

# 6AANA034

## Aesthetics

Syllabus – Academic year 2016/17

### Basic information

**Credits:** 15

**Module Tutor:** Dr Sacha Golob

**Office:** 705, Philosophy Building

**Consultation time:** TBC

**Semester:** First

**Lecture time and venue:** 1300 Tue, S-3.20

### 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?

#### Generic Learning outcomes

In successfully completing the course, students will demonstrate and refine an advanced ability to assess and criticise arguments, and to identify and analyse the rhetorical and stylistic structure of writing and speech. They will also have demonstrated and developed an ability to conduct individual research, to participate in seminars and seminar presentations, and to work to deadlines.

#### Specific Learning Outcomes

The capacity to grasp, assess and analyse the philosophical content of some of the most important developments and issues within the philosophy of art.

### Assessment methods and deadlines

*Summative assessment:* two 2,500-word essays (50% each) from the list marked 'Summative Questions'. Essays to be submitted according to the standard schedule.

*Formative assessment:* one 2,500-word essay from the list marked 'Formative Questions'. Essays to be submitted according to the standard schedule.

Please note that formative essays using one of the titles from the summative list will not be marked.

## 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).

## **\*Formative\* 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?
- (7) What makes something a picture of something else?
- (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.

## **\*Summative\* essay questions**

- (1) Why, according to Hume, is a 'standard of taste' necessary? Is he right?
- (2) Explain the role of either judgment or imagination or both in Kant's philosophy of art.
- (3) How would Hegel view conceptual art? Would he be right?  
OR  
What might a Hegelian analysis of Jackson Pollock's *Number 5* (1948) look like? Would such an analysis have any merit?
- (4) 'Heidegger's Origin essay is simply too vague to be helpful in understanding art'. Discuss
- (5) Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be art?
- (6) 'The best interpretation of a novel is whichever one makes for the most interesting reading'. Discuss.
- (7) Critically evaluate the thesis that pictorial representation is essentially conventional.  
OR  
'No theory of pictorial representation can be adequate unless it can explain linear perspective'. Discuss
- (8) "Surround yourself with the kinds of input that are uplifting, that expand your mind and settle your spirit." (Thomas Kikade). Discuss.  
OR  
What is the best argument for the view that pornography can be art? What is the worst?
- (9) 'There is no systematic connection between moral and aesthetic value'. Discuss.

## Suggested additional readings by lecture topic

The following material lists further reading by topic. There is no need to read all of it, but you should read all material on those topics that most interest you or that you are intending to write on.

Material marked with a '\*' is available either online via Library Search or on Keats. Material marked with a '#' is a particularly good place to start (the order of listing is otherwise not significant).

### (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.\*#