

Philosophy 334: Philosophy of Art

Gettysburg College
Department of Philosophy
Fall 2011

Professor: Bassam Romaya, PhD	Meeting Times: Mon Wed 11:00AM-12:15PM
Office Location: Weidensall Hall Room 310	Course Title: Philosophy of Art
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Office Phone: (717) 337-6296	Course Section: A
Office Hours: Mon Wed 1:00PM-2:00PM	Course Registration Number: 81011

I. Course Description: The scope and breadth of what has come to be known as aesthetics and the philosophy of art encompasses a variety of methods and world traditions, often sharing little in common with one another. Despite this vast terrain, central themes may be identified across competing perspectives. This course is not merely intended to survey philosophical perspectives on the fine arts, but aims to undertake a rigorous examination of key areas of contention in contemporary debates within aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Some of the main issues we will study include the nature of beauty and its relation to the sublime, prospects for a workable definition of art (e.g., institutional theory of art, etc.), the relationship between nature and art, the role of representation and mimicry, the significance of intention and interpretation in works of art, the distinction between art and craft, the role of expression and emotion in art, the relationship between form and content, the ontology of art, the nature of aesthetic experience/aesthetic “attitude” and other responses to art, as well as moral, legal, cultural, religious, and political implications for art making. We will analyze the work of many philosophers in this area, and other figures working in related fields such as art history, art criticism, and literary theory. Throughout the course, we will apply the various philosophies of art we study to both classic and contemporary examples, primarily drawn from the visual or “plastic” arts though other media such as architecture and photography will also be included. In general, we will not undertake a study of philosophical applications to literature, film, or music (these topics are covered in other specific courses, such as Philosophy 235, Philosophy 335, and Philosophy 339). We will also consider global theories in the philosophy of art, and incorporate feminist perspectives in our course.

II. Course Texts: In addition to the following required course texts, supplementary reading and instructional material will be available online as needed in Moodle, our course management system.

a) Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin, eds., *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2008). ISBN: 1405154357.

b) Susan L. Feagin, ed., *Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). ISBN: 9781405173551.

c) Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2004). ISBN: 0415266599.

III. Course Format: The course format consists in a combination of lectures, discussions, weekly readings, in-class presentations, take-home assignments and in-class examinations. On occasion, we may include other media (such as artwork, etc.) with special significance to course content or we may invite guest speakers to contribute to our class discussions. We will also visit local art venues or events, including Schmucker Art Gallery. While we will use Moodle for most of our course

management needs, weekly lectures and in-class discussions *will not* be posted online. Classroom attendance and active participation is an indispensable part of the pedagogical and learning process, substantially contributing to an integral portion of your overall course grade. As a general guideline, reading the text is mandatory. So, please come to class having done the assigned weekly readings and be prepared to discuss them *enthusiastically*.

IV. Prerequisites and Course Objectives: While a background in the visual arts is not required, a 100-level philosophy course is a prerequisite for registering in the class. This course invites you to be intellectually challenged, to think open-mindedly about new and traditional philosophical problems that we will examine/re-examine throughout the term. Additionally, you will be expected to “do philosophy” in the course; this entails practicing its methods of critical thought, reflection, analysis, and argumentation. In other words, you are required to think critically and philosophically about the various topics we discuss. Although there are many philosophical approaches encompassing different time periods, regions, and schools of thought, at least one thing remains certain—the preoccupation with rigorous, systematic reasoning and logical (though sometimes *illogical*) analyses frame the basis of much ancient and present philosophical work. In this course, we will not be particularly concerned with exploring the nature of rhetoric, sophistry, dogmatism, propaganda, sensationalism, coercion, mere *opinion* and other, traditionally non-philosophical methods or techniques. Philosophers are generally not concerned with uncritically assessed or narrowly subjectivistic standpoints devoid of sound argumentation. Alternatively, in the spirit of our enterprise, the aim is to: 1) broaden your theoretical presuppositions about the world we inhabit by critically examining the open and free-exchange of ideas that *philosophers* have contributed throughout the ages for the advancement of human knowledge; 2) invite you to draw your own well-informed and well-reasoned conclusions about general philosophical problems of human life; 3) encourage you to further explore your own place in the world by guiding you along on your own philosophical journey in search of “truths,” meaning and personal understanding of our global environment.

V. Course Requirements and Grading Procedure: Your grade for the course is based on the total number of points accumulated from 5 brief papers, 1 midterm exam, 1 term paper (with an oral component), 1 final exam, and an attendance and participation score (which includes presenting one of our course readings). Please note that this grading scale makes use of the plus/minus system. The *approximate* grading scale used to assess your final course grade is modeled upon the following percentile grade point system:

94-96 % = A	80-83 % = B-	67-69 % = D+
90-93 % = A-	77-79 % = C+	64-66 % = D
87-89 % = B+	74-76 % = C	60-63 % = D-
84-86 % = B	70-73 % = C-	57-59 % = F

In very few cases, half points may boost your overall grade. That is, if your grade total contains a fraction, you will automatically receive the next highest grade. For example, if your grade points amount to 89½, you get an A- for the course rather than B+. This works toward your advantage. Moreover, in very few cases, a student may earn a grade of A+, this involves earning a cumulative point total of 100 or more points. Please note that both the midterm and final exam will focus on knowledge base acquired during a previous X-week period, scheduled successively throughout the course; this means that there will be no comprehensive exams at any point during the term. Of course, you are encouraged to apply material you have amassed during various stages of the course, but please do note that each exam is structured so as to test your knowledge base of a particular area that we

cover during each X-weeks of instruction time. Finally, exams administered throughout the term will be writing-intensive/essay-based format, conventional in most philosophy courses; hence, there will be no “multiple choice” questions or “fill-ins” on any exam. Detailed instructions on how to write an essay for a philosophy exam will be provided several weeks before the first exam is given. The breakdown for 5 sections that constitutes your overall course grade is as follows:

V.1 Attendance, Participation, and Presentation: 15%

Regular attendance is essential for succeeding in this (and probably any other) course. After the first day of class, I will begin taking regular attendance; your attendance and participation score is largely determined by (fully awake) physical presence and active in-class participation; this customarily involves speaking up and directly contributing to our in-class discussions, projects, or assignments in a variety of ways. Participation scores are not tallied automatically; they are earned as a result of regular in-class participation and assessed at the sole discretion of the professor. Each student will be required to present one of the readings for the course (excluding introductions, prefaces, forwards, short excerpts or essays). Student presentations of weekly readings are worth up to 5 points, with attendance and participation making up the remaining 10 points. Please note that there will be no presentations during the final 3 weeks of the semester (therefore please arrange to present one of the course readings early on in the term). Presentations on the readings will be assessed for comprehension, argument analysis, clarity of presentation, and originality. The weekly lectures will assume that students have done the assigned readings (and thought critically about them) before coming to class; therefore, please be prepared to discuss the material *enthusiastically*. The College does not recognize a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Every absence is penalized at 2 points per class meeting. For any exceptions in the form of unexpected or immediate special circumstances, a student must notify me in advance or *ex post facto* of their serious and compelling reasons for missing class; this generally involves circumstances beyond a student’s control which may not only impact our own course but other classes as well. Compulsory obligations such as attending to unforeseen medical needs or immediate family emergencies constitute unexpected or immediate special circumstances. Supporting documentation may be requested in order to verify any urgent matters impacting class attendance. In the event that you are unable to make it to class, please remember that you are nonetheless responsible for obtaining and knowing any material covered during your absence (absences do not absolve you from accountability). Similarly, if you must leave class early or arrive late, you are responsible for knowing what you miss, so please consult with me or someone else in class about any crucial information you may have missed. Excessive absences will very likely impact your understanding of the material, thereby preventing you from succeeding in the course. What’s more, information such as weekly reading assignments, handouts, and current announcement of exams, is often made during class. On average, you should expect to spend approximately 2 hours of study or preparation time for each 1 hour we spend in-class per week. If you find that you are struggling with the material, I strongly advise you to see me as soon as possible for extra help—before you fall too far behind. Lastly, *please make sure you have a current Gettysburg College email account and check it frequently (at least daily). I often email students course updates and other pertinent announcements as new information becomes available.*

V.2 Reflection and Analysis: 25%

These biweekly assignments take on a variety of forms. In the beginning of the term, they will contain your responses to routine essay questions so as to give you some practice in preparing for upcoming essay exams. Other assignments may require argument analysis from course readings, or reflections on a film or other course content. The aim of these brief essay-style response papers is to keep you on track with weekly readings and other course material. They are intended to fulfill several learning

objectives; such as developing your skills at making arguments explicit, summarizing, and evaluating competing philosophical positions. The assignments also help you to hone down your essay writing skills in preparation for similar types of essay questions you will be faced with on the midterm and final exams. Additionally, they allow you to demonstrate your reading comprehension of the material, as well as your ability to situate a particular philosophical topic in relation to other material we have covered; the written assignments provide you with an opportunity to formally reflect on the readings on your own, and enable me to assess your level of engagement with course material. It also helps me to evaluate your course progress by the time midterm reports are due. More detailed information about each individual Reflection and Analysis paper will be provided in class. Generally, these papers involve responding to 2 essay questions, dedicating approximately a page to each question, with a running total of approximately 2-3 pages in length for each assignment. Every Reflection and Analysis assignment is worth up to 5 points, with 2 ½ points relegated to each essay. There will be 5 Reflection and Analysis papers assigned throughout the term. Accordingly, you may earn up to 25 points from these papers during the semester—this constitutes 25% of your course grade. The assignments are spaced out approximately 2 weeks apart, except for the weeks in which we have other major things due.

V.3 Midterm Exam: 20%

A three part midterm exam will test knowledge base acquired in the first half of the term. The basic format is 2 short essays and 1 long essay. The midterm exam is worth 20 points total; the short essays are worth 5 points each and the long essay is valued at 10 points. You may also attempt an extra credit question at the end of your exam which may boost your overall exam score (see Section VI on extra credit). *Please note that no electronic devices whatsoever may be used or accessed during your midterm exam.*

V.4 Term Paper: 20%

The term paper assignment has two components, oral and written. The basic structure of the paper is to lay out your position, anticipate objections to your argument, and whenever possible, provide replies to the objections you raise. The oral part of the paper involves an informal presentation of your findings to the class. This part of the assignment involves a brief 10-15 minute presentation, giving you an opportunity to share your findings with other students. It also enables you to practice public speaking skills and obtain direct feedback from other students so as to improve the overall quality of your work. The written portion is worth 15 points and the oral portion is worth 5 points (with 20 points total for the term paper assignment). The oral portion must be scheduled before the paper is due. Please keep in mind that each student may present their term paper research *only once* during the semester, and any missed presentation *cannot be rescheduled* or made-up. Finally, there will be no presentations during the last 3 weeks of the semester. The written portion asks you to analyze a specific philosophical problem in the philosophy of art and offer workable or convincing responses to common objections one might raise against your position. You may write on any topic that interests you from our course readings (other topics are also possible), regardless of whether or not we have covered the material in class; this gives you an opportunity to explore new material on your own. Recommended length for these papers is 8-10 pages. More detailed information on the term paper assignment will follow.

V.5 Final Exam: 20%

A final exam will be administered during our regularly scheduled exam time (see bottom of page 7). The final will be very similar to the midterm in format, though it will cover knowledge base acquired in the second half of the term. It is not a *comprehensive* exam, which means, it will not cover everything we learned since the first week of class, but only material acquired in the second half of the

semester. *Please note that no electronic devices whatsoever may be used or accessed during your final exam.*

VI. Extra Credit: While there are no formal assignments made for the exclusive purpose of gaining extra credit points, students have the opportunity to earn “extra credit” on both the midterm and final exam. Accordingly, students may accumulate more than the total number of points possible on either the midterm or final, through successfully addressing an optional extra credit question/problem which appears at the end of each exam. You will have several extra credit questions to choose from so your choices will not be limited. Please do keep in mind that extra credit exam questions may not come from the text and might be more challenging than ones contained in the body of the exam. Generally speaking, extra credit problems are set to a higher degree of assessment; that is, graded with a greater degree of scrutiny than questions in the body of the exam.

VII. Make-Up Exams and Late Work Acceptance Policy: Please make every effort to take the midterm and final exam during their regularly scheduled class time. Make-ups may only be administered in the event of serious and compelling reasons beyond the student’s control; this includes but is not limited to immediate family emergencies, documented medical reasons, or other College-approved exemptions. You must notify me in advance of your impending emergency and schedule a mutually-convenient appointment time for any make-ups. Late papers are penalized at a rate of 10% markdown for each day late beyond the due date (for example, if the term paper is worth 20 points, you will lose 2 points for each day the paper is late).

VIII. Snow Emergencies and Unexpected Class Cancellations: In the event of an unexpected campus wide emergency due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances that result in class cancellation, I will contact you (by email) with specific instructions on how the emergency impacts any exams, papers, or other assignments scheduled for the day/s in question. Depending on where we are at in the semester, I may postpone your exam, convert it to a take-home, or make other arrangements for you to complete the assigned course work.

IX. Academic Integrity: You are expected to abide by the principles and practices of the Gettysburg College Honor Code at all times. The Honor Code encompasses a broad range of responsibilities for honesty apart from specific academic contexts. While there will be several opportunities to discuss the principles of the Honor Code with respect to particular course assignments and in-class exams, you are encouraged to see me with any questions or concerns you may have about the College’s Honor Code system. Additionally, I encourage (but do not require) you to include and sign the pledge on all submitted work. As a reminder, all students are bound by the principles of the Honor Code regardless of whether or not they wish to sign and include the pledge in submitted course work. Printed copies of the Honor Code are available in the Office of Academic Advising. The full text is also available from their website at: http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/honor_code/

X. Class Conduct/Miscellaneous Policies: A successful learning environment is generated by respect, professional courtesy, and kind consideration of others; please keep this in mind while in class. As always, please adhere to familiar classroom etiquette; that is, please refrain from eating (drinks are fine), sleeping, talking privately, texting, and using any and all electronic equipment (i.e., cell phones, iPods, Blackberrys, personal stereos/headphones, palm pilots, recording devices, scientific calculators, laptops, etc.) while in class. *Please note that the use of cellular/mobile phones as well as laptops is not permitted in class at any time (or in my office hours).* The use of cellular phones in class is completely inappropriate and intolerable; operating phones in class distracts other students and interrupts my

concentration or train of thought. Moreover, students have been known to use cellular phones as a contemporary cheating device; therefore, you may not use your phones (or other electronic devices) during an exam. If it is imperative that you use your phone, please conduct your business outside of class as quickly as possible and disable your phone before returning to class. Additionally, laptops may not be used or accessed during class, as students often busy themselves with external matters unsuitable or inappropriate for a participatory in-class environment. For special or personal circumstances, please see me in advance about any exceptions to the prohibition on the use of electronic devices in class. In addition, please do not bring young children or non-human animals/pets (unless pre-approved by the College) to class. Finally, if you have any questions or concerns with respect to grades or your specific course performance, please contact me personally. As a general rule, your grades (among other educational records) are confidential, thus I am *not permitted nor required* to discuss your course performance with anyone else on your behalf. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as FERPA) prohibits me from discussing your educational records with other parties. For the FERPA policy governing Gettysburg College faculty, please see the College Registrar's website at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/registrar>. In brief, please conduct yourselves appropriately and adhere to commonsensical, mutually beneficial, classroom etiquette.

XI. Special Circumstances and Students with Disabilities: Please do not hesitate to meet with me in the event that you encounter difficulties of a personal nature which may hinder your ability to succeed in this course. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, etc.) that may impact course performance, should contact me immediately so that I may accommodate your needs as early on as possible. If you would like to request accommodations or review the College's policies governing disability disclosures, please contact the Office of Academic Advising at (717) 337-6579 or visit their office located in the College Union Building Room 280. You may also access the Gettysburg College *Handbook for Students with Disabilities* online at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/about/offices/provost/advising/disabilities/>

XII. Gettysburg College Writing Center: You are encouraged to take advantage of the Gettysburg College Writing Center in order to improve the quality of your writing. While you are *always* welcome to see me for help in improving your written work, on occasion, I may refer you to our Writing Center for additional assistance. If you would like information on drop-in tutoring hours, location, or the types of services offered by the College's Writing Center, please consult the Center's website at: <http://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/english/student/writing-center.dot>. You may also contact the Center's Assistant Director, Professor William Lane, directly by email at wlane@gettysburg.edu or by phone at (717) 337-6756.

XIII. Tentative Course Outline: (Subject to frequent revisions and omissions as needed)

Week 1: 8/29, 8/31—Introduction to Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: Ch 1 (Kristeller), Defining Art: Ch 22 (Tolstoy), Ch 35 (Weitz)

Week 2: 9/5, 9/7—Identification, Essentialism, and the Institutional Theory of Art: Ch 36 (Danto), Ch 37 (Dickie), Ch 38 (Goodman), Ch 39 (Carroll)

Week 3: 9/12, 9/14—Beauty and Sublimity: Ch 4 (Plato), Ch 10 (Hutcheson), Ch 12 (Burke), Ch 14 (Kant), **Reflection and Analysis #1**

- Week 4: 9/19, 9/21—Aesthetic Experience: Ch 24 (Bell), Ch 27 (Dewey), Ch 23 (Bullough), Ch 40 (Dickie)
- Week 5: 9/26, 9/28—Authenticity and the Ontology of Art: Ch 29 (Benjamin), Ch 30 (Heidegger), Ch 45 (Walton), 43 (Sibley), **Reflection and Analysis #2**
- Week 6: 10/3, 10/5—Imitation and Representation: Ch 3 (Plato), Ch 19 (Schopenhauer), Ch 46 (Carlson), Ch 26 (Collingwood), Midterm Review
- Week 7: 10/10 (NO CLASS: Reading Day), 10/12—**Midterm Exam**
- Week 8: 10/17, 10/19— Expression and Emotion: Ch 2 (Plato), Ch 5 (Aristotle), Ch 28 (Langer), Ch 51 (Sircello)
- Week 9: 10/24, 10/26—Interpretation and Evaluation in Art: Ch 32 (Gadamer), Ch 49 (Carroll), Ch 31 (Adorno), Ch 50 (Gaut), **Reflection and Analysis #3**
- Week 10: 10/31, 11/2—Morality, Religion, and Recent Controversies: Ch 18 (Hegel), Ch 11 (Hume), Ch 8 (St. Bonaventure), Ch 55 (Devereaux), Online Selections
- Week 11: 11/7, 11/9—*Gender and Aesthetics*: Intro, Ch 1-Ch 6 (Korsmeyer), **Reflection and Analysis #4**

Last day to withdraw from a course with grade of “W”: **Friday, November 11th 2011**

- Week 12: 11/14, 11/16—Global Theories in Art and Aesthetics I: Intro (Feagin), Balinese Aesthetics (Davies), Indian Aesthetics (Higgins), Somaesthetics (Shusterman), Islamic Aesthetics (Erzen)
- Week 13: 11/21, 11/23 (NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Recess)—Film: TBA, **Reflection and Analysis #5**
- Week 14: 11/28, 11/30: Global Theories in Art and Aesthetics II: Japanese Aesthetics (Lopes) and (Saito), Chinese Aesthetics (Mullis) and (Wiseman), Globalization (Danto) and (Carroll)
- Week 15: 12/5, 12/7: Afterthoughts, Final Review, **Term Papers Due**
- Week 16: 12/12 (NO CLASS: Final Exams), 12/14 (NO CLASS: Reading Day)
- Week 17: **Final Exam**

According to the Gettysburg College Fall 2011 Final Examination Schedule, our officially scheduled final exam will take place on:
Saturday, December 17th 2011 at 8:30AM to 11:30AM in Weidensall Hall 110