinson (1990). *Music, Art and Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
4. Richard Wollheim (1980). *Art and Its Objects*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
5. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the British Society of Aesthetics.
6. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, published by Blackwell’s Publishers on behalf of the American Society for Aesthetics.

D. ASSESSMENT: There are four components that you will be graded on: quizzes, essays, a critical review and a final essay.

Quizzes: There will be six quizzes during the semester, of which only the best five will be counted toward your grade. The total average of your best five quizzes will count as 30% of your final grade. These quizzes are designed to test your understanding of the material. Each quiz will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. Students will have ninety minutes to complete each quiz. Quizzes will be conducted online through the AsULearn website, and will be scheduled outside of class time over a period of five days (from Thursday at 4:45 to Tuesday at 3:00). Students should regularly refer to this website to familiarize themselves with the quiz schedule. **Late quizzes will not be counted.**

Essays: There will also be four essays assigned to coincide with four of the scheduled quizzes. Each of the four essays will count towards your grade—I will not drop any essay scores. The total average of your four essays will count as 40% of your final grade. These essays will be based on four focus questions that will be published on the AsULearn website during the quiz period. The student will be asked to choose one and write an essay of 1,000 words (+/-10%) addressing their chosen question. The essay **must** be submitted using the AsULearn website **before** the end of the scheduled quiz. **Late essays will not be accepted.**

Critical Review: For this assignment, you will analyze the style and form of Yasmina Reza's *Art*. A series of questions will be provided that will help you to focus your critique of this play. The final essay of this course will require you to write an extended essay on this play, so this review is intended to prepare you for that assignment. This essay will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will be worth 10% of your final grade. Your review is due before class begins on Tuesday, December 1 at 3:30. **Late essays will not be accepted.**

Final Essay: For this assignment, you will be asked to write a 2,000 word (+/-10%) critical essay on Reza's *Art*. You will have three tasks: (1) write a short summary of the plot of the play that identifies the features that you think are most salient, (2) identify and discuss some of the philosophical ideas of the play in as much detail as you can, and (3) give your own critical evaluation of the play as a whole. This essay is worth 20% of your final grade and is due on Tuesday, December 8 at 3:30pm. **Late essays will not be accepted.**

E. POLICIES: Attendance and Class Participation. Neither class participation nor class attendance will affect the determination of your grade. However, if you regularly skip classes, then I would not expect you to do very well on the assignments; and if you do not participate in discussions, then I expect you will be very bored.

Late Quizzes and Essays. The schedule of quizzes and essays is set in advance, which students can review on the AsULearn website. It is each student's responsibility to keep up with the assignments. I will not accept late quizzes or essays—**no exceptions.**

Offensive or Explicit Content. In a course on the philosophy of art, we may sometimes need to discuss works of art that some may find to be offensive or containing explicit content. My assumption is that any artist whose work has been exhibited in an internationally recognized museum or gallery is "fair game". For the purpose of this course, I will consider a work to be "offensive" or "explicit" if I am aware that the work has been the subject of discussion by philosophers, art critics or the popular media as being disgusting, disturbing, blasphemous or sexually explicit. In such cases, students will be warned at the beginning of the relevant lecture and students will be given the choice to leave the lecture if they so wish. Students who choose not to attend these lectures should inform me **in advance** of their decision so that they can be exempted from any quiz questions that might pertain to those lectures.

Cheating, Collusion and Plagiarism. Do not cheat, collude or plagiarize. The University does not tolerate this and I find it personally insulting. If I *suspect* you of cheating, collusion or plagiarism, I will request that you complete a new assignment. If I *discover* that you have been cheating, colluding or plagiarizing, you will automatically earn an *F* for the course, *and* you will be reported to the University for disciplinary action. **You are to avoid the mere suspicion of violating academic integrity.** All students are advised to familiarize themselves with the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found at the Office of Student Conduct's website (<http://studentconduct.appstate.edu/>).

Special Needs. Appalachian State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Those seeking accommodations based on a substantially limiting disability must contact and register with The Office of Disability Services (ODS) at www.ods.appstate.edu or 828-262-3056. Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODS staff to discuss eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

Syllabus and Course Content. I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus (including course content and policies) for any reason without advance notice. You will be notified of any changes to the *policies* of this course via email. Any changes in *course content* will be listed on the AsULearn website—no further notification will be given.

F. SUMMARY LECTURE SCHEDULE

	Tuesday	Thursday
Aug. 25 & 27	Introduction to the Course	Definitions of Art
Sept. 1 & 3	Expressionism	Formalism
Sept. 8 & 10	The Wittgensteinian Challenge	The Institutional Theory
Sept. 15 & 17	Defining Music	Music and Language
Sept. 22 & 24	Kitsch	Food
Sept. 29 & Oct. 1	Propaganda	Pornography
Oct. 6 & 8	The Ontology of Autographic Art	The Ontology of Allographic Art
Oct. 13 & 15	Forgeries	NO CLASS
Oct. 20 & 22	Genre and Style	NO CLASS
Oct. 27 & 29	Criticism as Retrieval	Criticism as Appraisal
Nov. 3 & 5	Intention and Interpretation	Outsider Art
Nov. 10 & 12	Marxist Aesthetics	Feminist Aesthetics
Nov. 17 & 19	Censorship	Immoral Art
Nov. 24 & 26	Fine Art and Pop Art	NO CLASS
Dec. 1 & 3	Sentimentalism	The Value of Art

Note: The schedule above is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes to this schedule will be published on the class website, so you are expected to refer to that schedule often.

G. GOALS AND OUTCOMES PERTAINING TO GENERAL EDUCATION

This course will meet the following General Education criteria for the Aesthetics Perspective: by (1) identifying the intellectual effects of their interactions with various forms of creative expression, (2) analyzing the conceptual components of various forms of creative expression, (3) interpreting forms of creative expression within various theoretical frameworks, (4) analyzing how products of creative expression reflect, respond to, and shape their social, political, and intellectual contexts, and (5) analyzing how cultural, conceptual and personal aesthetic criteria affect the processes of creation and interpretation.

Upon completion of this course, students will have acquired skills in critical and creative thinking as well as effective communication in the following ways:

Critical and Creative Thinking

- the critical analysis of philosophical arguments and theories pertaining to the philosophy of art with an emphasis on reducing an argument to its constitutive elements and determining the relevance and strength of those distinct parts.
- the ways in which concepts relevant to the philosophy of art are integrated in an argument.
- the ways in which individual or cultural perspectives may (or may not) be relevant to the determination of the validity of an argument, as well as the ways in which individual or cultural perspectives may (or may not) impact upon artistic practice in a way relevant to the philosophy of art.
- the philosophical techniques for the construction of an argument.
- the differences between competing philosophical theories, the ways in which the practice of the arts may impact upon various philosophical theories, as well as the ways in which the requirements of a philosophical theory may impact upon our understanding of the theory or practice of the arts.

Communicating Effectively

- articulating and effectively expressing a philosophically informed argument.
- the writing skills appropriate to the discipline of philosophy as they pertain to the arts.
- reading comparatively with an eye on integrating techniques and arguments from disparate philosophical traditions, contexts or sub-disciplines as well as relevant areas of art history and art theory.

H. ADVICE ON WRITING PHILOSOPHY ESSAYS

This is a course in philosophy, so you will be asked to write philosophical essays. Every good philosophy essay has (at least) three sections: a statement of *the question*, an *exegesis* and an *assessment*. As this course may be your first course in philosophy, I would suggest organizing the sections of your essays in that order.

The first section of your essay should simply spell out *the question* that your essay is intended to answer. In this section you would explicitly state the question and explain what is interesting or problematic about this question. For instance, if your essay is about Plato's theory of creativity, then in this section you would explain what the question is, why this question is interesting or what is problematic about this theory, and then you would briefly sum up your conclusion. In this section you identify "the problem" that your essay is going to discuss.

The next section of your essay should be an *exegesis*: you would explain how some philosopher solves "the problem". This is where you would closely examine some philosopher's answer to the question. You would explain this philosopher's answer in detail and, if possible, examine any criticism that other philosophers may have made of this argument. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate your knowledge of the philosopher's argument and, if applicable, your understanding of the historical importance of this argument. Again, if your essay is about Plato's theory of creativity, then in this section you would explain in detail what is Plato's theory and, if necessary, some of the criticism that this theory has received from *other* philosophers.

In the final section of your paper you would be expected to give some *assessment* of the argument offered in the exegesis. This is your chance to give your opinion. Do you agree with Plato's theory? Do you think it is flawed? Would you solve "the problem" differently? Or do you think that Plato's solution is correct and stands up against criticism? How might you defend Plato from his critics?

Generally speaking, more weight will be given to the first and second sections of your essay (the problem and the exegesis). As undergraduates, I don't expect you to have strong opinions yet on whether a certain philosophical argument is a good one or not. At this point in your academic career, I would be interested in your assessment because it gives me a good indication of how you are thinking of these philosophical problems, but you needn't make originality your top concern. You would not lose points on your essays for the opinion that you express, however you would gain points if you express your opinion well, making good use of the tools of philosophical argument and demonstrate an appreciation of the importance of the issues.

Remember: Having an opinion is a good thing, but having an *educated opinion* and *being able to express it clearly* is infinitely better. These two elements are essentially what I look for when grading an essay. The theories that we will study are part of your education—use these theories to express your educated opinion. In philosophy, the difference between a good essay and a bad essay is that a good essay gives the reader a reason to accept your opinion. An essay that consists of all opinion and no theory does not demonstrate that you have learned anything!

Breakdown of Grading Criterion:

Originality (0-10) — The essay contains some evidence of the student's thinking about the issues in a unique or significant way. Examples would include the student's offering an extended discussion of an original example or making a critical observation that significantly affects the student's analysis.

Use of text (0-20) — Each successful essay will exhibit familiarity with the assigned reading through the effective use of quotes or extended discussion of the text. The use of quotes taken from the lecture notes will not suffice.

Organization (0-15) — The organization of each essay should aid in the effectiveness of the argument and clarity of the exposition. Essays will be awarded points on the basis of clarity of organization, as well as essay length.

Comprehension (0-20) — Each successful essay will exhibit evidence of the student's appreciation of the philosophical issues and an understanding of philosophical techniques. Essays will be awarded points based on both of these criteria.

Clarity (0-15) — A successful essay will present the exposition and analysis clearly requiring a minimum of interpretation on the part of the reader.

Analysis (0-20) — Any philosophical argument will ultimately will be judged by the validity of its logic.