

6AANA034

Aesthetics

Syllabus – Academic year 2014/15

Basic information

Credits: 15

Module Tutor: Dr Sacha Golob (sacha.golob@kcl.ac.uk)

Office: 705, Philosophy Building

Consultation time: Mon 1000-1100; Fri 1500-1600 in 705 Philosophy.

Semester: First

Lecture time and venue: Mon 0900-1000 in Strand Building, S-2.23

Module description

This module introduces and examines a number of the key thinkers and the central debates within Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art.

The first half of the course looks in detail at four influential, historical analyses of art - by Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. Central questions addressed include the nature of beauty, whether all artistic preferences are equally valid, the relationship between art and art theory, and the role of artworks in enshrining, sustaining, or undermining, social institutions.

The second half of the course focuses on contemporary treatments of some of the core questions in aesthetics. The main topics considered include:

Can a work of art be immoral? If so, would it be bad art?

Can I make something a work of art simply by saying so?

How do pictures represent, and to what degree is pictorial representation conventional?

Can pornography be art? What, if anything, is wrong with kitsch?

Does a work of art have a single 'correct' meaning? If so, what determines it?

Learning outcomes

Students completing this module should:

- Understand the nature of some central problems in aesthetics.
- Encounter and evaluate a number of attempts to solve the philosophical problems under discussion.
- Acquire a knowledge of some of the outstanding contributions to the history of aesthetic thought.
- Acquire an ability to relate the questions discussed to the work of philosophers studied on other papers.
- Be encouraged to read with great care and reflect upon some difficult texts, as well as introductory and secondary material

Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment:** two x 1,500-word essays (check with seminar leaders re details)
Deadline for first essay: Fri Oct 31st.
Deadline for second essay: Fri Dec 12th.
- **Summative assessment:** two x 2,500-word essays (100%)
Deadline for summative essays: Thurs May 14th at 1200 Noon.

Outline of lecture topics plus suggested readings

Readings marked '*' are available online – either via Library Search or Keats. If at all possible you should read this material before the lecture.

(1) Introduction to Aesthetics – Some Central Problems

Lessing, A., 'What is wrong with a forgery?', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 19 (1965), pp.461-7.*

(2) Hume – Empiricism and the 'Standard of Taste'

Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste' in his *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Liberty Classics, 1987); reprinted in Neill and Ridley (eds.), *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995); and in many other anthologies.*

(3) Kant – The Nature of Beauty

Kant, *Critique of Judgment – Analytic of the Beautiful* (§§1-9, 19-21).* The recommended translation is by Pluhar (Hackett, 1987) but Guyer and Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000) is also fine.

(4) Hegel – The End of Art?

Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bosanquet, ed. Inwood (Penguin: 1993), pp.27-61, 75-97 OR Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), sections 1-8.*

(5) Heidegger – Art, Truth, and World

Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', trans. Krell, in *Heidegger: Basic Writings* (Routledge: 2002), pp.140-181.*

(6) What is Art? Definition After Dada

Danto, A., 'The Artworld' in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.61 1964, pp.571-584.* Also reprinted in Neill and Ridley (eds.), *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995), and many other anthologies.

(7) Intention and Interpretation - The Death of the Author?

Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy' in Neill and Ridley (eds.) *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995); in Margolis (ed.), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (Temple University Press, 1987); and other anthologies.*

Barthes, R., 'The Death of the Author' in Neill and Ridley (eds.) *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995), and widely available online.*

(8) Pictorial Representation – How do Pictures Represent?

Wollheim R., 'Seeing-as, seeing-in, and pictorial representation' in his *Art and its Objects*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.205-226.*

(9) Kitsch and Porn – Kinkade, Koons, and Schiele

Kulka, T., 'Kitsch', *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 28 (1988), pp. 18-27.*

Kieran, M., 'Pornographic Art' in *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 25, (2001), pp. 31-45.*

(10) Art and Ethics – De Sade and Tolstoy

Carroll, N., 'Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research', *Ethics*, Vol. 110, 2000), pp.350-387.*

Tolstoy, Excerpts from *What is Art* in Neill and Ridley (ed.), *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw 1995).

Suggested essay questions

- (1) To what extent does Hume succeed in establishing a 'standard of taste'? Why does the answer matter?
- (2) Why, according to Kant, are judgments of beauty able to claim universal assent?
- (3) Critically assess the relation between Hegel's vision of philosophy and his vision of art.
OR
What would be Hegel's view of either Warhol's *Brillo Box* OR Picasso's *Three Musicians*?
Would he be right?
- (4) What, if anything, can Heidegger's 'Origin...' contribute to our understanding of art?
- (5) Is something art if I say it is? If not, why not?
- (6) To what extent does the artist have authority over the meaning of a work?
OR
'The best interpretation of a novel is whichever one makes for the most interesting reading'.
Discuss.
- (7) What makes something a picture of something else?
OR
'Pictorial representation is as conventional as linguistic representation'. Discuss.
- (8) What is so wrong with kitsch?
OR
'The phrase 'pornographic art' is an oxymoron'. Discuss.
- (9) 'A moral defect in a work of art is always an aesthetic defect'. Discuss.

Suggested additional readings by lecture topic

Readings marked ‘*’ are available online - either via Library E-Resources or Keats.

(2) Hume – Empiricism and the ‘Standard of Taste’

- Shelley, J., ‘The Empiricists’ in the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (Routledge: London, 2001).
Ibid, ‘Hume and the Joint Verdict of True Judges’, in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 71, 2013, 145-53.*
Levinson, J., ‘Hume's Standard of Taste: the real problem’ in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60, 2002, pp. 227-238.*
Hume, ‘On the Delicacy of Taste and Passion’, ‘On Tragedy’, ‘On Refinement in the Arts’. All in his *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Liberty Classics, 1987).
Mason, M., ‘Moral Prejudice and Aesthetic Deformity’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 59, 2001, pp. 59-71.*
Gracyk, T., ‘Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 52, 1994, pp.169-82.*
Shiner, ‘Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 54, 1996, pp.237-49.*

(3) Kant – The Nature of Beauty

- Wenzel, C., *An Introduction to Kant's Aesthetics* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), Intro and chs.1-4.*
Wicks, R., *Kant on Judgment* (Routledge, 2004), ch.1.*
Ginsborg, H. “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.*

(4) Hegel – The End of Art?

- Wicks, R., ‘Hegel’s Aesthetics’ in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, Beiser (ed.), (Cambridge University Press, 2006).*
Houlgate, S., *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth, and History* (Oxford: Blackwell 2005), ch.4.
Geuss, R., ‘Art and the Theodicy’, in his *Morality, Culture and History* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).*
Rutter, *Hegel on the Modern Arts*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), ch.1.

(5) Heidegger – Art and World

- Young, J., *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, (Cambridge University Press: 2001), ch.1.
Thomson, I., *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge University Press: 2011), ch.2.
Wrathall, M. *How to Read Heidegger* (Granta: 2013).
Inwood, M. *The Heidegger Dictionary* (Blackwell: 1999).

(6) What is Art? Definition After Dada

- Carroll, N., ‘Aesthetic Experience’ in Kieran (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2006).
Dickie, G., ‘The New Institutional Theory of Art’ in Neill and Ridley (eds.) *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995), and other anthologies.
Ibid, ‘Wollheim’s Dilemma’ in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 38, 1998, pp.127-35.*
Levinson, J., ‘Defining Art Historically’ in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 19, 1979, pp.232-50.*
Gaut, B., ‘The Cluster Account of Art Defended’, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 45, 2005, pp. 273-88.*

(7) Intention and Interpretation - The Death of the Author?

Wollheim, R., 'Criticism as Retrieval' in *Art and its Objects*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.185-204; reprinted in Neill and Ridley (eds.) *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995) and other anthologies.
Stecker, M., 'Interpretation' in the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (Routledge: London, 2001).
Walton, K., 'Categories of Art' in Neill and Ridley (eds.) *The Philosophy of Art* (McGraw, 1995), and Margolis (ed.), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (Temple University Press, 1987).
Levinson, J. 'Defending Hypothetical Intentionalism' in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 50, 2010, pp.139-50.*
Livingston, P., 'Pentimento', in Gaut and Livingston (eds.), *The Creation of Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

(8) Pictorial Representation

Hopkins, R., 'How do Pictures Represent?' in Kieran (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2006).
Lopes, D. 'The Domain of Depiction' in *Ibid.*
Budd, M. 'On Looking at a Picture' in his *Aesthetic Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2008).*
Abell, C. 'Canny Resemblance', *Philosophical Review* 118 (2009).*

(9) Kitsch and Porn – Kinkade, Koons, and Schiele

Levinson, J. 'Erotic Art and Pornographic Pictures' in Neill and Ridley (eds.), *Arguing about Art* (Routledge, 2001).
Langton, R. 'Sexual Solipsism' in her *Sexual Solipsism* (Oxford University Press, 2009).*
Udhir, C.M., 'Pornography at the edge' in Levinson and Maes (eds.) *Art & Pornography* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
Saul, J. 'On Treating Things as People: Objectification, Pornography and the History of the Vibrator', in *Hypatia*, 21, 2006: 45–61.
Nussbaum, M. 'Objectification', in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1995, 249-90*

(10) Art and Ethics – De Sade and Tolstoy

Gaut, B., 'The Ethical Criticism of Art' in Levinson (ed.), *Aesthetics and Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). Reprinted in Lamarque and Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Blackwell, 2003).
Jacobson, D., 'Ethical Criticism and the Vice of Moderation' in Kieran (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2006).
Kieran, M., 'Forbidden Knowledge: the Challenge of Immoralism' in Bermudez and Gardner (eds.), *Art and Morality* (Routledge 2003).
Posner, R., 'Against ethical criticism - parts 1 and 2', *Philosophy and Literature*, Vols. 21-22, 1997-8.*
Nussbaum, 'Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 22, 1998.*