AESTHETICS (PHL 340)
Spring Semester 2007
Instructor: Dr. Eugene E. Selk
Office: Humanities Center 107
   office hours: Tue. & Wed., 1:30-3, & by appointment
Communication: tel. 280-2229 (if I am not in, leave a message on voice mail)
   departmental tel. 280-2834 (departmental secretary)
   departmental facsimile 280-3359
e-mail: eeselk@creighton.edu
   internet address: people.creighton.edu/~ees33175

Required texts

Books available in the bookstore


Packet of essays


**Overview of the course**

Aesthetics is the philosophy of art—that is, the reflective and critical study of basic questions about art. It is not the history of art, or art appreciation—albeit, one of the secondary goals of this course is to increase your knowledge of the history of art and to enhance your enjoyment of art. But the primary task of aesthetics is to explore the nature of art and of art criticism.

There are two really big problems of aesthetics: What is art, and what is good art? And there are a number of secondary issues: the aesthetic attitude, truth in art, progress in art, art and science, art and religion, creativity in art, and the value of art, art interpretation, and artistic language.

The first part of the course will address the first primary problem of aesthetics: What is art? After briefly exploring the classical Greek and the Renaissance theories of art, we will examine in detail three contemporary theories of art—the expressionist theory, the formalist theory, and the institutional theory.

We will next turn to a number of secondary issues in aesthetics: truth in art; pornography, censorship, and art; public support for the arts; high and low art; and the interpretation of works of art.

Finally we will address the second primary question in aesthetics: What is good art? The issues here are: What criteria, if any, can be used to distinguish between good and bad art, and are there objective criteria for evaluating art?

The course will close with a brief discussion of the value of art—i.e., the place of art in the life of humankind.

**Outline of the course**

I. Aesthetics: Its meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Shiner, “Introduction”</td>
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II. The classical Greek view of art: The Mimetic Theory

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Shiner, chap. 1.</td>
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**Paper #1** - due Monday, January 22
III. Medieval Aesthetics: The New Abstraction

1/24 Shiner, chap. 2.

IV. The Renaissance view of art: Variations on the Mimetic Theory

1/26 Read: Alberti on mimeticism. On Blackboard.
Bruce Cole, "The Artist in Society."
1/29 Shiner, chaps. 3 & 4.
1/31 catchup

V. Closing reflections on the mimetic theory

Oscar Wilde, "Nature's Imitation of Art."

2/7 Tour of Joslyn Art Museum - Meet at the east, atrium entrance; the tour will begin exactly at the announced time.

VI. The three major contemporary theories of art

1. The Expressionist Theory

2/5 Read: Shiner, chap. 5, 6 & 7
Romanticism and the Expressionist theory: The Romantic movement
catchup

Exam # 1 - Monday, February 12

2/14 Read: Leo Tolstoy, in Wartenberg, 102-109.
2/16 Shiner on the apotheosis of art, chap. 10, 11, & 12.
2/19

Paper # 2 - due Monday, February 19

2. The Formalist Theory

2/21 Read: Clive Bell’s formalism, in Wartenberg, 117-124.
2/23
3. The Institutional Theory

2/26 Read: Arthur Danto in Wartenberg, 205-217.
3/2 catchup

Spring break - March 4-11

VII. Truth in art & interpreting works of art

3/12 Read: Schopenhauer in Wartenberg, 64-72.
3/16 Barthes on interpretation, in Wartenberg, 254-259.

VIII. Aesthetics & ethics & public support for the arts

Pornography, censorship, and art

Easter break - April 6 - 9

Aesthetics values & moral values

Exam # 2 - Monday, March 26

3/28 Excerpts from Bullets over Broadway, or another film

Public Funding of the Arts
3/30 Read: Edward Martenson, "Public Support: A Contract with the Arts."

early April - 2nd visit to Joslyn - tentative

IX. The end of art, or a philosophy of the history of art

4/2 Read: Hegel, in Wartenberg, 73-83.
Arthur Danto, Chapters 1 & 2 from After the End of Art. On Blackboard.
Paper # 3 - due Wednesday, April 11

X. High & low art; art & craft, art & anti-art

4/11 & 4/13 Read: Shiner, chap. 13, 14, 15, & conclusion
Jegede in Wartenberg, 312-322.

XI. The second primary question of aesthetics: What is good art?

Kenneth Clark, What is a Masterpiece? (tentative) On Blackboard.

XII. The value of art; the place of art in the life of human persons


Exam # 3 - Wednesday, May 2 - 10 a.m.

Course requirements

1. Attendance & participation. I will take attendance regularly, and attendance together with the quality of your participation will count for 8% of your total grade. For each unexcused absence, 5 points will be subtracted from your attendance and participation grade (on a 100 point scale).

   Participation includes coming to class on time, being prepared for class, being attentive and respectful of others, and volunteering to ask and respond to questions. It also includes not dominating the discussion and being sensitive to the desires of others to comment or ask questions. Good participation means being aware of the dynamic of the class as a whole.

2. Dialogue days. Approximately one class session each week will be based on your answers to questions which handed out a class or two before. Write out your answers and bring them to class. The class session will be based on your discussion of the questions. Make two copies of your answers. I will collect one copy at the beginning of class. Use the other copy for the class discussion. These will be graded lightly (i.e., normally, you will get the full points for each completed question-sheet). However, if you did not take the assignment seriously (flippant answers or answers which clearly show a failure to read carefully), I will give less than full points.
3. **Gallery sessions.** Toward the end of the semester, each member of the class will be required to present an image of a work of art (preferably a painting, print, or sculpture) to the class. Give a bit of background on the work—the artist, art-historical movement to which the work belongs, and the style of the work. Use ideas and language which have been developed in the course. Then **evaluate** the work, that is, give your judgement on whether the work is good or bad, and defend your judgement. You may wish to link your evaluation to one of the four theories of art. For example, you might emphasize the formal qualities of a work and link this to Clive Bell’s formalist theory.

You can use whatever medium you wish—a slide, poster, projected digital image, or an original work of art. Limit your presentation to **15 minutes (maximum).**

Check the evaluation sheet on criteria to be used in determining your grade.

4. **Short papers.** Three papers, from 2 to 3 pages, are required. A short statement of the project of the paper will be handed out approximately a week before the paper is due. They will be on one or two of the assigned readings or on a problem for analysis. For papers on assigned readings, (1) begin with an abstract of at most 4 or 5 sentences; (2) give a tight overview of the topic assigned. Don’t simply repeat the author’s language. Put the summary in your own words. Show me that you understand the issues and arguments. (3) Give your critical assessment of the author’s position.


- University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center
- Purdue University - the Owl
  [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/)

Late papers will be penalized one-half of a letter grade; papers over one week late will be penalized a full letter grade.

5. **Principal deadlines**

- paper # 1 - Monday, January 22
- exam # 1 - Friday, February 12
- paper # 2 - Monday, February 19
- exam # 2 - Monday, March 26
- paper # 3 - Wednesday, April 11
- exam # 3 - Wednesday, May 2, 10 a.m.
6. Exams and grading

There will be three exams. They will be non-cumulative, and the last of the three exams will be the final. Exams must be taken on their assigned dates. In case of an emergency, you must contact me for permission to delay taking the exam before the exam is given.

All exams and papers will be graded on a 100 point scale with the following breakdown for each letter

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>100-93</td>
<td>92-86</td>
<td>85-79</td>
<td>78-72</td>
<td>71-62</td>
<td>61-54</td>
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The following is the weighting of each of the course requirements:

- three exams at 15% each - 45%
- three papers at 8% each - 24%
- answers to dialogue-days questions - 16%
- class presentation - 08%
- attendance and participation - 07%

Incompletes & extra credit. No extra credit is available. Except for very special circumstances, I do not give incompletes.

BEST WISHES FOR A GOOD SEMESTER!

Classroom etiquette. A good learning environment requires treating your instructor and classmates with respect. This includes, raising your hand to speak, not wearing a hat in class, not putting your feet on the desk in front of you, and not gathering papers and bags before the class has ended.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with the mission of Creighton University, academic honesty is expected of students in this course. "Academic or academic-related misconduct' includes . . . unauthorized collaboration or use of external information during examinations; plagiarizing [see the following statement] or representing another's ideas as one's own; furnishing false academic information to the University; falsely obtaining, distributing, using or receiving test materials; falsifying academic records; . . . misusing academic resources; defacing or tampering with library materials; obtaining or gaining unauthorized access to examinations or academic research material; soliciting or offering unauthorized academic information or materials. . ." (Creighton University Bulletin: 2002-2003 Undergraduate Issue, 87-88) It is a requirement of the College of Arts and Sciences that all serious violations of academic honesty must be reported to the Dean's office. A violation of academic honesty may result in a dramatic lowering of the course grade or failure.
Plagiarism

Be careful never to copy directly or directly adapt from another author without crediting the source. General sources must be listed in a bibliography; any indirect or direct quotation or paraphrase must be credited within the body of the paper. Any unacknowledged copying will result in severe penalties.

(The following is adapted from a statement by Dr. Appleby, Marian College, 1993)

A. What is plagiarism?
1. Definition: "Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, whether deliberately or accidentally" (Fowler 501).
2. Plagiarism is derived from a Latin word meaning "kidnapper" (Fowler 70).
3. Forms of plagiarism
   i. "The use of another's writing without proper use of quotation marks. Do not under any circumstances, copy onto your paper a direct quotation without providing quotation marks and crediting the source" (Lester 47)
   ii. "The borrowing of a word or phrase, the use of an idea, or the paraphrasing of material if that phrase, idea, or material is not properly introduced or documented. Also included in plagiarism is the mere rearrangement of phrases from the original into a new pattern" (Lester 47).
   iii. It is also plagiarism to "take, buy, or receive a paper written by someone else and present it as your own" (Corder and Ruszkiewicz 633).
   iv. Another form of academic dishonesty that is related to plagiarism is collusion which is defined as "collaboration with someone else in producing work you claim to be entirely your own" (Corder and Ruszkiewicz 633).

B. How can plagiarism be avoided?
1. Acknowledge all borrowed material by introducing or following the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority from whom it was taken.
2. Enclose all quoted material within quotation marks, even single words and phrases.
3. Make certain that all paraphrased material is written in your own style and language.
4. Provide bibliographic entry for every source that appears in a written work.
5. Be certain that all written work you submit is your own. You may (and in some cases should) ask others to review your work, but "any changes, deletions, rearrangements, or corrections should be your own work" (Corder and Ruszkiewicz 633).

C. Why is plagiarism wrong?
It is considered a criminal offense (i.e., the theft of intellectual property) and can result in fines and/or imprisonment.
It is academically dishonest and can lead to serious sanctions from the university.
It undermines the academic integrity and ethical atmosphere of the university.
It violates the mission of Creighton University.
It involves a passive learning process that obstructs the acquisition and understanding of meaningful academic material.
It retards intellectual, moral, and social development.
It is contrary to the concept of critical thinking.

References

Standards for evaluating the writing assignments

A paper
- a clear statement of the topic of the paper (thesis statement); clear to the reader what the main point of the paper is and consistency throughout the paper in sticking to the topic
- good personal reflections
- no grammar or spelling mistakes
- no awkward phrases or colloquialisms
- smooth transitions
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, body, & conclusion
- correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

**B paper**
- the main focus of the paper is not always clear
- begin paper with a sweeping statement which is trivial and empty
- adequate personal reflections
- few grammar or spelling mistakes
- relatively smooth transitions
- occasional use of colloquialisms
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, body, & conclusion
- correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

**C paper**
- no clear focus to the paper; the reader can’t decipher what the point of the paper is
- begin paper with a sweeping statement which is trivial and empty
- few personal reflections
- grammatical and/or spelling errors
- many awkward or tangled phrases
- use of colloquialisms
- excessively ambiguous or incoherent sentences
- no clear flow from introduction, through body, to conclusion
- ambiguity about who is speaking (you? the author you are discussing?)
- jumps without transitions or connections with what precedes
- incorrect use of the MLA parenthetical style

**D paper**
- many items from the C paper plus
- only marginally on the topic assigned

**F paper**
- Items under the C paper and the D paper plus
- using sources without any references (plagiarism)

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**Standards for evaluating participation**

**strengths**
- attendance
- indication that you have read the material beforehand by appropriate questions and comments responding to the professor’s and classmates’ comments
- comments indicate background reading, reflection, and analysis

**weaknesses**
- failure to attend, chronically late
- inability to use material which was to be read before class
- no response to professor’s and classmates’ comments
- comments indicate little reflection and no connection to readings used in course
- dominating the discussion and being insensitive to the desires of other students to participate in the discussion
Standards for evaluating answers to dialogue-days questions

strengths
- cite specific comments within the reading
- raise good questions & criticisms based on the reading
- relate your comments to course readings & lectures

weaknesses
- excessively brief answers which do not go beyond the web site outlines
- indications that you did not read the essay (e.g., excessively brief answers which could be gleaned from the headings)

Standards for evaluating the presentations

A
- excellent background information (artist, art-historical movement)
- good selection of standards for evaluating the work & good defense of these standards
- clear & well-focused
- good pace; not too fast or too slow
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, body, and conclusion
- focused on & highlighted main points; did not get lost in details
- very few awkward phrases & pauses
- stayed within the time limit

B
- solid background
- good selection of standards but could have been more clearly articulated
- a few disjoined connections
- focus okay; could be sharper
- occasional awkward phrases & pauses

C
- not much background information
- occasionally repetitive
- many awkward & tangled phrases
- used colloquialisms
- no clear focus
- only marginally on the topic assigned
- got lost in details & missed main points
- excessively short or went beyond the time limit

D & F
- very repetitive
- many colloquialisms
- no focus
- confused and tangled sentences
- not on the topic assigned
- not clear what standards you used for evaluating the work
- excessively short or went beyond the time limit
Evaluation of papers

strengths

_____ clear statement of the project of the paper (thesis statement)
_____ good personal reflections
_____ well-organized; good movement from introduction, through body, and to conclusion
_____ few grammatical and spelling mistakes
_____ few awkward phrases
_____ good transitions
_____ correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

weaknesses

_____ no clear statement of the project of the paper (thesis statement)
_____ repeating classroom discussion and assigned reading with nothing more
_____ grammatical and/or spelling errors
_____ many awkward or tangled phrases
_____ use of colloquialisms
_____ excessively ambiguous or incoherent sentences
_____ no clear flow from introduction, through body, to conclusion
_____ ambiguity about who is speaking (you? the author you are discussing?)
_____ jumps without transitions or connections with what precedes
_____ incorrect use of the MLA parenthetical style
_____ few personal reflections or analyses
_____ only marginally on the topic assigned
_____ using sources without any references (plagiarism)