

Syllabus

How to use this syllabus

This syllabus provides you with information specific to this course and information about important university policies. This document should be viewed as a course overview; it is not a contract and is subject to change as the semester evolves.

Course Materials

1. Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology. (eds Cahn and Meskin) Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
2. An Actor Prepares. Constantin Stanislavski (trans. Hapgood) Routledge 2003.
3. The Spirit of Noh: A New Translation of the Classic Noh Treatise the Fushikaden. Zeami (trans. Wilson) Shambhala Publications, 2013.
4. Excerpts from *Descartes' Error* and *Looking for Spinoza* by Antonio Damasio will be provided online.

Course Plan

In ancient Greece, an *art (techne)* was merely a skill, cf. martial arts, nautical arts, medical arts. The distinctions we now make between fine arts, crafts, design, etc., were articulated much later, as the Renaissance progressed into the Modern Period when intellectual revolutions bloomed and systems became all the rage. In the contemporary period philosophy took a linguistic turn that changed the nature of the question "what is art?"

There will be three units to the course this semester.

Week 1: Introduction to the topic (see attached Handout 1)

Unit 1: Performance as an Art - How exemplary experts answer Plato's challenges

Unit 2: The Modern Period - The systematic/scientific turn

Unit 3: The Contemporary Period - The linguistic and political turns

Unit 1 overview: Plato's arguments concerning rhapsody and imitation in the *Ion* and the *Republic* may initially strike us as silly and outdated, but we can find in them the seeds of philosophical issues that are live today. Consider the following philosophical questions as you read Plato (Challenger), Stanislavski (Contemporary Westerner), Zeami (Classic Easterner), and Damasio (Neuroscientist).

1. Why might one value a skilled performance more highly than a skillfully made artifact?
2. What makes a performance beautiful? Its subject matter, its form, something else?
3. Of what is an expert poet a master?
4. Of what is an expert rhapsode a master?
5. Can we generalize or analogize from rhapsody to other performing arts, e.g. script writing and cinematic acting?
6. Can one be a master of performance without mastering any distinct subjects or arts?
7. What are the excellences of performance? What makes a performance "inspired"?
8. Are inspired performances false? If so, what consequences would this have for the value and evaluation of art?

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Course Objectives and Methods

Do not expect the texts we read to *answer* philosophical questions like those listed. Most philosophical work raises questions and attempts to make progress towards an adequate answer to them. *Your job* is to understand the question, critically assess our progress, and perhaps make some progress yourself.

In order to do this *well*, you will need to develop your philosophical skills. Converting the argument in an essay or dialogue into standard argument form is a philosophical skill that takes practice. Constructing your own argument is a related but distinct philosophical skill that can be practiced by proposing objections and replies to an argument.

In order to help you learn how to read philosophy of art and begin doing your job as a philosophy student, an *interpretation* of Plato's argument in *Ion* as an inference to the best explanation is provided in Handout 2. This is an *example* of what you will need to do in order to understand the text, critically analyze it, and communicate your objections and insights effectively. Your notes should always outline arguments by the time you are finished. Sometimes the argument form, the premises, and the inferences are all explicit and clear [LOL]. Usually you will need to do a lot of work to construct a sound argument from the text.

Notes on the reading will be provided only for the first few reading assignments. We will practice parsing the arguments in the text together in class periodically throughout the course, but it will be up to you to construct your notes for most of the course because this is one of the best ways to develop your philosophical skills.

Course Requirements

This is a **writing-intensive, upper division** philosophy course. Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, on average, **ten hours per week** doing work for this course: 3 hours per week attending lecture and an additional 6-7 hours per week reading and studying the material, completing graded assignments, and otherwise preparing for class. This should total approximately 140-150 hours of work for the semester.

- Attendance and participation are required. Class discussions are an essential part of the learning process for this course. There is no substitute.
 1. Preparation is required. In order to be prepared for class, you will need to read the assigned text *more than once*, take notes on the key definitions and theses, outline the arguments presented, and identify questions raised.
 2. Online participation for this course is minimal, amounting basically to downloading reading materials and notes, checking your email, and turning in assignments
- Presentation/"Show and Tell" (10%) You will be asked to share your philosophical analysis of an alleged work of art with the class. This is an opportunity to share and to practice speaking in front of a friendly group and fielding questions.
- Papers (40%). You are encouraged to submit a draft of your paper for advance feedback.
- Exams (50%) There will be at least two essay-based exams. For each exam you will be provided with a list of study questions from which the exam questions will be drawn.

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Reading List

We will not be able to cover the entire book. If there are particular authors or topics you wish to cover, let me know and I will try to work your interests into the schedule. The following list of readings is our initial plan for the course. Note that many of the works included in our textbook are excerpts from a longer work, and there is *plenty* more material out there for those of you who continue on in this field.

Unit 1: Performance as an Art

- How exemplary experts answer Plato's challenges

Plato	<i>Ion, Republic X</i>
Stanislavski	<i>An Actor Prepares</i> (especially Chapter 2)
Wilson's	Introduction to the <i>Fushikaden</i>
Zeami	<i>Fushikaden</i>
Damasio	<i>Descartes' Error</i> and <i>Looking for Spinoza</i> (excerpts)

Unit 2: The Modern Period

- The systematic/scientific turn

Hutcheson	<i>An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue</i>
Hume	<i>Of the Standard of Taste</i>
Burke	<i>A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful</i>
Kant	<i>Critique of Aesthetic Judgment</i>
Schiller	<i>Letter of an Aesthetic Education of Man</i>
Von Schelling	<i>Philosophy of Art</i>
Hegel	<i>The Philosophy of Fine Art</i>
Schopenhauer	<i>The World as Will and Representation</i>
Bullough	"Psychical Distance" as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle
Clive Bell	<i>Art</i>
Collingwood	<i>The Principles of Art</i>

Unit 3: The Contemporary Period

- The linguistic and political turns

Weitz	<i>The Role of Theory in Aesthetics</i>
Danto	<i>The Artworld</i>
Dickie	<i>What is Art? An Institutional Analysis</i>
Goodman	<i>When is Art?</i>
Wimsatt/Beardsley	<i>The Intentional Fallacy</i>
Gaut	<i>The Ethical Criticism of Art</i>
Devereaux	<i>Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers, and the Gendered Spectator: The "New" Aesthetics</i>

Each of these units will focus primarily on the fine and beautiful arts, but not exclusively.

Handout 1 *Dividing the Task*

We may divide the topic *art* in several different ways, each of which will lend itself to some distinctive issues and some overlap with other ways of dividing art.

What are the arts?

Martial	Dramatic
Nautical	Musical
Healing	Literary
Political	Culinary
Plastic (sculpture, architecture)	Pedagogic

Is it possible to construct a complete system of all possible arts or categories of art?

On what grounds can we correctly individuate arts? Is it arbitrary?

Is there a fundamental difference between liberal arts, fine arts, and/or beautiful arts?

Who is involved in art?

Artists	Guilds	Producers
Audience/observers	The Public	Consumers
Patrons	Publishers, Studios	Funders
Teachers	Schools	Educators
Critics	Awarding institutions, the press	Evaluators
Supporting artists (director, editor, set designer, casting agent)		Collaborators

Can there be non-artistic roles involved in the creation of art?

Can we systematize the possible roles we may have in art individually and collectively?

We may also divide an investigation of art according to the traditional divisions of Western analytic philosophy.

Value Theory

- What is beauty? What is sublimity? Can we systematize the evaluative terms of art?
- What is artistic genius? Can it be developed or disciplined?
- What makes an art “fine” (refined)? What makes something a “work of art”?
- Is the value of art the value of a skill? The value of an artifact?
- Is the value of art political, moral, religious, instrumental, or irreducibly valuable “in itself”...?

Metaphysics and Epistemology

- What is an “aesthetic judgment” (i.e. the peculiar sort of thing we do when we say “that is beautiful”)? What faculties are required to do this and how do they work?
- Is there a standard of taste? Can there be a science of taste? Of feeling? Of art?
- Can true artistry be learned or taught? What is a school of art? Is this different from a movement?
- What are the proper objects of aesthetic judgment, if any? (nature, artifacts, fine art, myself)
- Is art essentially representational? Is there truth in art? Should there be?
- Can works of art be functional? Ought they be?

Each of these ways of dividing the topic is somewhat arbitrary and problematic. As mentioned in the syllabus, our initial approach to the arts in Unit 1 will be to focus on performance as a paradigm of art.