

PHLC03-Topics in the philosophy of art: Art, values, and mind

Instructor: Dr. Dustin Stokes
Section: PHLCO3H3 LEC01; Winter Term
Lectures: Wed 11:00-1:00 AA206
Office: HW 325
Office Hours: W 1-2/and by appointment
Contact: d.stokes@utoronto.ca

Course description

This will be a course in analytic philosophy of art. We will divide our time (roughly) across three sets of issues: 1) What is our concept of art? 2) What are our concepts of the values of art and how do these relate to experiences of art? 3) What is the nature of our mental engagement with art? As we'll see, these questions, and their answers, are related.

How can we—indeed, *can* we—give a philosophical analysis of our concept of art? What form should it take? Traditionally, many have tried to provide an essential definition— independently necessary and conjointly sufficient conditions—for 'art'. Examples include mimesis, representational, and expressive theories. Ostensibly, these theories fail, and so we begin by looking at a few more recent attempts to define art that arise out of that failure. We consider attempts to define 'art' in institutional and historical terms. We then turn to some "non-definitional" characterizations in the spirit of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. Even if at the end of these analyses we find that art cannot be defined, the mere attempt is illuminating: the features of art which make it difficult to define are the very features that distinguish art as an invaluable part of our lives.

Second, we turn to concepts that concern not the essence of art, but how we evaluate and understand artworks and their experiences. We first consider a classic problem in philosophical aesthetics: the problem of taste. Is taste *just* subjective, or can we be mistaken about taste judgements? What is the nature of our aesthetic concepts and artistic categories? For example, how does the (non)application of categories like 'cubist', 'surrealist', or 'baroque' affect our experience of perceived works of art? Finally, how is the value of art influenced by moral and cognitive value?

The third unit of the course emphasizes research at the intersection of philosophy of art and philosophy of mind. First, how do we cognitively evaluate artworks and how does this value contribute to the artistic value of artworks? We then turn to two distinct but related issues: the role of imagination in our experience of art and our emotional responses to art. One way to think about representational artworks is in terms of the ways such works encourage us to use our imagination. This invites a number of interesting questions: How does imagination interact with other mental states and with action? How much control do we have over our imaginings? Can we imagine anything we choose? We also respond emotionally to fictional events and characters. But why? We know (while watching or reading them) that fictions are merely fictional, so why or how do we respond in such rich emotional ways? We'll consider philosophical analyses of this and other related problems of fiction.

Text

All readings will be online, on the blackboard course webpage. Note also that, essay assignments, announcements, and other information will also be made available on this site. Please check the site regularly.

The portal may be accessed via: <https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>
(You must login using your UTORid and password. Then find our course: PHLB81 Theories of Mind. Then click 'Content', then 'Course readings').

Assignments/Requirements:

30%	Short paper 1	DUE 16 FEB. (Assigned 9 Feb.)
30%	Short paper 2	DUE 16 MAR. (Assigned 9 Mar.)
40%	Final exam	TBA

The short papers might also be thought of as take-home exams. You will be given a short list of questions, from which you will choose and respond to one. The questions will be distributed in class, and the papers are to be submitted the following week at the start of class. Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be approximately 750-1250 words.

The final exam will be comprehensive and essay-style, but like the short papers, you will have choices between questions.

General:

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style, etc.

All paper/exam dates are listed on this syllabus. Therefore, late work/exams are allowed only if arranged at least one week prior to the scheduled due date/exam date. Unexcused late work will be penalized accordingly.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. You should familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>

If you require special test-taking or note-taking accommodations, please see me.

(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:

CONCEPTS OF ART

- 12 Jan.** *Introduction/fundamentals/history*
- 19 Jan.** *Definitions and context*
 A. Danto, 'The Artworld'
- 26 Jan.** *Context and history*
 J. Levinson, 'Defining Art Historically'
 G. Currie, 'Aliens, Too'
- 2 Feb.** *Against definitions*
 N. Carroll, intro. from *Theories of Art Today*, 3-15
 B. Gaut, 'Art' as a Cluster Concept'

EVALUATING AND EXPERIENCING ARTWORKS

9 Feb. *Evaluation and taste*
D. Hume, 'On the Standard of Taste'
F. Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts'

16 Feb. *Categories of art*
K. Walton, 'Categories of Art'
Short essay 1 due

23 Feb. NO CLASS-READING WEEK

2 Mar. *Artistic value and moral value*
M. Budd 'Artistic Value'
B. Gaut, 'The Ethical Criticism of Art'

ART AND MIND

9 Mar. *Cognitive value of art*
J. Stolnitz, 'On the Cognitive Triviality of Art'
K. Stock, 'Fiction and Psychological Insight'

16 Mar. *Imagination*
K. Walton, from *Mimesis as Make-Believe*
Short essay 2 due

23 Mar. *Emotional responses to artworks*
G. Currie, 'The Paradox of Caring'
B. Gaut, 'Reasons, Emotions, and Fictions'

30 Mar. *Imaginative resistance*
T. Gendler, 'The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance'

6 Apr. YOUR CHOICE: More on imaginative resistance OR emotions and tragedy

Resources:

All of the readings will be primary sources. Needless to say, much of this material will be challenging. You might find some of the following resources helpful.

-For a good introductory book on philosophy of art and aesthetics, I suggest Noel Carroll's *Philosophy of Art* (Routledge 1999).

-For resource-style texts on aesthetics, see the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd Ed., ed. Gaut, B. and Lopes, D. (Routledge 2005) or the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Levinson, J. (Oxford University Press 2003)

-For general philosophy resources, I suggest both *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (1999) ed. Audi, R. and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (1994) ed. Blackburn, S. Online, try the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>