

PHIL 3120 – Philosophy of Art

4003 Brown Hall

Tues. and Thurs. 2:00-3:15

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

TA: dominic.j.aishe@wmich.edu (3007 Moore Hall, Tues. 4:00-5:00 & Wed. 2:00-3:00)

Required Texts: None – all materials will be posted to Elearning

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the analysis of the nature of art, aesthetic experience, and its significance in our lives. We'll 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 the meaning and interpretation of artworks; the aims of art, including imitation and the expression of emotion; ideals of beauty, ugliness, and what grounds these properties; conceptions of what kind of value art can have and why it's worth our time; the importance of authenticity; and the ontology artworks. The final portion of the course will discuss the relationship between art and politics/morality, and will employ theories developed earlier in the course while thinking through some important works of art. Throughout, we'll attempt to illustrate the theories and concepts introduced by applying them to specific problem cases and concrete artworks.

Note: The readings, artworks, and the reading schedule are subject to change depending on the progress and interests of the class. The exact dates of the assignments may shift as well, but I'll try to keep them as close to the dates here as possible.

Schedule and Readings:

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| Week 1 | INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ART? CAN IT BE DEFINED? | |
| Jan. 9 | Introduction and examples (no reading) | |
| Jan. 11 | Dickie, Defining Art (<i>optional</i>) Danto, The Artworld | |
| Week 2 | HOW AND WHAT DOES AN ARTWORK MEAN? AUTHOR'S INTENT | |
| Jan. 16 ^{*1} | Celan, <i>In Eins</i> Wimsatt and Beardsley, The Intentional Fallacy (excerpt) (<i>optional</i>) Barthes, The Death of the Author | (PAPER 1 PROMPT OUT) |
| Jan. 18 | IN-CLASS PAPER 1 | |
| Week 3 | HOW AND WHAT DOES AN ARTWORK MEAN? TRADITION AND PRACTICE | |
| Jan. 23 [*] | Simpson, <i>Under the Hammer</i> (excerpt) Babbitt, The Composer as Specialist | |
| Jan. 25 | MacIntyre, <i>After Virtue</i> (excerpt) | |

¹A star next to a date indicates that there will be a reading quiz or a written response at the beginning of class or due then.

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| Week 4 | WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF ART? IMITATION |
| Jan. 30 | Plato, <i>Republic</i> 595a - 600a Plato, <i>Republic</i> 514a - 517c (“The Allegory of the Cave”) |
| Feb. 1* | Nehamas, Plato and the Mass Media (excerpt) (optional) Nehamas, Plato and the Mass Media (full) |
| Week 5 | WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF ART? EMOTION |
| Feb. 6 | Tolstoy, What is Art? Ch. 5 and 15 Watch at home: Martha Graham, <i>Lamentation</i> (8:12) |
| Feb. 8* | Listen at home: Beethoven, String Quartet in C# Minor, Op. 131, Mvt. 1 (8:54) Davies, Why Listen to Sad Music If It Makes One Feel Sad? |
| Week 6 | WHAT IS AN AUTHENTIC WORK OF ART? |
| Feb. 13* | Watch at home: Berger, <i>Ways of Seeing</i> , episode 1 (30:04) (PAPER 2 DUE) Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (excerpt) |
| Feb. 15 | Lessing, What is Wrong with a Forgery? <i>La Pietà</i> news article |
| Week 7 | WHAT MAKES AND ARTWORK GOOD? WHO DECIDES? |
| Feb. 20* | Hume, Of the Standard of Taste (excerpts) |
| Feb. 22 | Bourdieu, <i>Distinction</i> , Introduction GSA’s account of the <i>Tilted Arc</i> controversy |
| Week 8 | WHAT MAKES AN ARTWORK GREAT? |
| Feb. 27 | Kant, <i>The Critique of Judgment</i> (excerpts) |
| Feb. 29* | Heidegger, The Origin of the Work of Art (excerpt) Watch at home: <i>Last and First Men</i> (excerpt) (9:17) |
| Week 9 | SPRING BREAK |
| Mar. 5 | No class |
| Mar. 7 | No class |
| Week 10 | ART AND POLITICS |
| Mar. 12* | Foucault, <i>The Order of Things</i> , Ch. 1 |
| Mar. 14 | Marcuse, <i>The Aesthetic Dimension</i> , I |
| Week 11 | TRAGEDY AND THE OPERA |
| Mar. 19* | Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> 1449b22 - 1455a21 |
| Mar. 21 | Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> §§1-2 (optional) Wagner, <i>The Art-work of the Future</i> (excerpts) |

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| Week 12 | EURYDICE SCREENING | | |
| Mar. 26 | In class: <i>Eurydice</i> screening, part 1 (no reading) | | (PAPER 3 DUE) |
| Mar. 28 | In class: <i>Eurydice</i> screening, part 2 (no reading) | | |
| Week 13 | RACISM AND SEXISM IN THE ARTS | | |
| Apr. 2* | Gooding-Williams, Look, a Negro! (excerpt) | | |
| | Watch at home: Interview with Edward Nkoloso (4:01) | | |
| | Watch at home: <i>Afronauts</i> (14:06) | | |
| Apr. 4 | Nochlin, Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? (<i>optional</i>) Eaton, What's Wrong with the (Female) Nude? | | |
| Week 14 | DIFFICULTY IN MODERN THEATER | | |
| Apr. 9 | In class: <i>Endgame</i> screening (no reading) | | (EXAM OUT) |
| Apr. 11 | Adorno, Trying to Understand <i>Endgame</i> | | (EXAM DUE) |
| Week 15 | ART AND REDEMPTION | | |
| Apr. 16 | Geuss, Art and Theodicy | | |
| Apr. 18* | Watch at home: Mahler, <i>Das Lied von der Erde</i> , Mvt. 1 (8:36) | | |
| | Watch at home: Mahler, <i>Das Lied von der Erde</i> , Mvt. 6 (29:59) | | |
| | (<i>optional</i>) Kitcher, <i>Deaths in Venice</i> (excerpt) | | (FINAL PAPER DUE) |

Assignments:

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| Paper 1 | 10% | Short expository paper | Due: Jan. 23 |
| Paper 2 | 10% | Short critical paper | Due: Feb. 13 |
| Paper 3 | 20% | Medium length paper evaluating an argument or position | Due: Mar. 26 |
| Paper 4 | 25% | Final paper for the course | Due: Apr. 18 |
| Final Exam | 15% | Comprehensive take-home exam | Due: Apr. 11 |
| Participation | 20% | This is necessary for a philosophy course Attendance and ~10 reading quizzes will contribute to this grade | |

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 disability service office on campus is: Disability Services for Students (269) 387-2116.

Academic Integrity: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the university's [policies and procedures](#) that pertain to Academic Integrity. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in a transgression of academic integrity, you will be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. 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 integrity prior to the submission of an assignment.

Due to the extensive use of ChatGPT and similar AI tools I've found being used in recent courses—tools that you are not authorized to use in this course—all of your essays (aside from the first which will be written in class) must be written and submitted using the following method.

1. Go to goWMU (<https://go.wmich.edu/s/>) and log in.
2. Click on the “Quick Links” menu near the top of the page and select “W-Exchange.”
3. Click the Word icon on the left-hand side of the page.
4. Create a new Blank document to start your essay.
5. Write your paper.
6. When you're done, click the “Share” menu in the top right corner of the page and select “Share.”
7. Type “Dominic Aishe” and click his name when it appears.
8. Push the “Send” button to submit the file to him.

Religious Observance Policy: See the information here: wmich.edu/registrar/calendars/interfaith.

WMU Essential Studies Information: This is a Level II – Exploration and Discovery course. The primary learning objectives are (1) to increase foundational knowledge of the Social Sciences, Humanities, or the Arts; and (2) to develop creative and critical thinking.

Grading: The grading for this course will be based on the following scale.

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| A | [92.5, 100] |
| BA | [87.5, 92.5) |
| B | [82.5, 87.5) |
| CB | [77.5, 82.5) |
| C | [72.5, 77.5) |
| DC | [67.5, 72.5) |
| D | [60, 67.5) |
| E | [0, 60) |

Resources: If this is your first philosophy course, you may want to consult the following resources containing suggestions about how to read and write philosophy papers.

jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html
jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html