

Honors Seminar 2011 (01): Philosophy of Art and Literature
Professor Erica L. Neely
Spring 2016

Place and Time: Burgett 134, MWF 1-1:50 p.m.
Email address: e-neely@onu.edu
Office Hours: Burgett 121, MWF 10-11 a.m., 2-3 p.m., and by appointment
Required Texts: *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, 3rd edition,
ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley
Never Let Me Go (Kazuo Ishiguro)
On the Beach (Nevil Shute)
Brave New World (Aldous Huxley)
Web page: <https://northernonline.onu.edu/>

General education learning outcome: providing informed responses to aesthetics in art or nature

Aims and Objectives

This course examines philosophical issues in art, paying special attention to the art form of literature. There are two components to this course. First, we will be considering works of literature that explore philosophical questions. *Never Let Me Go* addresses issues of personal identity – what kinds of people are we? What is it to be human? *On the Beach* highlights how people react to situations they cannot change – what do we do when a situation is beyond our control? Lastly, *Brave New World* raises many questions concerning society and the state.

Second, we will consider current debates in aesthetics more generally. For instance, we tend to make a distinction between a “real” piece of art and a forgery - what is the difference in value? Why do we take one to be more important than the other? If we prize authenticity in art, what does that mean? How can we care about what happens to fictional characters? For that matter, how can we enjoy reading about tragic events? What is the relation between art and nature? What sorts of things count as art? We’re used to going to museums and seeing paintings and sculptures, but what about other media? Could food be art? Photography? What are the bounds of art - can pornography be art? If not, why not? Lastly, we will consider the relationship between art and society; we will look at controversies regarding art in public places and ask whether there are societies which lack all kinds of art whatsoever.

Assignments and Grading

Short Paper (Artifact) 10% – This is a 3-4 page paper on an assigned topic, the purpose of which is to demonstrate your writing style and ability to construct an argument; I will provide you with detailed feedback on anything you might need to improve when you tackle your long papers. Your performance on this paper is not a large percentage of your grade in the course, but it is not possible to pass the class without completing this assignment.

Midterm and Final Papers 25% each – These papers are 10-15 pages each on a topic of your choice pertaining to the philosophy of art and/or literature. I must approve the topic in advance, but you are welcome to explore whatever course readings most interest you; you are also encouraged to seek out

additional readings on the topic if you so choose. Your papers must demonstrate an ability for philosophical thought – I am not interested in a book report; I want to read your criticisms, arguments, and ideas. I am willing to read outlines or rough drafts; students whose grades on the midterm paper are lower than a B may be required to show me an outline and/or draft of the final paper in advance.

Papers are to be submitted in class on the scheduled date; if you know that you will be absent on the day an assignment is due, please make arrangements to have a classmate hand it in or leave it in my mailbox. Unless something extraordinary prevents you from turning your assignments in on time, late papers will be dropped one step for each day that they are late. (Hence an A- paper that is one day late will be a B+ paper; if it is two days late it will be a B, etc.)

Discussion Leading 25% total – For most of the aesthetics topics of the course, I will lead the discussion for the first two days; the final day on the topic will be led by student groups. Essentially, I'll assign you to a small group and divide the topics up among you. (You will get input on what topics you'd like to cover!) For the final day of the topic, that group will be responsible for leading the discussion. The members will generate some questions in advance, either sparked by the reading or by class discussions on the previous days; on that day of class, one or more of the group will start the discussion and keep it going for the entire period. You should also turn in some notes about what you had planned to cover, in case you had questions that you didn't get to. (This is not a hugely formal assignment – we will talk about it more before the first group has to lead discussions.) It currently looks like there will be five groups of three people, which means you will be responsible for two aesthetics topics per group. Each person in a group will also choose one of the three novels to be responsible for; you will be soliciting discussion questions from your group for one of our novel discussion days. We will discuss this further closer to the first novel. This is your chance to make sure we cover what you find most interesting about a topic!

Participation 15% – This course will involve a fair amount of discussion, so even when you aren't leading the discussion, you should come prepared to talk! Hence while attendance is not required, you need to read the material before class and come prepared with questions and ideas.

Note also that inappropriate participation can negatively impact your participation grade. **In particular, holding conversations or texting during class will count against you.** These classes aren't big enough to hide in, so show some courtesy to your teacher and fellow students.

Special Note on Academic Dishonesty

The University expects its students to conduct themselves in a dignified and honorable manner as mature members of the academic community and assumes that individually and collectively they will discourage acts of academic dishonesty. The University also expects cooperation among administrators, faculty, staff, and students in preventing acts of academic dishonesty, in detecting such acts, reporting them, and identifying those who commit them, and in providing appropriate punishment for offenders. The University Code of Academic Student Conduct is found in Appendix C of the Student Handbook: http://www.onu.edu/student_life/student_conduct/student_handbook

Academic dishonesty may result in an automatic failure in the course; the administration may pursue additional sanctions. (Note: this does not mean I'm going to fail you for incorrectly formatting your citations, okay? But I will fail you if you try to pass other people's ideas off as your own.)

Other Information

Although final grades are limited to whole letter grades, individual assignments will use the plus/minus scale; this will enable you to see whether your B is closer to an A or closer to a C.

Students requiring particular accommodations because of physical and/or learning disabilities should contact their Dean's office prior to or during the first week of classes. For additional information, see: http://www.onu.edu/student_life/disability_services

A day-by-day schedule of readings is included in this syllabus; assignments should be completed prior to class on the date they are listed. You'll want to fit the novels in before we cover them in class.

Day-by-Day Reading and Assignments (complete before class)

January

M 1/11 First Day of Class

Authenticity

W 1/13 Introduction: The "authentic" performance of music: 55-58
"Authenticity in musical performance" (Stephen Davies): 59-70
F 1/15 "The concept of authentic performance" (James O. Young): 71-81
M 1/18 **No Classes – Martin Luther King's Day**

Falsity

W 1/20 Introduction: Fakes and forgeries: 85-88
"What is wrong with a forgery?" (Alfred Lessing): 89-101
F 1/22 "Artistic crimes" (Denis Dutton): 102-114
M 1/25 No new readings

Art and Nature

W 1/27 Introduction: Appreciation, understanding, and nature: 153-156
"Aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment" (Allen Carlson): 157-171
"On being moved by nature: between religion and natural history" (Noël Carroll):
172-191
F 1/29 "Models of nature appreciation (Malcom Budd): 192-206

February

M 2/1 No new readings

Feelings and Fictions

- W 2/3 Introduction: 251-256
“Fearing fictionally” (Kendall L. Walton): 257-271
F 2/5 “Fiction and the emotions” (Alex Neill): 272-290
M 2/8 No new readings

Literary Interlude One: Self and Identity

- W 2/10 *Never Let Me Go* (Kazuo Ishiguro)
F 2/12 continued
Short Paper (Artifact) due

Food

- M 2/15 Introduction: The art of food?: 7-10
“Food as art” (Elizabeth Telfer): 11-29
W 2/17 “The meaning of taste and the taste of meaning” (Carolyn Korsmeyer): 30-51
F 2/19 No new readings

Rock and Roll

- M 2/22 Introduction: Rock music and culture: 117-120
“The decline of musical culture” (Roger Scruton): 121-136
W 2/24 “Music’s worldly uses...” (Theodore Gracyk): 137-150
F 2/26 **No class – Instructor Absence**

M 2/29 **No Class – Spring Break**

March

- W 3/2 **No Class – Spring Break**
F 3/4 **No Class – Spring Break**

M 3/7 No new readings

Enjoying Horror

- W 3/9 Introduction: 291-296
“Why horror?” (Noël Carroll): 297-316
F 3/11 “The paradox of horror” (Berys Gaut): 317-330
Midterm Paper Topic Approval Deadline
M 3/14 No new readings

Literary Interlude Two: Things Beyond Our Control

- W 3/16 *On the Beach* (Nevil Shute)
F 3/18 continued

Midterm Paper Due

Photography

- M 3/21 Introduction: Photography and representation: 209-212
“Photography and representation” (Roger Scruton): 213-232
W 3/23 “The aesthetics of photographic transparency” (Dominic McIver Lopes): 233-245
“The real challenge for an aesthetics of photography” (Dawn M. Phillips): 246-250
F 3/25 **No class – Easter Break**
M 3/28 **No class – Easter Break**
T 3/29 No new readings [meets as a Monday]

Sentimentality

- W 3/30 Introduction: Sentimentality: 333-336
“Sentimentality” (Anthony Savile): 337-341
“The alleged unwholesomeness of sentimentality” (Ira Newman): 342-353

April

- F 4/1 “Sentimentality and truthfulness” (David Pugmire): 354-359
M 4/4 No new readings

Pornography

- W 4/6 Introduction: Pornography and erotica: 363-367
“Pornographic art” (Matthew Kieran): 368-380
F 4/8 “Erotic art and pornographic pictures” (Jerrold Levinson): 381-392
M 4/11 No new readings

Art in Public Places

- W 4/13 Introduction: Public art: 395-398
“Transcript of a hearing to decide the future of *Tilted Arc*” (Various): 399-405
“What is public art?: time, place, and meaning” (Hilde Hein): 406-415
F 4/15 “Public art/public space: the spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* controversy” (Gregg M. Horowitz): 416-426
“Public art controversy: the Serra and Lin cases” (Michael Kelly): 427-440
M 4/18 No new readings

Societies without Art

- W 4/20 Introduction: Are there societies without art?: 443-447
“ ‘But they don’t have our concept of art’ ” (Denis Dutton): 448-463
F 4/22 “Western and non-Western concepts of art” (Larry Shiner): 464-470
M 4/25 No new readings

Final Paper Topic Approval Due

Literary Interlude Three: Society and the State

W 4 /27 *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley)
F 4/29 continued

W 5/4 **Final Paper Due, 2 p.m.**

Important Dates

M 1/18 **No Classes – Martin Luther King’s Day**
F 2/12 **Short Paper (Artifact) due**
F 2/26 **No class – Instructor Absence**
M 2/29 **No Class – Spring Break**
W 3/2 **No Class – Spring Break**
F 3/4 **No Class – Spring Break**
F 3/11 **Midterm Paper Topic Approval Deadline**
F 3/18 **Midterm Paper Due**
F 3/25 **No class – Easter Break**
M 3/28 **No class – Easter Break**
M 4/25 **Final Paper Topic Approval Due**
W 5/4 **Final Paper Due, 2 p.m.**