

# Philosophy 264

## Aesthetics

### **General Information**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Instructor                | Dr. Kenneth A. Lambert  |
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| Class Period and Location | M/W/F 9:05-10:00, Wilson 2017   |
| Office Hours              | M/W/F 10:10-11:10, or by appointment  |

### **Required Texts**

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art, Volume I*, T.M. Knox translation (Oxford University Press, 2001, ISBN-13: 978-0198238164).

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art, Volume II*, T.M. Knox translation (Oxford University Press, 1998, ISBN-13: 978-0198238171).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1999, ISBN-13: 978-0521639873).

Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art* (Princeton University Press, 1998, ISBN-13 978-0691002996).

### **Course Description**

What counts as art, and why do we value it? Do the particular arts, such as architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, have a pecking order? What are the differences between art and science? Is our appreciation of works of art influenced by ethical considerations? What do works of art tell us about ourselves? Can we reason about, and reach agreement on, what makes a work of art good or beautiful? How is this process different from our reasoning about factual matters and moral matters? Is our aesthetic experience really little more than a series of grunts and groans? What sets of skills, sensibilities, and insights are required of an artist?

Aesthetics is the philosophical examination of such questions and problems relating to our experience of works of art and natural beauty. For the fall term of 2012, this course will engage in a close reading and analysis of the work of three highly influential but radically different philosophers of art, G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Danto. Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* represents perhaps the greatest attempt of

philosophy to comprehend art, whereas Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* aims to show how art not only resists any such attempt but also undermines and overcomes philosophy. Danto's *After the End of Art* is an attempt to steer a middle course between these two alternatives, in the process of coming to terms with the philosophical implications of modernist and postmodernist art.

Classroom work consists of lecture, observation, and discussion. Short weekly writing assignments and two longer papers are also required.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to recognize and criticize arguments in aesthetic theories.
2. Students will be able to distinguish and assess descriptive aesthetic claims and normative aesthetic claims.
3. Students will be able to converse and write effectively about major aesthetic concepts such as expression, beauty, the sublime, taste, and artistic genius.
4. Students will be conversant with major aesthetic thinkers and traditions in the history of philosophy.

### **Grading**

Upon completion of *all* assigned work, your grade will be computed as follows:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Two long papers    | 50% |
| Final examination  | 30% |
| Weekly assignments | 10% |
| Participation      | 10% |

### **Participation**

Students are required to attend class on time, and attendance will be taken. If you believe that you will be unable to attend a class or if you miss a class, please notify me in order to determine if work needs to be done to make up for missing the class. Failure to do this may result in a failing grade for participation, and may also result in a failing grade overall.

The assigned reading will follow the class schedule (see below). Students are required to do all the assigned reading before class. A prepared student will not only read the material but will have reflected upon the claims and arguments made therein. It will be wise to start this reading early, because some material may require more than one reading.

Students are to respect their classmates and me by raising their hand when they wish to ask a question or when they wish to reply to a question asked or statement made by another. Students are expected to listen to their classmates and the professor carefully and respectfully. This entails not Web surfing, texting e-mailing, or allowing cell phones to ring in class.

Students are encouraged to discuss the readings, assignment questions, and paper topics with me outside of class during office hours or by scheduling a meeting. All participation, whether in class or outside of class, counts towards the participation grade.

### ***Written Work for the Course***

Written work for the course consists of three parts:

1. You will write a one-page essay each week, except for the first week of the course and the two weeks when longer papers are due. Each essay will take the form of an answer to a question about the reading. This question will be provided to you on the Friday before the week that the assignment is due. Assignments will be due on the following Friday.
2. You will write two six-page papers, on topics to be selected from a list of topics provided at least two weeks in advance. The due dates for these papers are given in the schedule below. All students are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me about these papers, especially those who have never written a philosophy paper before.
3. You will write a comprehensive final examination, to be given during the W&L final examination week. This three-hour examination will range over all of the material covered in the course. More details about the examination will be given closer to examination week.

The grading scheme and criteria for written work are described later in this syllabus. You must complete all writing assignments to pass the course. Late assignments or papers will be docked a full letter grade, unless you receive permission from me to turn the paper in by an extended due date. No late assignment or paper will be accepted after a three-day delinquent period, unless the professor agrees to an extenuating circumstance.

### ***Academic Integrity***

All work submitted for credit should be your own work. You must give full and accurate credit to sources that are not your own (books/journals, online resources, other students). Deliberate concealment of sources constitutes plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for the course and a report to the EC. Cite and credit everything, except your own class notes. All work must be pledged. Please familiarize yourself with W&L's policy on plagiarism at [http://library.wlu.edu/research/ref/cite\\_plag.asp](http://library.wlu.edu/research/ref/cite_plag.asp)

## **Accommodations**

Washington and Lee University makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All undergraduate accommodations must be approved through the Office of the Dean of the College. Students requesting accommodations for this course should present an official accommodation letter within the first two weeks of the (fall or winter) term and schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and to follow up about accommodation arrangements. Accommodations for test-taking should be arranged with the professor at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

## **Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings**

| <b>Day</b>    | <b>Topic</b>                                     | <b>Reading</b>   |
|---------------|--|--|
| <b>Week 0</b> |  |  |
| Sept 7        | Introduction and overview                        |  |
| <b>Week 1</b> |  |  |
| Sept 10       | Common sense vs Science (philosophy)             | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 1-55                                |
| Sept 12       | Historical deduction and division of the subject | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 55-90                               |
| Sept 14       | The Idea of beauty                               | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 91-115                              |
| <b>Week 2</b> |  |  |
| Sept 17       | Beauty in nature                                 | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 116-132, 143-152                    |
| Sept 19       | The Ideal in art                                 | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 153-196                             |
| Sept 21       | Action   | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 217-244                             |
| <b>Week 3</b> |  |  |
| Sept 24       | The artist                                       | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 280-298                             |
| Sept 26       | The symbolic form of art                         | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 299-322, 347-361                    |
| Sept 28       | The art of the sublime                           | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 362-377                             |
| <b>Week 4</b> |  |  |
| Oct 1         | The classical form of art                        | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 427-442, 476-501                    |
| Oct 3         | The dissolution of the classical ideal           | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 502-516                             |
| Oct 5         | The romantic form of art                         | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 517-529, 530-539, 552-567, 573-585  |
| <b>Week 5</b> |  |  |
| Oct 8         | The dissolution of the romantic ideal            | Hegel, Volume I, pp. 593-611                             |
| Oct 10        | Introduction to the particular arts              | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 613-629                            |
| Oct 12        | Reading Day 1                                    |  |
| <b>Week 6</b> |  |  |
| Oct 15        | Symbolic and classical architecture              | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 630-650, 654-659, 660-663, 674-676 |

|                |   |                                 |
|----------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Oct 17         | Romantic architecture   | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 684-695   |
| Oct 19         | Sculpture   | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 701-716   |
| <b>Week 7</b>  |   |                                 |
| Oct 22         | The romantic arts<br><b>First long paper due</b>  | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 792-796   |
| Oct 24         | Painting  | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 797-869   |
| Oct 26         | Reading Day 2   |                                 |
| <b>Week 8</b>  |   |                                 |
| Oct 29         | Music   | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 888-909   |
| Oct 31         | Poetry vs prose   | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 959-1007  |
| Nov 2          | Dramatic poetry   | Hegel, Volume II, pp. 1158-1192 |
| <b>Week 9</b>  |   |                                 |
| Nov 5          | “On Truth and Lying in a Non-moral Sense”   | Nietzsche, pp. 141-153          |
| Nov 7          | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 1-6  | Nietzsche, pp. 13-36            |
| Nov 9          | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 7-10   | Nietzsche, pp. 36-54            |
| <b>Week 10</b> |   |                                 |
| Nov 12         | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 11-15  | Nietzsche, pp. 54-75            |
| Nov 14         | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 16-25  | Nietzsche, pp. 76-116           |
| Nov 16         | “An Attempt at Self-Criticism”  | Nietzsche, pp. 3-12             |
| <b>Week 11</b> |   |                                 |
| Nov 26         | “Modern, Post-Modern, and Contemporary”<br><b>Second long paper due</b>                 | Danto, pp. 3-20                 |
| Nov 28         | “Three Decades after the End of Art”  | Danto, pp. 21-40                |
| Nov 30         | “Master Narratives and Critical Principles”<br>“Modernism and the Critique of Pure Art” | Danto, pp. 41-79                |
| <b>Week 12</b> |   |                                 |
| Dec 3          | “From Aesthetics to Art Criticism”  | Danto, pp. 81-100               |
| Dec 5          | “Painting and the Pale of History”  | Danto, pp. 101-116              |
| Dec 7          | “Painting, Politics, and Post-Historical Art”   | Danto, pp. 135-152              |

## ***How to Read Philosophy***

Philosophy texts, if they are saying anything significant, must be read more than once. Reading a piece of philosophy is not like surfing the Web or reading a magazine or a newspaper, where the primary purpose is to receive information. Reading philosophy is much more like reading literature, where other things, such as aesthetic engagement, self-discovery, and analysis, are happening as well.

Ideally, your approach to reading a philosophy text should consist of at least two passes through the text. On the first pass, your reading should be receptive, but not passive. Try to suspend your own opinions and preconceptions. Let the author, or rather the terms and ideas of the text, speak to you. Make a note of new or unusual terms and the ways in which they are related. Try to isolate those terms or ideas, if any, to which the author returns again and again as the essential terms or ideas of the text.

The second pass should be a more active reading. Try to articulate how the essential terms or concepts fit together to form a coherent whole. Are there one or two central concepts around which the text is organized? Is there a single thread that ties together the main ideas of the text? Can you put that thread into your own words? You will rarely find an explicit argument (a set of premises and a conclusion) in terms of which these concepts are developed and presented. Try to tease an argument out of the central body of ideas. Are the premises of the argument true, and do the conclusions of the argument follow from its premises? Or, if you cannot find an argument, does the presentation of the ideas enhance your understanding of related ideas? Now confront your preconceptions with these central ideas. Are your preconceptions shifting, being overthrown, or remaining firmer than ever? What fundamental question(s) does the text raise for you?

## ***How to Write Philosophical Criticism***

Just as literary criticism goes well beyond mere plot summary, writing about philosophy does more than summarize or even restate the main ideas of a text. There are many criteria for judging a piece of philosophy: Are the arguments (if any) sound? Are the claims of fact consistent with those of science and common sense? Do claims that seem to go beyond common sense or the scientifically verifiable make sense and enhance your understanding of the world? Are statements consistent with each other, and do they give a coherent picture of the world? What is the text really driving at, and how do you respond (intellectually, aesthetically, morally)? How do things stand with your preconceptions when they are confronted with the text's central ideas?

## ***Guidelines for Writing Weekly Assignments and Papers***

Each weekly assignment question will appear on the Sakai course site. Your answer should be one page, typed 1 ½ spaced, in a Word file. The file should be turned into the course's Sakai site, on or before the due date. I will make comments and assign a grade in the file, and return the commented version via Sakai for your review.

The two longer papers should be six pages each, typed 1 ½ spaced, in a Word file. Each of these files should be turned in to your drop box on the Sakai course site. I will make comments and assign a grade in the files, and return the commented versions via Sakai for your review.

Criteria for grading individual assignments and papers are as follows, working from the bottom up:

F – Any or all of the following: this paper is riddled with spelling, punctuation, and/or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates little or no attempt to understand the material or no critical examination of it. The paper is turned in four or more days beyond the due date.

C – This paper has very few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates an acceptable understanding of the material and a reasonable attempt to critically examine it.

B – This paper has no spelling errors and practically no punctuation or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates a good understanding of the material and a reasonable attempt to critically examine it.

A – This paper has no spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates excellent understanding of the material and a well-developed critical examination of it.

### ***Classical Books on Aesthetics***

Plato, *Republic* (Basic Books, 1991).

Plato, *Symposium* (Penguin Classics, 2003).

Aristotle, *Poetics* (Penguin Classics, 1997).

Hume, David, “Of the Standard of Taste,” in *Four Dissertations* (St. Augustine Press, 2001, first published in 1757).

Kant Immanuel, *Critique of Judgment* (Hackett Publishing, 1987, first published in 1790).

Schiller, Friedrich, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Dover Publications, 2004, first published in 1794).

Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea* (London: Routledge, 1964, first published in 1819).

Collingwood, R.G., *The Principles of Art* (Oxford, 1963, first published in 1938).

Marcuse, Herbert, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Beacon Press, 1979).

Davis, Walter, *Get the Guests: Psychoanalysis, Modern American Drama, and the Audience* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

Davis, Walter, *Art and Politics: Psychoanalysis, Ideology, Theatre* (New York: Pluto Press, 1997).

Graham, Gordon, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics, Third Edition* (London: Routledge, 2005).

### ***Anthologies of Recent and Not-So-Recent Essays and Excerpts***

Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, Editors, *Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Kennick, Willam, ed., *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics* (St. Martin's Press, 1979).

Kivy, Peter, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

Levinson, Jerrold, ed., *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Rasmussen, David, ed., *Continental Aesthetics: An Anthology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

### ***Critical Works on Hegel's Aesthetics***

Desmond, William, *Art and the Absolute: A study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (SUNY Press, 1986).

Houlgate, Stephen, ed., *Hegel and the Arts* (Northwestern University Press, 2007).

Maker, William, ed., *Hegel & Aesthetics* (SUNY Press, 2000).

Rapp, Carl, *Fleeing the Universal: The Critique of Post-Rational Criticism* (SUNY Press, 1998).

Winfield, Richard Dien, *Systematic Aesthetics* (University Press of Florida, 1995).

Winfield, Richard Dien, *Stylistics: Rethinking the Artforms After Hegel* (SUNY Press, 1996).



***Critical Works on Nietzsche's Aesthetics***

Houlgate, Stephen, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Ramsey, Matthew, ed., *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Schmidt, Dennis, *On Germans & Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Indiana University Press, 2001).