

Philosophy of Art 343

Syllabus

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Spring 2018
MWF 11.15-12.05
Office Hours: M 1-2:30

Description

This course is meant to introduce you to philosophical questions about art. We will focus primarily on trying to understand the nature of art. The main question will thus be, “What is art?” We will begin by looking at a variety of answers to that question. Some have said that art is necessarily representational, others that it expresses emotion, others that it has form or structure, and others that it provokes aesthetic experience. Some doubt that there are necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as art. They think the question “What is art?” does not have a tidy answer.

Once we’ve looked at some of these views, we’ll pivot to an extended examination of one of the following topics:

Option 1: The philosophy of music. We will attempt to answer various questions within the philosophy of music including but not limited to: What is the difference between music and noise? What is a work of music? Are the works of classical music, rock, and jazz fundamentally different kinds of things? What is a musical performance, and what makes one accurate or authentic? What are the relevant social, cultural, and ethical considerations when playing or engaging with music? This option will involve reading articles that I will make available on Moodle, as well as a listening component.

Option 2: The thesis that art should be understood as a social practice. This view specifically rejects the model of art on which only the codified “fine arts” (painting, poetry, dance, music, drama, and sculpting) are taken as archetypal instances of it. Perhaps recognizing more kinds of art can give us more insight into what art itself is. We will look at memorial art, religious art, social protest art, and work songs as examples to help us think about art as a social practice. This option will involve an in-depth reading of Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Art Rethought*, along with additional texts.

Objectives

The goals of this course include enabling you to:

- Identify, properly interpret, and evaluate various philosophical views about art and arguments for those views.

- Engage in reflective and respectful discussion with your peers on the topic of philosophy of art.
- Develop your own views in the philosophy of art and an increased ability to communicate them and argue for them by verbal and written means.

I'll measure your progress in these by recording your performance on the assignments mentioned below.

Textbooks

You should buy the following book:

PA = Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*
ISBN-10: 0415159644; ISBN-13: 978-0415159647

Both are required. They'll make up a lot of our reading this semester. There will be other required readings, all of which will be made available ahead of time on Moodle.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on Reading Commentaries, Discussion Write-ups, in-class interaction, and two papers, according to the following distribution:

READING COMMENTARIES	20%
DISCUSSION WRITE-UPS	20%
IN-CLASS INTERACTION	15%
PAPERS	50% (15% for midterm; 35% for final)

Reading Commentaries

During the semester you must complete 8 reading commentaries. Each commentary must be on a separate unit. You must upload your commentary to Moodle before 11.59 PM on the night before the class period on which the reading on which you are commenting is due. So if you choose the reading for Friday, 02/03, then you must upload your commentary to Moodle by 11.59 PM on the night of Thursday, 02/02. Follow the description and rubric uploaded onto Moodle for instructions on how to do reading commentaries.

Discussion Write-ups

The class will proceed by a series of condensed units. Each unit will look at a topic from one of our two main texts and an accompanying article or historical text. At the end of each unit we will have a day devoted to student discussion. In order for students to be (and feel) more prepared for this day, I will have each of you bring written answers to questions that will be discussed on that day. The questions will be available on Moodle before the discussion.

Papers

The midterm paper will be a 1,300-1,800 word (roughly 4-6 page) paper taking a stance on some debate or summarizing and evaluating an argument for some view in the first section of the course. Prompts will be provided and made available on Moodle a few weeks ahead of the due date. If you'd like to write on something not included in one of the prompts, you may do so, but only with instructor approval at least two weeks ahead of the due date. Once the grades for the midterm paper have been returned you will have an opportunity to revise your paper for a better grade.

Your final paper will be a 2,000-3,000 word (roughly 7-10 page) paper developing an argument for some view in one of the debates central to our course topic and literature. There will be an outline, a rough draft with comments from me, and a finished version of the paper due during exam week. You must turn in each part of the assignment by the time specified on the Course Schedule below. The purpose of the final paper is to go beyond merely evaluating the views of other philosophers in the field and to attempt to make one's own contribution to the literature.

Late Work

Turn things in on time. **The penalty for late work is 10% per day.** This is harsh because I want to build in an incentive not to get behind. Also, it is usually a burden on my time to accept late work at all. Work is to be submitted on Moodle on the day it is due by the time specified for the assignment. Work will be considered one day late if it is to me between any time in the 24 hours after the due date, two days late if to me between 24-48 hours of the due date, and so on.

Extensions

I am normally happy to grant extensions on assignments for a variety of reasons **if you communicate with me ahead of time.** If you ask for an extension an hour after an assignment is due, the answer will be no. That just tells me you didn't care enough to think ahead and determine whether you had time to do the thing until it was already due. If you're a week or two out from a due date and feel that you'll have a hard time executing everything you need to do to get an assignment done well and on time, just ask for an extension and I'll probably give it to you. This isn't quite as true for Reading Commentaries or Discussion Write-ups, which are not a lot of work and come at regular intervals. Try not to fall behind on these. Think of your papers, though, as projects, and of me as your project manager. I'm just trying to help you manage your time and resources to do well on your project, and the only way I can do that is if you are communicating with me.

Absences

You are allowed two unexcused absences. Any absences beyond this will reduce your overall grade by 2%. So, if you have 7 unexcused absences your maximum grade is 90% in the course, if you have 12 unexcused absences your maximum grade is 80%, etc. Excuses will only be granted for students who alert me **ahead of time** by email or word of mouth; only for health reasons, school groups, or family emergencies; and only with official documentation to verify the excuse. Exceptions may be made for last minute emergencies.

Technology

I have a **No Screen Policy** in class. Notes should be taken by hand. Laptops, phones, and tablets distract people, they detract from face-to-face connection and empathy, and they worsen your retention of information compared to hand-writing notes. So put them away when you come into class.

Academic Dishonesty

Don't plagiarize. Seriously. I'll know if you do, and you will fail the assignment (and possibly the course) when I catch you. Plus, it's immoral. If you aren't sure whether something counts as plagiarism, ask me. You can also research our school's stance on plagiarism and related issues:

<http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you desire accommodations for this class on the basis of physical, learning, psychological or emotional disability, you should contact Disability Services. Disability Services is located at:

161 Whitmore
181 Presidents Drive
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-9313

It can be reached by calling 413.545.0892. Visit <https://www.umass.edu/disability/students> for more information. Make sure to plan ahead if you are going to ask for adjustments to assignment requirements.

Tentative Course Schedule

We're scheduled to meet 39 times over 13 weeks. On the following page you will find a schedule of how—tentatively—the readings and assignments will break down over those weeks. Each reading must be finished by the beginning of class on the day on which it's due.

Day	Unit	Reading Due	Assignment Due
01/22 – Mon			
01/24 – Wed		PA – Introduction (1-17)	
01/26 – Fri	1	PA – Ch. 1: Part 1 (18-32)	
01/29 – Mon		Sherri Irvin (2005)	
01/31 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
02/02 – Fri	2	PA Ch. 2: Part 1 (58-78)	
02/05 – Mon		Jenefer Robinson (2005)	
02/07 – Wed		Gregory Currie (1997)	
02/09 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
02/12 – Mon		N/A	
02/14 – Wed	3	PA Ch. 3: Part 1 (107-136)	
02/16 – Fri		Richard Eldridge (1985)	
02/21 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
02/23 – Fri	4	PA Ch. 4: Part 1 (156-181)	
02/26 – Mon		Carolyn Korsmeyer (2012)	
02/28 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
03/02 – Fri	5	PA Ch. 5: Part 1 (206-223)	
03/05 – Mon		PA Ch. 5: Parts 2-3 (224-264)	
03/07 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
03/09 – Fri	6	Levinson, "The Concept of Music"	Midterm Paper
03/19 – Mon		Kania, "Silent Music"	
03/21 – Wed		Kivy, "The Work"	
03/23 – Fri		Gracyk, "That Thin Wild Mercury Sound: Ontology"	Final Paper Topic Approval
03/26 – Mon		Kania, "All Play and No Work: An Ontology of Jazz"	
03/28 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
03/30 – Fri	7	Walton, "Categories of Art"	
04/02 – Mon		Levinson, "Evaluating Musical Performance"	
04/04 – Wed		Magnus et al., "Judging Covers"	
04/06 – Fri		Discussion Day	DW & Final Paper Outline
04/09 – Mon	8	Davies, "The Dialoge Between Words and Music"	
04/11 – Wed		No Reading	
4/13 – Fri		Smuts, "The Ethics of Singing Along"	
04/17 – Tue		Rudinow, "Can White People Sing the Blues?"	
04/18 – Wed		Bicknell, "Just a Song?"	
04/20 – Fri		Goehr, "Political Music and the Politics of Music"	Final Paper Rough Draft
04/23 – Mon		TBD	
04/25 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up
04/27 – Fri		Paper Workshop	
04/30 – Mon		Paper Workshop	
05/04 – Fri		No Class	Final Paper