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PM

PH410

**Aesthetics
Spring 2000**

Instructor: C. R. Unni, Tel (H) 941 8434; (O) 735 4879; e-mail: crunni@lava.net

General Objectives

We are familiar with such things like painting, sculpture, ceramics, poetry, drama, dance, photography and movies. All of them are types of arts. Confronted with such variety, we are tempted to ask if there is such a thing as art, or whether there are any unifying principles, which the various works of, arts share. Any general claim about art as such is likely to be too difficult to be sustained. While aesthetics is the philosophical study of art, this course introduces such study as specific to each type of art. While the general approach of the course is sensitive to the need to pay specific attention to particular types of art, it does not discourage the student from raising general questions about such endeavors. Traditionally some philosophers have indeed argued that regardless of the diversity of form and functions all the arts share some thing. The moment this shared feature is named, the theory however is likely to run in to trouble. In philosophy there is a recognizable difference between the analytic and continental approaches to the subject. But especially in the study of art, the differences in approaches have some points where they converge. There is also an emergent trend with in culture studies to give equal or sometimes greater prominence to popular arts in comparison to high arts. The general objective of the course is to keep open the classical question: are there standards for taste such that we can evaluate works of art? To this of course we like to consider a positive response by a modified strategy that philosopher David Hume made available in the 18th century.

Specific Objectives

Specifically the course will consist of the following ten modules of inquiry and discussion.

1. Since the word aesthetic derives from the Greek word for perception, how does the psychological view that perception is cognitively informed (formed or shaped by our attitude) influence aesthetic theory?
2. Is there such a thing as multiple aesthetics in the sense of there being fundamental differences in aesthetic sensibilities and if so do they merely reflect cultural differences or can we find fundamental differences within the same culture?
3. While the term beauty is often used in connection with characterizing the aesthetic experience, its association with spectator's pleasure is often disputed by alternative theories of the aesthetic

experience. What then are the appropriate ideas in terms of which art and aesthetic experience is to be characterized?

4. Since art or ways of seeing or describing the reality can create monuments and symbols of a culture, how shall we characterize the contribution that art makes to society especially in light of the historical selection of certain societies and certain levels of those societies for this purpose?
5. In sharp distinction to defining the characteristics of art from the perspective of the spectator, expressionism defines it from the perspective of the artist or the creator of the artwork. But the notion of expression or self-expression raises a number of problems. Can the concept of expression make sense independent of the concept of self-expression of the artist?
6. What if any is the relation of the concept of genius to the idea that there is artistic freedom of expression? Is there a form of art, which is purely the product of the mental faculty or the genius of an artist?
7. Even in conceptions of art as the product of self-expression and freedom, there is the recognition that artistic production is subject to rules. But what is the relationship between those energies that come through in a work of art and the restraints that went into its composition? Since understanding a work of art involves critically appreciating it, how does one make sense of the elements of interpretation that come in to any effort to make a work of art meaningful?
8. Since emotional response to art like dramatic productions, is regarded not only as natural but healthy, how exactly does a work of art evoke our sensibilities and feelings? Are there any specific types of emotions, which it is more appropriate for the work of art to evoke? Finally what sorts of enjoyments do we feel in subjecting ourselves to the kinds of emotions that artworks evoke in us?
9. Is it ever possible to evaluate works of art as good or bad in an aesthetic sense? If so can such judgments ever be objective in the sense defensible by criteria and rational procedure?
10. Finally is what is called aesthetic experience autonomous in the sense that it is not reducible to some other experience? Can for example a modified religious experience be appearing as aesthetic?

Requirements

The successful student will:

- a. Pass the ten tests based on the specific objectives.

- b. Pass a final to the satisfaction of the instructor.
- c. Participate in the class discussions on these topics.
- d. Submit homework assignments on time.
- e. Attend at least 80% of the class sessions.

Text

Feagin and Maynard, ed., *Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Advanced Reading

David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown, *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997)

Virgil Aldrich, *Philosophy of Art* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963)

Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958)

Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958)

R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958)

David Cooper, *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)

John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton 1934)

Marcia Eaton, *Aesthetics and the Good Life* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989)

John Hospers, *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: Free Press, 1969)

Morris Weitz, *Philosophy of the Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990)

E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967)

Grading

Attendance: 10 points.

Tests Maximum 40 points.

Midterm 20 points.

Final 30 points.

- To get full points for attendance the student should be in class for 38 of the 42 meetings.
- If the student falls below 34 class meetings the attendance points will drop to 5.
- If a student arrives late (10 minutes after class starts) no attendance points will be given.
- If a student leaves before the class ends, no attendance points will be given.

- Midterm and finals will contain both a take-home and an in-class part.
- All take-home parts of tests must be submitted on time in the required format to qualify for full points.
- In the event of sickness or other emergencies, proper clearance from the advising center is to be obtained.

A=95-100; B=85-94; C=75-84; D=65-74; F=below 64

Schedule

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|---|------|---|
| 1 | 1/19 | <u>Chapter 1.a The Aesthetic</u>
Clive Bell
Reading: Text, pages 15-23
Paul Ziff
Reading: Text, pages 23-30 |
| 2 | 1/21 | Allen Carlson
Reading: Text, pages 30-40
Oscar Wilde
Reading: Text, pages 40-45 |
| 3 | 1/24 | John Dewey
Reading: Text, pages 45-55 |
| 4 | 1/26 | Test 1 (The Aesthetic) |
| 5 | 1/28 | Kazuko Okakura
Reading: Text, pages 56-61
Jun' ichiro Tanizaki
Reading: Text, pages 62-66 |
| 6 | 1/31 | Friedrich Nietzsche
Reading: Text, pages 66-67
Joshua Taylor
Reading: Text, pages 67-71 |
| 7 | 2/2 | Linda Nochlin |

- Reading: Text, pages 71-78
Michael Roemer
Reading: Text, pages 78-86
- 8 2/4 Test 2 (Many Aesthetics)
- 9 2/7 Paul Oskar Kristeller
Reading: Text, pages 90-102
Abbe Batteux
Reading: Text, pages 102-104
- 10 2/9 Jean Le Rond D'Alembert
Reading: Text, pages 105-108
- 11 2/11 Clifford Geertz
Reading: Text, pages 109-118
- 12 2/14 Test 3 (The Arts in Society)
- 13 2/16 Mark Sagoff
Reading: Text, pages 119-128
Whitney Chadwick
Reading: Text, page 129
- 14 2/18 Griselda Pollock
Reading: Text, pages 130-141
- 15 2/23 Kathleen Marie Higgins
Reading: Text, pages 141-148
Ivan Karp
Reading: Text, pages 149-153
- 16 2/25 Test 4
- 17 2/28 Clive Bell
Reading: Text, pages 158-159
- 18 3/1 J. S. Mill
Reading: Text, pages 160-166

- 19 3/3 Leo Tolstoy
Reading: Text, pages 166-171
John Hospers
Reading: Text, pages 172-175
- 20 3/6 Test 5
- 21 3/8 Meyer Schapiro
Reading: Text, pages 175-180
G. W. F. Immanuel Kant
Reading: Text, pages 180-192
Hegel
Reading: Text, pages 192-197
- 22 3/10 Xie-He
Reading: Text, page 206
Su Shih
Reading: Text, pages 206-207
- 23 3/13 Edgar Allan Poe
Reading: Text, pages 208-215
R. G. Collingwood
Reading: Text, pages 215-220
- 24 3/15 Test 6
- 25 3/17 Monroe Beardsley
Reading: Text, pages 224-228
Steven Davis
Readings: Text, pages 228-234
Richard Wollheim
Readings: Text, pages 235-242
- 26 3/20 Michael Baxandall
Readings: Text, pages 242-249

- Susan Sontag
Readings: Text, pages 249-255.
- Arthur Danto
Readings: Text, pages 256-264
- 27 3/22 Nelson Goodman
Readings: Text, pages 264-270
- Roland Barthes
Readings: Text, pages 270-274
- 28 3/24 Test 7
- 29 4/3 R. K. Elliott
Readings: Text, pages 278-288
- Kendall Walton
Readings: Text, pages 288-296
- 30 4/5 Aristotle
Readings: Text, pages 296-300
- Martha Nussbaum
Readings: Text, pages 300-305
- Susan Feagin
Readings: Text, pages 305-313
- 31 4/7 Ted Cohen
Readings: Text, pages 314-324
- Edmund Burke
Readings: Text, pages 324-328
- Jerrold Levinson
Readings: Text, pages 328-338
- 32 4/10 Test 8
- 33 4/12 Curt Ducasse
Readings: Text, pages 342-347

Meyer Schapiro

Readings: Text, pages 347-350

David Hume

Readings: Text, pages 350-364

34 4/14 Arnold Isenberg

Readings: Text, pages 364-371

John Berger

Readings: Text, pages 371-374

35 4/17 Kwame Anthony Appiah

Readings: Text, pages 374-379

36 4/19 Test 9

37 4/24 Special readings in the library on reference

38 4/26 Special readings in the library on reference

39 4/28 Special readings in the library on reference

40 5/1 Test 10

41 5/3 Review

42 5/5 Review