Inspiration for diversifying this syllabus was drawn from, and therefore credit is due to the professors contributing to, https://aesthetics-online.org/general/custom.asp?page=CurriculumGrants
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Prof-Christopher-Davidson/377742182328244

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Art is all around us. All human cultures have some form or another of art, with music and decorative arts being among the most common. There seems to be something universally shared in the human desire to make and experience art. However, what counts as art varies drastically with place and time and culture, so maybe art is not universal. Maybe it expresses unique details and addresses the experiences of a few people at this moment, rather than of all humanity for all time.

Whether the arts are local and particular, or are universal and global, they are incredibly powerful when they get at their audience in the right way: Some people cry during movies but not during their own breakups. Some people will avoid socializing with their friends because of the risk of spoilers about their favorite TV shows (I sympathize). Many of us are deeply invested in our most prized pieces of art. The arts stir deep emotions and reveal reality in ways that science and philosophy cannot. What gives art this intense power over us?

You might wonder why these questions matter: if you love a painting, what could an explanation of ‘why?’ add to that? One reason to philosophically ask ‘why?’ is that if we reflect on what art is, what it does to its audience, who counts as an artist, how art is integrated into our social world, and in what ways some artworks are better than others, then we can expose ourselves to more art where we previously would not have expected to find it. You will also have a better idea of what one generally can get out of art—and of what you specifically want to experience when you approach something as art.

Readings in the philosophy of art, unfortunately, sometimes hardly refer at all to any actual art, or, do so only to add support to the pre-existing ideas of the author (I’m looking at you, Heidegger). To counter this unfortunate tendency, this course includes many statements by artists themselves. “To the arts themselves!,” might be a motto for our course.

Another unfortunate limitation of the best-known philosophy of art— by Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, etc.—is that it is almost exclusively by western European men from the past. But so much happened in art after World War II, and there are so many voices—from non-Europeans, women, African-Americans, homosexuals, etc.—which are part of a full experience of the arts. So most of the artists here represent or give us a more inclusive and more contemporary discussion.

One question loudly raised by the arts recently is, “what makes something art?” It cannot just be beauty, since some great art is deliberately ugly (e.g., Bosch, Goya). It cannot just be expression of feeling, since some abstract art avoids expressivism. It cannot even be that only “the best, most cultured” qualifies as art: popular music and even downright bad TV, for instance, is still art. We will end our course on this theme, partly to set up these questions: since autobiography (a self-written life) can be art, then can a life be art, if it is not written down yet is lived to the fullest? And if so, how can we transform our lives into aesthetically rewarding artworks?

GRADING

Your total grade will consist of:

Maintenance Project:    5%
First Paper: 20%
Second Paper: 30%
Questionnaire 2%
3 Reading Journals: 18% (6% each)
Online Discussion: 15%
Instagram Report: 5%
Facebook Posts 5%

POLICIES
Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.

You will be held to University of Little Rock’s standards of academic integrity without exception. I have zero tolerance for cheating.

The policy: http://ualr.edu/deanofstudents/home/academic-integrity/. You are responsible for knowing the policy: “but I did not know that I was plagiarizing” is not a valid excuse. If you are ever in any doubt about what is acceptable, please ask.

ASSIGNMENTS
MAINTENANCE PROJECT: Following closely pages 731-37 of the Stiles book, we will perform an art practice ourselves. I will specify how ours will differ from the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles’ practice, but basically, you will live one hour of your day as art for 5 straight days, much as she turned the mundane into art. You will turn in on Blackboard a write up of what it was like each day (Aug 1-5), telling me the hour you chose, what you did during this hour, who knew that this hour was declared to be art, why it felt like real art or why not, and on the final day say how the experience changed over the 5 days.

PAPERS: Papers are graded anonymously to ensure fair, unbiased grading. Do not put your name in the paper, but, do give it a distinctive title so I can tell them apart. The papers will be based on prompts I give you, or on a prompt of your own that you have spoken with me about. There is information on Blackboard regarding further requirements.

READING JOURNALS: There are 3 Journal assignments due; they all follow the following format. Each journal assignment must refer to at least 4 readings. The minimum length for each assignment is over two pages double-space; each individual reading should get a half-page to a page of response. There is no maximum length. At least one author must be an artist from the Kristine Stiles book and at least one must be a philosopher from the S.D. Ross book. Do not summarize the reading: tell me your reaction to it. Were you surprised at how the artist described her working process? Does the reading give you a new way of thinking about art? Was something shocking in the reading, or did it make you laugh?
**ONLINE DISCUSSION:** Inside Blackboard is a discussion board, which is our online participation forum. For an A, you will need to give a substantial post or response to another’s post at least 3 times each week. Posting once a week or less will earn a C. Responding to another person’s post counts just as much as posting your own. You are expected to show the same respect to your classmates as you would show in a physical classroom. Disagreement is acceptable—indeed, encouraged. But it will be done in a civil manner even when there are important disagreements.

**INSTAGRAM REPORT:** Details to come shortly, but I will give a list of artistic pages to follow on Instagram. Instagram is a free photo-sharing app; you will have to download it if you do not have it already. You will then fill out a report for me that addresses questions about democratizing art by removing it from its elite museum context, seeing contemporary international artists you cannot see otherwise, technology and art, etc.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Kristine Stiles, 2nd edition
- *Art and Its Significance*, (AIS) edited by Stephen David Ross, 3rd edition

**SCHEDULE**

Readings with just page numbers, e.g., (831-33), are in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Kristine Stiles.
Readings marked with (AIS) are in *Art and Its Significance*, ed. Stephen David Ross.

Do the readings in the order listed. Generally, we start with artists: there are many of these so that we can hear first some voices other than the pre-approved canon of (mostly western European, mostly male) philosophers.

There are often connections between the artists’ writings and the philosophers’—though not always and often the connection is one of disagreement. Find your own connections.

**Section 1: General or Particular? Universal vs. Individual Taste, and “Art” vs. Different Kinds of Arts**

July 5- Introductions. Assignment Due: Questionnaire
Sam Gilliam, “The Transformation of Nature through Nature” (727-29)
Carolee Schneemann, “Woman in the Year 2000” (842-43)
John Cage, “Composition as Process, Part II: Indeterminacy” (831-33)

July 6-
Romare Bearden, “Interview with Henri Ghent” (245-48)
Carrie Mae Weems, “Interview with Susan Canning” (1044-46)
Jesse Helms, “Senator Helms Objects to Taxpayers’ Funding for Sacrilegious Art” (297-98)
Andre Serrano, “Letter to the National Endowment for the Arts” (298)
David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (AIS 77-92)

July 7-
Paul Tillich, “Each Period has Its Peculiar Image of Man” (208-10)
Joan Jonas, “Closing Statement” (894-95)
Robert Ryman, “Statement” & “Statements” (720-21)

July 8-
Ai Weiwei, “Making Choices” (1069-70)
Alberto Burri, “Words Are No Help” (52-53)
Marlene Dumas, “Unsatisfied Desire and the untrustworthy Language of Art” (308-311)
G.W.F. Hegel (AIS 153-59)

**Section 2: Kant’s and Aristotle’s Canonical Philosophies of Art**
July 11- Assignment Due: Reading Journal #1
Agnes Martin, “The Untroubled Mind” (150-59)
Dorothea Rockburne, “Statement” (169-171)
Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (AIS 93-113): on beauty

July 12-
Anish Kapoor, “Interview with John Tusa” (188-89)
Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor’s World* (605-9)
Immanuel Kant (AIS 128-138): on the artist and on taste

July 13-
Cai Guo-Qiang, “Foolish Man and His Mountain” (789-790)
Immanuel Kant (113-127): on the sublime

July 14-
Robert Motherwell, “Beyond the Aesthetic” (28-29)
Carolee Schneemann, “From the Notebooks” (840-42)
Aristotle, *Poetics* (AIS 65-74)

**Section 3: Who is The Artist? Do Artists Communicate Falsity, Mystical Truth, or Feelings?**
July 15-
Yayoi Kusama, “Interview by Grady Turner” (111-13)
Joan Mitchell, “Interview with Yves Michaud” (32-35)
John Baldessari, “What Thinks Me Now” (1040-41)
Plato, *Republic* (AIS 7-11, 32-39; 43-44) and Plato, *Ion* (AIS 45-55)

July 18- Assignment Due: Reading Journal #2
Max Bill, “Concrete Art” & “The Mathematical Approach in Contemporary Art” (91-94)
Lucian Freud, “Some Thoughts on Painting” (243-45)
Section 4: The Frightening, Ugly, or Brutal (but not the Beautiful) Can Be Sublime Art

July 19- Assignment Due: Paper #1
Francis Bacon, “Interview with David Sylvester” (222-27)
Mario Merz, “Statements” (779-780)
Karel Appel, “My Paint is Like a Rocket” & “The Condemned” (231-32)
Sigmund Freud, “The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming” (AIS 500-506)

July 20-
Magdalena Abakanowicz, “Statements” (274-77)
Jenny Saville, “Interview with Simon Schama (316-18)
Bernd and Hilla Becher, Blast Furnace in Siegen, Germany (1015)
Umberto Eco, On Ugliness (BB)

July 21-
Piero Manzoni, “For the Discovery of a Zone of Images” (109-110)
Lucio Fontana, “Manifesto blanco” (47-50)
Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy sections 1-4 & 7 (BB)

July 22-
Tadeusz Kantor, “Representation Loses More and More Its Charm” (56-58)
Friedrich Nietzsche, sections 9, 10, 12, & 15 (BB)

July 25- Assignment Due: Reading Journal #3
Louise Nevelson, Dawns and Dusks (603-5)
Yinka Shonibare, “Interview with Anthony Downey” (671-72)
Emilio Vedova, “It’s Not So Easy to Paint a Nose” (50-51)
Robin James, Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism (BB)

July 26-
Yvonne Rainer, “Statements” (838-840)
Louise Bourgeois, “Interview with Donald Kuspit” (38-42)
Elizabeth Murray, “Statement” (67)
Robin James, Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism (BB)

Section 5: Is Art an Effect, or on the Contrary, a Cause, of Future Social Changes?
Modernism and Postmodernism

July 27-
Fernand Léger, “The Human Body Considered as an Object” (202-4)
Joseph Kosuth, “Statement” & “Art After Philosophy” (976-982)
Victor Burgin, “Looking at Photographs” (1004-8)
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (AIS 525-538)

July 28- Assignment Due: Instagram Project
Jeff Donaldson, “Ten in Search of a Nation” (414-17)
Jean Tinguely, “Statement” (473-74)
Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels (639-42)
Agnes Denes, “Wheatfield” (644-46)
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto” (AIS 655-659)
Umberto Boccioni, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture” (AIS 661-666)

July 29-
Pat Steir, “Interview with Barbara Weidle” (59-63)
Fiona Rae, “Interview with Simon Wallis” (70-73)
Mierle Laderman Ukeles, “Maintenance Art Manifesto” & letter & “Sanitation Manifesto!” (731-37)
Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” & “Sentences on Conceptual Art” (987-992)

Aug 1- Assignment Due: Maintenance Art Day 1
Peter Halley, “Notes on the Paintings” & “Deployment of the Geometric” (186-87)
Takashi Murakami, “The Super Flat Manifesto” & “Earth in My Window” (321-23)
Rasheed Araeen, “Cultural Imperialism: Some Observations on Cultural Situation in the Third World” (886-89)
Cindy Sherman, “Statement” & “Interview with Els Barents” (926-28)
Keith Haring, “Statement” (426-28)
Jean-François Lyotard (AIS 559-564)

Section 6: Social Functions, Our Everyday Relation to Art, Consuming Art
Aug 2- Assignment Due: Maintenance Art Day 2
Barkley L. Hendricks, “Palette Scrapings” (261-66)
Pipilotti Rist, “Interview with Rochelle Steiner” (541-43)
Maya Lin, “Interview with Elizabeth Hess” & “Interview with Sarah J. Rogers” & “Lecture” (623-24)
Felix Gonzalez-Torres, “Being a Spy: Interview with Robert Storr” (1056-58)
Suzanne Lacy, “The Name of the Game” (895-99)
John Pitman Weber, “Murals as People’s Art” (293-297)

Aug 3- Assignments Due: Paper #2 Assignments Due: Maintenance Art Day 3
Seth Sigelaub, “The Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement” (1001-2)
Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting” (BB)

Section 7: “But is it ‘Art’?” Aesthetics of Daily Existence, Popular Music, Pop Art, and Kitsch
Aug 4- Assignment Due: Maintenance Art Day 4
Max Beckmann, “Letters to a Woman Painter” (205-8)
Robert Filliou, “GOOD-FOR-NOTHING-GOOD-AT-EVERYTHING” (854)
Yoko Ono, “To the Wesleyan People” (858-860)
Eleanor Antin, “Notes on Transformation” (892-94)
Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress” (BB)

Aug 5- Assignment Due: Maintenance Art Day 5
Richard Hamilton, “Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility” (344-46)
Roy Lichtenstein, “Interview with G.R. Swenson” (388-390)
Andy Warhol, “Andy Warhol in His Own Words: Statements” (390-96)
Orlan, This Is My Body . . . This Is My Software (584-87)
Teresa Murak, “The Seed” (783-784)
John Latham, “Art and Culture” (1017)
Arthur Danto, “The Artworld” (AIS 469-481)

Aug 8- All Facebook Posts Due
Claes Oldenburg, “I Am for an Art . . .” (385-88)
Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff, “Art Hysterical Notions of Progress and Culture” (176-186)
Willy Komar and Alexander Melamid, “Blue Landscapes, Bewitching Numbers, and the Double Life of Jokes: An Interview with JoAnn Wypijewski” (365-68)
Theodor Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening” (AIS 539-547)
Matei Calinescu, “Kitsch and Modernity” (BB)