

PHIL 380: PHILOSOPHY OF CRITICISM (WINTER 2015)

T & TR 11:00AM - 12:20PM

[Taught at University of Alberta, Canada]

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to various theories of art criticism and theories concerning the nature of aesthetic and artistic value as well as their relation to other kinds of values. We will start with Hume's seminal essay on taste. This essay will set the tone for this course: If we are wondering about the nature of the aesthetic experience and appreciation of artworks, perhaps one of the ways in which we can approach this issue is through investigating the role of the art critic. In the first half of the course, we will read some of the most influential writings on art criticism. We will ask what the function of art criticism is, whether critical discourse is descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive, whether art critics can appeal to general reasons in grounding their judgments or whether each judgment is specific to the particular work of art, what aesthetic properties are, whether or not they supervene on natural properties, etc. In the second half of the course we will look more closely at the realism/anti-realism debate concerning aesthetic properties and then move on to examine some debates on the relationship between art and cognition, art and disgust, and art and morality. Some of the questions that our discussions will center around will be whether or not truth or knowledge has anything to do with aesthetic or artistic value, why and how we aesthetically appreciate works that arouse the feeling of disgust, what the relationship between aesthetic and ethical properties is and whether or not ethical merits/defects can count as aesthetic merits/defects in our aesthetic evaluations of a work. This will provide us with an opportunity to reevaluate the theories of criticism we read in the first half of the course. Lastly, as an extension of the debate on the relation between art and morality, we will read some recent literature on the phenomenon of imaginative resistance.

Required Readings

Noël Carroll, *On Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2008) (ISBN-10: 0415396212, ISBN-13: 978-0415396219)

The rest of the readings will be available on e-class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation	15%
Response Papers (200-300 words each) (8 out of 11 or 8 best)	40% (5% each)
Presentation	10%
Term Paper (2500-3000 words)	30% + Draft (5%)

Attendance and Participation (15%)

Much of the value you will get from this class will come from your interaction with your classmates and instructor. Regular attendance and participation is important to the class dynamic and to your learning process.

Response Papers (40% [5% each])

During the term you will be asked to write 11 response papers on the questions assigned. You can choose either of two options: (1) You can write 8 response papers and your grade will be based on them or (2) You can write more than 8 response papers, and 8 of the papers you got the highest grades on will count towards your grade. The questions will be posted on e-class a week in advance. These papers should be between 200 and 300 words. They must be submitted in person, at the beginning of the class, to receive a grade. There is absolutely no possibility of extension or make-ups.

Some Tips on Response Papers

- Give your paper a very clear structure and cut out anything irrelevant. These are very short pieces of writing and you can't afford to ramble. You should be able to look at every sentence of your paper, even every word of your paper, and say what it's doing to further your argument.
- Don't waste words simply explaining everything in the readings. The questions are asking specific things about the readings. Read them carefully, answer directly to the question and avoid irrelevant details.
- You are not only being asked to explain certain issues concerning the reading but also to evaluate the positions of the philosophers. Evaluating and giving your insights about philosophical positions requires careful and charitable engagement with the readings. So do not underestimate the philosophers we will be reading and avoid creating straw(wo)men out of them and attacking trivialized versions of their positions.
- Write as clearly as possible. Avoid jargon, long words, and convoluted sentences. Don't try to sound sophisticated or 'philosophical': convey what you have to say as explicitly and unambiguously as you can. Keep sentences and paragraphs relatively short.
- Be sure to proof-read your final draft: missing words, misspellings, and poor syntax all serve to undermine the reader's confidence.

Presentation (10%)

You will give a short in-class presentation; the presentation time will be kept to 10 minutes leaving 20 minutes for discussion. The presentation times will be scheduled on January 8. Your presentation should engage with the readings assigned for that day. However, it should not be simply a report on those readings. You are encouraged to consult with me about your presentation ideas. It can involve a critical assessment of an argument in the reading, or a comparison of positions. It would be helpful to focus on some aspects of the reading you found most interesting or controversial. You might consider doing some research on the topic, bringing in additional relevant material, evaluating and/or criticizing the philosophical position on the basis of some works (of good art, bad art, non-art, failed-art, and so on), using audiovisual aids that illustrate the issue, doing a dramatic performance, a video, etc. Imaginativeness and creativity is highly encouraged. The presentations should be enjoyable as well as educational for you and your fellow classmates. In short, do not hesitate to introduce new ideas, show video clips, make your own video, play music, read poems, stage a play, or do whatever else is relevant to your topic. It is also vital that the presentation promotes class discussion and allows ample time for such discussion during or following the presentation. You will be asked to prepare some discussion questions related to your presentation in order to sustain an on-going discussion.

Term Paper (30% + Draft [5%])

You will write an essay (2500-3000 words in length, typed, double-spaced, with normal margins and font) on a topic of your own choosing. You are required to consult with me at least one week prior to the deadline for the draft submission. You will submit the draft of your paper on March 31st at 11 am via email. 5% of your grade will be based on your draft. Your final paper will be partially evaluated on the basis of how well you responded to my comments on your draft and the improvements you make on it. The final version of the paper is due on April 16th at 3 pm and will constitute 30% of your overall grade. The hard copies should be left with the secretary in the Philosophy Department Office ASH 2-40. They must be dated-stamped and initialed by the Department secretary. Papers that are handed in late will be docked 5% per day. Papers will not be accepted more than 5 days after the deadline, so please make sure to hand the assignments in on time. All the above tips on response papers are also relevant for the term paper. You are encouraged to come to the office hours to discuss your paper ideas with me.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1	Jan 6 Tuesday	Introduction
	Jan 8 Thursday	True Judges David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757)
WEEK 2	Jan 13 Tuesday	Sameness of Vision Arnold Isenberg, “Critical Communication” (1949) Mary Mothersill, “Critical Reasons” (1961) <i>Response Paper 1 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Jan 15 Thursday	Consumers’ Union Model of (Professional) Criticism Monroe Beardsley, “On Generality of Critical Reasons” (1962) Monroe Beardsley, “What Are Critics For?” (1982)
WEEK 3	Jan 20 Tuesday	Aesthetic Concepts and Taste Frank Sibley, “Aesthetic Concepts” (1959) <i>Response Paper 2 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Jan 22 Thursday	Kinds of Art Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art” (1970)
WEEK 4	Jan 27 Tuesday	The Artworld and the Critic Arthur Danto, “The Artworld” (1964) Arthur Danto, “The Fly in the Fly Bottle: The Explanation and Critical Judgment of Works of Art” (2005) <i>Response Paper 3 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Jan 29 Thursday	Evaluation and Reasons Noël Carroll, “Introduction”, “Criticism as Evaluation”, “The Object of Criticism” (2008)
WEEK 5	Feb 3 Tuesday	Noël Carroll, “The Parts of Criticism (Minus One)” <i>Response Paper 4 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Feb 5 Thursday	Noël Carroll, “Evaluation: Problems and Prospects”
WEEK 6	Feb 10 Tuesday	Realism/Anti-Realism Debate Eddy Zemach, “Real Beauty” (1991)
	Feb 12 Thursday	Alan Goldman, “Aesthetic Qualities and Aesthetic Value” (1990)
WEEK 7	Feb 17-19 Tuesday, Thursday	READING WEEK
WEEK 8	Feb 24 Tuesday	Jerrold Levinson, “Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force and Differences of Sensibility” (2001) <i>Response Paper 6 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Feb 26 Thursday	Art and Knowledge Malcolm Budd, “Artistic Value” (1995)
WEEK 9	Mar 3 Tuesday	Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Cognitive Triviality of Art” (1992) Berys Gaut, “Art and Cognition” (2006) <i>Response Paper 7 due at the beginning of class</i>
	Mar 5	Art and Disgust

	Thursday	Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Varieties of Aesthetic Disgust" (2011) Supplement: Michelle Meagher, "Jenny Saville and a Feminist Aesthetics of Disgust" (2003)
WEEK 10	Mar 10 Tuesday	Carolyn Korsmeyer, "The Magnetism of Disgust" Response Paper 8 due at the beginning of class
	Mar 12 Thursday	Art and Morality Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism" (1996) Supplement: Mary Devereaux, "Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl's 'Triumph of the Will'" (1998)
WEEK 11	Mar 17 Tuesday	Berys Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art" (1998) Response Paper 9 due at the beginning of class
	Mar 19 Thursday	Daniel Jacobson, "Ethical Criticism and Vice of Moderation" (2006)
WEEK 12	Mar 24 Tuesday	Rethinking Artistic Value Dominic McIver Lopes, "The Myth of (Non-Aesthetic) Artistic Value" (2011) Response Paper 10 due at the beginning of class
	Mar 26 Thursday	Imaginative Resistance Kendall Walton, "Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality" (1994)
WEEK 13	Mar 31 Tuesday	Tamar Szabó Gendler, "The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance" (2000) Term paper drafts due at the beginning of class
	Apr 2 Thursday	CLASS CANCELLED
WEEK 14	Apr 7 Tuesday	Brian Weatherson "Morality, Fiction and Possibility" (2004) Response Paper 11 due at the beginning of class
	Apr 9 Thursday	Shen-yi Liao, Nina Strohminger, and Chandra Sekhar Sripada, "Empirically Investigating Imaginative Resistance" (2014)
Term paper is due on April 16th at 3 pm.		