

## **Meaning of the Arts**

Temple University

Spring 2014

Course Number: 0847, Section 001

3.0 Credit Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30am -10:50am

Professor: Katie Brennan

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-12pm, Anderson Hall 213D

### **Course Description:**

In this course we will take up the question: Why are we attracted to art that depicts ugly, gruesome, disgusting, or painful images or events? Some of the most highly regarded artists throughout history—Sophocles, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Goya, Francis Bacon, Andres Serrano—create art that is difficult to look at, but we are drawn to it nonetheless. In this world, many strange and even shocking things count as art. In this course we will analyze the paradoxical structure of these types of artworks and interrogate different views on why these types of artworks continue to have value.

In doing so, we will undertake central questions in philosophy of art and aesthetics concerning the nature of art and its value and the ways to understand, evaluate and interpret works of art. We will explore various philosophical perspectives on the arts. The course involves close reading of philosophical arguments and art theory, evaluating and responding to them in discussion and writing. Our theoretical analyses will be supplemented by experiential engagement with artworks through a museum visit, short clips, films, and visual and audio examples.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Cultivate an ability to critically analyze and evaluate philosophical texts, ideas, problems, and questions.
- Obtain proficiency writing an academic philosophy paper in which students critique and analyze philosophical problems.
- Become familiar with different aesthetic theories and be able to apply them to different situations.

## Required Texts:

(All texts are available at the Temple Bookstore, or may be purchased online. Additional readings will be posted to Canvas.)

- 1) Sophocles, *Theban Plays*, trans. Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff, Hackett, 2003.

## Course Requirements:

The evaluation for the course will consist of six items (totaling 200 points):

1. First Exam (45 points)
2. Second Exam (45 points)
3. Critical Reading Assessments (30 points)
4. Final Paper (40 points)
5. Independent Field Study Assignment (10 points)
6. Participation and Attendance (30 points)

### Numeric-To-Letter-Grade Scale:

Name:	Range:	
A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

a) **Exams** will be in the form of essays. In order to help you focus your studying, one week before each exam I will circulate a list of study questions from which the essays will be exclusively composed. I will provide you with five to six essay questions to study from. Of these questions, I will select three that will appear on the exam. Of these three, you will have to answer two for your exam.

In general, to write a good essay keep in mind that you should have a thesis (the main point you want to assert and support) that is supported with textual evidence (quotations from the text) and discussion (logical development that links the evidence to your claims in order to demonstrate the main point). It should be carefully written and well-organized. You are encouraged to use examples of artworks as well to support your point. I will distribute a rubric and more detailed information about the essay exams closer to the exam date.

b) Each student is expected to write one four to six page **paper** that is double spaced and in Times New Roman font. Papers must follow Chicago Manual format. We will discuss the papers in more detail as the semester progresses.

c) **Attendance** is required. You will be allowed two absences. After the second absence, the student's semester grade will be lowered one grade for each unexcused absence (for example, if you have one additional absence an A will become an A-, an A- will become a B+, a B + will become a B, and so on).

d) **Critical Reading Assessments (CRA)** are homework assignments that consist of a series of questions designed to help students navigate the assigned readings. I will provide a complete assignment description and rubric before the first CRA is due.

e) For your **Independent Field Study Assignment** you will write a two to three page paper on a painting, sculpture, or work of architecture you have selected, using the artwork as a jumping off point to explore one of the theories or topics we have been studying. In order to complete your presentation, you will need to visit a local museum (I recommend the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the Barnes Foundation) and select one artwork that relates to the readings we have done so far in the course. The artwork can relate to the course readings by acting as an example of a theory that we have read, by providing a counterexample to a theory we have read, or by raising questions about a theory we have read.

**Note:** Work is due in class at the beginning of class. Late (even *barely* late) work loses the point equivalent of one full grade, and a further grade for each additional twenty-four hours of lateness.

There will be no make-up exams. The only way to respond to a botched or missed examination is to resolve to do better on the next one.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones are not appreciated as they may disturb the intensity of the learning environment.

**Course Schedule and Readings:** (Subject to Change as Needed)

*Reading assignments should be completed in advance of each class.*

Tuesday 1/21- Introduction

**Should Art Be Beautiful?**

Thursday 1/23 – Cynthia Freeland, “Blood and Beauty”

Tuesday 1/28- Matthew Kieran, “Aesthetic Value: Beauty Ugliness and Incoherence”;

CRA #1 Due

**Tragedy: Beauty from Suffering**

Thursday 1/30- Sophocles, *Antigone*

Tuesday 2/4 – Sophocles, *Antigone*

Thursday 2/6- Sophocles, *Antigone*

Tuesday 2/11- Plato, *Republic*, Book X **and** Christopher Janaway, “Plato”

Thursday 2/13- Aristotle, *Poetics* **and** Nickolas Pappas, “Aristotle”

Tuesday 2/18- David Hume, “Of Tragedy”

Thursday 2/20- Aaron Ridley, “Tragedy”

Tuesday 2/25- Susan Feagin, “The Pleasures of Tragedy”; CRA #2 Due

Thursday 2/27- First Exam

Tuesday 3/4 and Thursday 3/6 - SPRING BREAK

**Sublime Beauty**

Tuesday 3/11– Kant, “On the Sublime” **and** Donald Crawford, “Kant”

Thursday 3/13- Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

Tuesday 3/18- Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

**Enjoying Horror**

Thursday 3/20- Noël Carrol, *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart*; CRA #3 Due

Tuesday 3/25- Berys Gaut, “The Paradox of Horror”

Thursday 3/27- Kendall L. Walton, “Fearing Fictionally”

Tuesday 4/1- Daniel Shaw, “Power, Horror, and Ambivalence”; CRA #4 Due

Thursday 4/3- Susan Feagin, “Monsters, Disgust and Fascination”

Tuesday 4/8- Second Exam

**Disgust**

Thursday 4/10- No class, independent field study at the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Tuesday 4/15- Dan Kelly, *Yuck! The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust*

Thursday 4/17- Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics*;

CRA #5 Due

**Street Art**

Tuesday 4/22- Nicholas Riggle, “Street Art: The Transformation of the Commonplaces”

Thursday 4/24- Banksy Documentary

Tuesday 4/29- Banksy Documentary  
Thursday 5/1- Review/Catch Up Day

**Exam Week:**

Final Papers due Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at midnight

**Disability policy**

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including special accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation by the end of the second week of classes or as soon as is practical. If you have not done so already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism, which is failure to properly acknowledge someone else's words or ideas, thus passing them off as your own, is a form of academic dishonesty and work containing it will receive a failing grade. See the University policy for details:

[http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/ugradbulletin/policies\\_part2.htm#pac](http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/ugradbulletin/policies_part2.htm#pac)

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:

[http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02).