

Philosophy 250: Aesthetics
Professor Erica L. Neely
Fall 2010

Place and Time: Burgett 134, MWRF 1:00-1:50 p.m.
Email address: e-neely@onu.edu
Office Hours: WR 12:30-1 p.m., MWRF 2-3 p.m. and by appointment
Required Texts: *Aesthetics: Classic Readings from the Western Tradition*, 2nd edition,
ed. Dabney Townsend
Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates, 3rd edition,
ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley
Recommended: *But is it art?*, Cynthia Freeland
Web page: <http://webct-new.onu.edu>

Note: I am disability and ESL friendly. If you need accommodation or are having trouble keeping up in class due to language issues, please drop me an email or come to see me. I'm happy to help.

Aims and Objectives

There are two threads running through this course. First, we will examine general philosophical conceptions of aesthetics. What is the nature of art? What are the qualities that make something art? Given that we often praise art as being beautiful, this raises further questions about the nature of beauty. What makes something beautiful? Are there independent standards of beauty or are they relative to particular cultures? We will examine historical conceptions of art and beauty starting with Plato and running through to modern thinkers.

Second, we will consider current debates in aesthetics. 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? 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

Midterm and Final Papers 40% each – These papers are 10-15 pages each on a topic of your choice pertaining to aesthetics. I must approve the topic in advance, but you are welcome to explore whatever 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.)

Participation 20% – This course will involve a fair amount of discussion; while attendance is not required, you need to read the material before class and come prepared with questions and ideas. Participation will be a factor in your final grade; if you are shy about speaking in class, you may share your thoughts with me through email, on the course website, or after class.

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.

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

September

W 9/8 First Day of Class

Classical and Medieval Aesthetics: Townsend

R 9/9 The nature of art and beauty - discussion, no readings
F 9/10 Introduction to Classical and Medieval Aesthetics: 1-4
From *The Republic* (Plato): 5-19
M 9/13 From *Poetics* (Aristotle): 20-43
W 9/15 *Ennead One*, Sixth Tractate (Plotinus): 44-54
"Retracing the Arts to Theology" (Bonaventure): 55-65
R 9/16 "Letter Ten" (Dante): 66-76

Authenticity and Falsity: Neill and Ridley

F 9/17 Introduction: The "authentic" performance of music: 55-58
"Authenticity in musical performance" (Stephen Davies): 59-70
M 9/20 "The concept of authentic performance" (James O. Young): 71-81
Introduction: Fakes and forgeries: 85-88
"What is wrong with a forgery?" (Alfred Lessing): 89-101
W 9/22 "Artistic crimes" (Denis Dutton): 102-114

Modern Aesthetics: Townsend

R 9/23 Introduction to Modern Aesthetics: 81-86
From *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Francis Hutcheson): 87-99
F 9/24 "Of the Standard of Taste" (David Hume): 100-116

M 9/27 From *Critique of Judgment* (Immanuel Kant): 117-141

Art and Nature: Neill and Ridley

W 9/29 Introduction: Appreciation, understanding, and nature: 153-156

“Aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment” (Allen Carlson): 157-171

R 9/30 “On being moved by nature: between religion and natural history” (Noël Carroll):
172-191

October

F 10/1 “Models of nature appreciation (Malcom Budd): 192-206

Nineteenth Century Aesthetics: Townsend

M 10/4 Introduction to Nineteenth Century Aesthetics: 145-149

From *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science* (G.W.F. Hegel): 150-158

From *The Word as Will and Idea* (Arthur Schopenhauer): 159-172

W 10/6 From *The Birth of Tragedy* (Friedrich Nietzsche): 173-187

Paper One Topic Due

R 10/7 From *Modern Painters* (John Ruskin): 188-203

From *What Is Art?* (Leo Tolstoy): 204-213

Food, photography, and rock ‘n roll : Neill and Ridley

F 10/8 Introduction: The art of food?: 7-10

“Food as art” (Elizabeth Telfer): 11-29

M 10/11 “The meaning of taste and the taste of meaning” (Carolyn Korsmeyer): 30-51

Paper One Due

W 10/13 Introduction: Rock music and culture: 117-120

“The decline of musical culture” (Roger Scruton): 121-136

R 10/14 “Music’s worldly uses...” (Theodore Gracyk): 137-150

Introduction: Photography and representation: 209-212

F 10/15 “Photography and representation” (Roger Scruton): 213-232

M 10/18 “The aesthetics of photographic transparency” (Dominic McIver Lopes): 233-245

“The real challenge for an aesthetics of photography” (Dawn M. Phillips): 246-250

Turn of the Century Aesthetics: Townsend

W 10/20 Introduction to Turn of the Century Aesthetics: 216-219

From *Aesthetic* (Benedetto Croce): 220-236

R 10/21 From “*Psychical Distance*” as a Factor in Art... (Edward Bullough): 237-254

F 10/22 From *Art* (Clive Bell): 255-269

M 10/25 **No Class**

Sentimentality and Pornography: Neill and Ridley

- W 10/27 Introduction: Sentimentality: 333-336
“Sentimentality” (Anthony Savile): 337-341
“The alleged unwholesomeness of sentimentality” (Ira Newman): 342-353
- R 10/28 “Sentimentality and truthfulness” (David Pugmire): 354-359
- F 10/29 Introduction: Pornography and erotica: 363-367
“Pornographic art” (Matthew Kieran): 368-380

November

- M 11/1 “Erotic art and pornographic pictures” (Jerrold Levinson): 381-392

Aesthetics in the Twentieth Century: Townsend

- W 11/3 Introduction to Twentieth Century Aesthetics: 271-280
From *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Walter Benjamin):
281-295
- R 11/4 “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics” (Morris Weitz): 296-306
“The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” (George Dickie): 307-321
- F 11/5 “The Artworld” (Arthur Danto): 322-337

Art and Society: Neill and Ridley

- M 11/8 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
- W 11/10 “Public art/public space: the spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* controversy” (Gregg M.
Horowitz): 416-426
Final Paper Topic Due
“Public art controversy: the Serra and Lin cases” (Michael Kelly): 427-440
- R 11/11 Introduction: Are there societies without art?: 443-447
“ ‘But they don’t have our concept of art’ ” (Denis Dutton): 448-463
- F 11/12 “Western and non-Western concepts of art” (Larry Shiner): 464-470
- M 11/15 **Final Paper Due, 2:30 p.m.**

Important Dates

- W 10/6 **Paper One Topic Due**
- M 10/11 **Paper One Due**
- M 10/25 **No Class**
- W 11/10 **Final Paper Topic Due**
- M 11/15 **Final Paper Due, 2:30 p.m.**