

## PHIL 3120 – Philosophy of Art

2037 Brown Hall

Mon. 4:00-6:30

james.v.martin@wmich.edu (3012 Moore Hall, by appointment)

**Required Texts:** *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory* (Ross)

All other readings will be online at <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~jnk5408>.

**Course Description:** This course is an introduction to the analysis of the nature of art, aesthetic experience, and its significance in our lives. We will begin by considering the familiar question, “What is art?” largely in an attempt to set aside the felt need for definitions here. We’ll then discuss theories of beauty, ugliness, and what grounds these properties; ideas about what kind of value art can have and why it is worth our time; the importance of aesthetic experience and authenticity; and the ontology and meaning of artworks. The final portion of the course will discuss the relationship between art and religion, historical setting, morality, politics, and various modes of discrimination. Throughout, we will attempt to illustrate the theories and concepts introduced by applying them to specific problem cases and concrete artworks.

### Schedule and Readings:

- |        |         |  |
|--------|---------|--|
| Week 1 | Jan. 11 | Introduction<br>— The case of the damage to the <i>Pietà</i>   |
| Week 2 | Jan. 25 | What is art? Can it be defined?<br>— Danto, <i>The Artworld</i><br>— Dickie, <i>Defining Art</i> (online)<br>— Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§66-75 (online)    |
| Week 3 | Feb. 1  | Beauty, ugliness, and taste (FIRST PAPER DUE)<br>— Hume, <i>Of the Standard of Taste</i><br>— Kant, <i>Critique of Judgment</i> , the First, Second, and Fourth Moments                |
| Week 4 | Feb. 8  | Why spend time on art?<br>— Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book X<br>— Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>   |
| Week 5 | Feb. 15 | Can we learn from art?<br>— Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book II & III<br>— Plato, <i>Symposium</i><br>— Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i> , “The Work and Truth” to the end |

- Week 6 Feb. 22 Experience of and emotional response to art (SECOND PAPER DUE)  
 — Tolstoy, *What is Art?*  
 — Bell, *Art*  
 — Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*  
 — (optional) Davies, Why Listen to Sad Music if it Makes One Feel Sad? (online)
- Week 7 Feb. 29 What constitutes the artwork?  
 — Thomasson, The Ontology of Art (online)  
 — Collingwood, *Principles of Art*
- Week 8 Mar. 14 Authenticity and aesthetic equivalence  
 — Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility  
 — Lessing, What's Wrong with a Forgery? (online)
- Week 9 Mar. 21 How and what does an artwork mean? (THIRD PAPER DUE)  
 — Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, "Foundations of a Theory of Hermeneutical Experience" to the end  
 — Wimsatt and Beardsley, The Intentional Fallacy (online)
- Week 10 Mar. 28 The relation between art and morality  
 — Nehamas, Plato and the Mass Media (online)  
 — Gass, Goodness Knows Nothing of Beauty (online)
- Week 11 Apr. 4 The politics of art  
 — Foucault, *The Order of Things*  
 — Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*
- Week 12 Apr. 11 Racism and sexism in the arts  
 — Gooding-Williams, Look, a Negro! (online)  
 — Nochlin, Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? (online)  
 — (optional) Rudinow, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues? (online)
- Week 13 Apr. 18 Screening of *What is Cinema?* (FINAL PAPER DUE)

**Assignments:**

Paper 1	15%	Short expository paper	Due: Feb. 1
Paper 2	15%	Short critical paper	Due: Feb. 22
Paper 3	25%	Medium length paper evaluating an argument or position	Due: Mar. 21
Paper 4	30%	Final paper for the course	Due: Apr. 18
Participation	15%	This is necessary for a course that meets only once a week	

**Accommodations:** Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact me and the appropriate Disability Services office at the beginning of the semester. The two disability service offices on campus are: Disabled Student Resources and Services (269) 387-2116 and the Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (269) 387-4411.

**Academic Honesty:** You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the university's [policies and procedures](#) that pertain to Academic Honesty. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment.