

# Philosophy and the Arts

Philosophy 263, Fall 2019

**Instructor:** Dr. Max Bialek

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**Lecture:** TuTh 2:15–3:35 (03)

**Office Hours:** TBA

**Location:** RAB-206

**Office Hours Location:** Miller Hall 211 ([map](#))

**Course Description.** “Introduction to the major issues in the philosophy of art, with emphasis on the implications of recent developments in film, music, and painting for art theory.”

This course surveys four major groups of philosophical questions that we might want to ask about art. There are definitional questions about art status: What is it to be a work of art? Who or what decides if something counts as “art” or something else? Questions of value: What determines the value of a work of art? What makes something beautiful? What aesthetic value is had by non-artworks? Do works of fiction have cognitive value? Questions of meaning: What is the meaning of the work of art? Who determines the meaning of a work? And last, but not least, questions of ontology: What sort of thing is a work of art? What are we referring to when we speak of particular sculptures, paintings, films, symphonies, improvisational jazz performances, etc...?

In considering these questions we will constantly be seeking out art and relevantly art-like things in order to test the views being discussed.

**Learning Goals.** It is the goal of this course that students enrich their ability to engage with art and art-like works. This enrichment occurs on two fronts: Individually, students will learn to reflect and draw on recent philosophical work on the nature of art and aesthetics, as well as be prepared to critically engage with other such works that they might encounter in the future. Interpersonally, students will learn to discuss their views—and the views of others—on art, aesthetics, and particular works, in ways that can be simultaneously critical, constructive, and respectful.

In so doing, this course satisfies two SAS Core Arts and the Humanities learning goals:

**(AHo)** Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

**(AHp)** Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

**Course Materials.** Most of the readings and other material will be posted on the course website. There is, however, one required book: David Davies’ *Philosophy of the Performing Arts* (ISBN 978-1405188036).

**Course Website.** The course website is done through Canvas, and is available directly at [TBA]. It is expected that you turn on alerts for announcements made on the course site so that you can stay up-to-date on any changes to the course.

**Accessibility and Accommodations.** Any needed accommodations or issues that might affect your academic performance should be brought to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible. Consult with the instructor or any of the following offices for help or more information: [Academic Advising](#), [Office of Disability Services](#), [Health and Counseling](#), [Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance](#).

**Student Conduct.** You should make sure that you are familiar with the rules regarding proper academic conduct as detailed at the [Student Affairs' Academic Integrity website](#). Additional information regarding student conduct in general is available at the [Office of Student Conduct website](#).

**Course Requirements & Grading.** Attendance and regular participation during in-class discussions is required and worth 10% of the course grade.

If you expect to miss any classes, please use the University's [absence reporting website](#) to indicate the date(s) and reason(s) for your absence.

All discussions related to this course—in class, out of class, online, wherever and whenever—should be conducted respectfully and constructively in accordance with the Department of Philosophy's [statement on the norms of discourse](#).

There will be thirteen weekly online discussion forums in which at least one substantial post (original or in reply to others' posts) must be made. These will each be worth 2% of the course grade, and the three lowest scoring discussions will be dropped, for a total 20% of the course grade being based on discussion posts.

Over the duration of the semester, each student will have to give an in-class presentation about a particular work of art or art-like thing that can serve as an interesting example when discussing course content. This will be worth 10% of the course grade.

There will be one highly structured literature review paper (750-1500 word) worth 15% of the course grade.

There will be one discussion paper (1000-2000 words) in which you present your own thinking on a course topic. Prior to writing the paper, a brief proposal (no more than 500 words) must be prepared and approved by the instructor. The proposal will be worth 5% of the course grade, and the paper itself will be worth 20% of the course grade.

A final exam comprised of short answer questions will be worth 20% of the course grade.

In short:

10% — Attendance/Participation	15% — Review Paper
20% — Weekly Discussion Posts	5% — Discussion Paper Proposal
10% — Art Presentation	20% — Discussion Paper
20% — Final Exam	

All grades will be given in numerical form. The course grade will be based on the weighted average described above, and the following scheme will be used to convert its numerical value to a letter grade:

$$A \geq 90 > B+ \geq 87 > B \geq 80 > C+ \geq 77 > C \geq 70 > D \geq 60 > F$$

**Late Assignments.** Late assignments may be submitted, but will have 5% of their maximum possible score deducted per day that they are late.

**Schedule.** Below is a *tentative* schedule for the course. Check the course website announcements at least once a week for any possible changes.

Readings should be done *before* the class on which they are listed.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Sep 3** Introduction

**Sep 4** Danto, A. (1964). The Artworld. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 571–584.

**Sep 10** Levinson, J. (1979). Defining Art Historically. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 19 (3), 232–250.

**Sep 12** Zangwill, N. (1995) Groundrules in the Philosophy of Art. *Philosophy*, 70 (274), 533-544.

**Sep 17** Gaut, B. (2005). The cluster account of art defended. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 45 (3), 273–288.

**Review Paper details announced.**

**Sep 19** Meskin, A. (2007). Defining Comics? *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65 (4), 369–379.

#### VALUE

**Sep 24** Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste*

**Sep 26** Mothersill, M. (1997). In Defense of Hume and the Causal Theory of Taste. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55 (3), 312–317.

**Oct 1** Sibley, F. (1959). Aesthetic Concepts. *The Philosophical Review*, 68 (4), 421–450.

**Oct 3** Walton, K. L. (1970). Categories of Art. *The Philosophical Review*, 334–367.

**Oct 8** Korsmeyer, C. (2012). Touch and the Experience of the Genuine. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 52 (4), 365–377.

**Oct 10** Carroll, N. (1999). Horror and Humor. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57 (2), 145–160.

(Oct 11) **Due: Review Paper**

- Oct 15** Stolnitz, J. (1992). On the cognitive triviality of art. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32 (3), 191–200.
- Oct 17** Elgin, C. Z. (2007). The laboratory of the mind. In *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, 43-54.

#### MEANING

- Oct 22** Wimsatt, W., & Beardsley, M. (1946). The Intentional Fallacy. *The Sewanee Review*, 54 (3): 468–488.
- Oct 24** Hirsch, E. D. Jr. (1967). In Defense of the Author. In *Validity in Interpretation*, 1–23.
- Oct 29** Tolhurst, W. E. (1979). On What A Text Is and How It Means. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 19 (1), 3–14.
- Oct 31** Nehamas, A. (1981). The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal. *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1), 133-149.
- (Nov 4) **Due: Discussion Paper Proposal**
- Nov 5** Appiah, K. (1991). Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial? *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (2), 336–357.
- Nov 7 In-class meetings about discussion paper proposals.**

#### ONTOLOGY

- Nov 12** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 1
- Nov 14** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 2
- Nov 19** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 3
- Nov 21** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 4
- Nov 26** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 5
- Nov 28** NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
- Dec 3** Davies' *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, Chapter 6
- Dec 5** Kania, A. (2018). Why Gamers Are Not Performers. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 76 (2), 187–199.
- (Dec 9) **Due: Discussion Paper**
- Dec 10** Review and Conclusion

#### FINAL EXAM TBA