

PHIL 361:

Philosophy of Art

Instructor: Rebecca Harrison

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What is art? What, if anything, is art supposed to do? What can art show us about ourselves? What is the role of the artist in the creation of the work of art, and the role of the audience in its reception? What contribution does the human context (material, political, historical) make to our understanding of art?

These are just a few of the questions this course hopes to address. Our class will be a seminar-style discussion course oriented around a historical survey of influential philosophical approaches to art and aesthetics more generally. This historical and thematic approach will be of interest to students in philosophy

as well as those in art and art history. This course will prepare students to critically engage with contemporary literature on the subject, and to think more deeply about their own relationship and experiences with art.

Course Texts:

Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology, edited by Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin

Arthur Danto, *What Art Is*

Optional: Brian Mogck, *Writing to Reason: A Companion for Philosophy Students and Instructors*

Additional readings will be provided.

Assignments:

- Three papers of increasing length and complexity, due during Week 5, Week 10, and Finals Week.
 - Paper #1: 3-4 pages (double spaced), assigned topic TBA — **20%**
 - Paper #2: 4-6 pages (double spaced), assigned topic TBA — **25%**
 - Paper #3: 6-8 pages (double spaced), topic of student's choice (with instructor approval), requires some outside research — **30%**.
- Attendance and participation in seminar is required — **25%**

Schedule of Readings:

- **Week 1** - 8/29: Plato. Selections from *The Republic* and *Symposium* (Anthology Chapters 3 & 4)
- **Week 2** - 9/5: Early Modern: Hutcheson & Hume. Selections from “An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue” and “Of the Standard of Taste” (Anthology chapters 10-11)
- **Week 3** - 9/12: Kant. Selections from the *Critique of Judgment*. (Anthology Chapter 14, pp. 131-149)
- **Week 4** - 9/19: Nietzsche. Selections from *The Birth of Tragedy*. (Anthology Chapter 21)



- **Week 5** - 9/26: Dewey, “Art as Experience” (Anthology Chapter 27)
- **Week 6** - 10/3: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (Anthology Chapter 29)
- **Week 7** - 10/10: Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” (Anthology Chapter 30)
- **Week 8** - 10/17: Merleau-Ponty, “Eye & Mind” (pdf)
- **Week 9** - 10/24: Weitz, “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics,” and Dickie, “What is Art? An Institutional Analysis” (Anthology Chapters 35 & 37)
- **Week 10** - 10/31 [Halloween]: Noel Carroll, “The Nature of Horror” (pdf)
- **Week 11** - 11/7: Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?” (pdf)
- **Week 12** - 11/14: Noë, “Experience and Experiment in Art” (pdf provided)
- **Week 13** - 11/28: Danto, *What Art Is*, Chapter 1: Wakeful Dreams
- **Week 14** - 12/5: Danto, *What Art Is*, Chapter 3: The Body in Philosophy and Art
- **Week 15** - 12/12: Danto, *What Art Is*, Chapter 6: The Future of Aesthetics

NOTE: *Assigned readings are subject to change or modification at any time.*

Note: It is **extremely important** that you do the readings in a timely fashion, and that you regularly attend seminar. As you will discover, the texts we are going to cover are interesting and rewarding, but generally quite difficult. It is very unlikely you will be able to succeed in the course (and unlikely that you will enjoy it!) without keeping on top of the readings and coming to class with questions in hand. In order to read well, a number of things are necessary: **(1)** a place where you can concentrate, **(2)** a significant amount of time (these works are best read slowly and deliberately rather than in a short glances), **(3)** a pen or pencil so that you can read *actively* – argue with the author, struggle to understand, to question, to respond – and to do this you must underline, write in the margins, make notes. Putting in the time to prepare for class adequately will make for a more interesting and fulfilling class for everyone!



Attendance

Attendance and participation in this course is required. Students will be permitted one “freebie,” an absence for which they do not have to provide documentation or justification. Each subsequent unexcused absence will negatively impact the student’s attendance/participation grade. Absences will only be excused in extenuating circumstances for which the student can provide adequate documentation, in advance of the absence when possible.

Disability Accommodations

Students with a disability or medical restriction who are requesting a classroom accommodation should contact the Disabled Student Services at 562-985-5401 or visit Brotman Hall, Suite 270 during 8AM-5PM weekday hours. Disabled Student Services will work with the student to identify a reasonable accommodation in partnership with appropriate academic offices and medical providers. Students are encouraged to reach out to DSS as soon as possible, and bring the relevant paperwork to the professor at the beginning of the semester.

Late/Missing Assignments

It is strongly in your interest to turn in assignments on time. You will lose 1/3 letter grade on an assignment for every day that it is late (so, e.g., a B assignment handed in two days late will receive a C+). That said, it is always better to turn in an assignment late -- even if you can only hope to get a D at best -- than not to turn in an assignment at all. Late assignments will *not* be accepted more than one week past their original due date.

Withdrawal

Students are expected to be aware of and act in accordance with university withdrawal policies. Those students who do not attend class meetings or complete assigned coursework will be assigned an F for the course unless they withdraw in a timely manner.

Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty:

In short: don’t do it. Make sure you are aware of what “plagiarism” is. Basically, it involves presenting someone else’s ideas as your own. This includes cases in which you are clearly “ripping off” someone else’s paper, book, or website, but it also includes cases in which you repeat something an author said or something your instructor said without properly attributing it (i.e., putting quotes around it and giving a citation for it), or presenting an idea you got from an outside source “in your own words” without attribution. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask. Students found to be plagiarizing or cheating on any portion of any assignment will *at*

least receive a 0 for that assignment, and possibly fail the course. Please familiarize yourself with CSULB's policies on plagiarism and cheating here: <http://catalog.csulb.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=30#cheating-and-plagiarism>

Classroom Etiquette:

Do not behave in any way that distracts from or disturbs the classroom environment. This includes late arrival to and early departure from class, speaking or whispering while others are speaking, using laptops for purposes other than those related to the class (e.g. facebook), texting, cell phones ringing, etc. (You may either be on the internet or your phone, OR you may be in my class, but not both). I reserve the right to ask any student engaged in distracting behaviors to leave the classroom, and repeated interruptions may result in failure of the course.

Biographical Information:

Rebecca Harrison is a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy at UC Riverside. She received her MA from Georgia State University in 2012. She is currently working on a dissertation that argues for thinking of Merleau-Ponty as a certain kind of realist, and considers some interesting consequences that result. Before coming to Riverside in 2012, she lived in Atlanta, New York, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans. She likes coffee and craft beer, is a middling-at-best musician (piano, guitar, and voice) and has been vegetarian for nearly 20 years. She has two dogs and a cat, and is happy to show you pictures of them if you ask nicely. View her webpage at <https://rdharrison.org/>

Featured Images:

- (1) Marcel Duchamp, "Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2," 1912.
- (2) Johannes Vermeer, "The Music Lesson," 1662-1665.
- (3) Paul Cezanne, "Still Life with a Curtain," circa 1898.