Philosophy of Art

Instructor: David Weberman (Email: webermand@ceu.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays 14:30 – 16:30, Thursdays 15:30 – 17:30 in room D-407 or at whereby.com/weberman-ceu or by appointment

Teaching Assistant: László Kőszeghy (Email: koszeghy_laszlo@phd.ceu.edu) Office Hours: available by appointment

Credits: 2 US/4 ECTS

Semester: Winter 2022

Course status: no prerequisites, BA second year elective

Course description: This introduction to the philosophy of art provides an overview of some of the most important questions raised about art in philosophy. Questions include how to define art, whether art breaks from or continues with our everyday lives, whether taste and quality are subjective, whether or what kind of truth art might convey, how to think about the interpretation of artworks. We’ll read both historical and contemporary texts.

Learning outcomes: By the end of this course, students who have done the required work will:
become familiar with some of the central problems in philosophy of art and aesthetics; develop the ability to discern and critically evaluate arguments in philosophical texts; develop their argumentation and writing skills and be able to articulate their own well-argued position on key questions presented in the course.

Requirements and assignments: Students are required to attend classes and finish the readings prior to class. They are strongly encouraged to participate in discussion.
- Ten writing assignments (200-250 words in length). Assignments will be due at the start of the class on Mondays. They are based on discussion questions distributed on the Wednesdays before the due date.
- Take-home final exam: The exam format is short essay. A list of exam questions will be distributed in Week 12. Students choose one question to answer, 1200-1400 words in length.

Course assessment:
- Participation: 15%
- Writing assignments: 45% (5% for each of the assignments with the highest grades, the lowest grade doesn’t count
- Final Exam: 40%
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Criteria for assessment:
• Exposition: The view or argument under consideration is explained accurately, precisely, and charitably. Technical terms are explained. Appropriate textual support is provided.
• Argumentation: A clear and cogently presented argument is presented.
• Writing and organization: The writing is clear and precise. The text is well-organized and easy to follow. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.
• Originality: The work demonstrates originality and independence of thought not merely by summarizing what others have said, but in one way or another by going beyond it (e.g., by raising a new objection, providing a new argument for a view discussed in class, offering a new reply to an objection considered in class, etc.).
Weekly Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1: What is Art? Institutional Definitions


Week 2: What is Art? The Historicity of Art


Week 3: The Autonomy of Art


Week 4: Art as Non-Autonomous and Continuous with Life


Week 5: Feminist Critiques of the Autonomy of Art


Week 6: The Standard of Taste: Hume’s Solution


Week 7: The Standard of Taste: We’re All Snobs

Commented [LK1]: Perhaps, instead of two weeks on Kant, we could have only just one session dedicated to Kant where we look at the first two moments of the analytic of the beautiful and then during the other session on the Autonomy of Art, we could read Clement Greenberg’s essay on Modern Painting where he creates an analogy between the Kantian notion of autonomy and modern paintings struggle to become autonomous from the task of representation. Perhaps that might help digest Kant. Here is a version I found online: https://www.yorku.ca/yamlau/readings/greenberg_modernistPainting.pdf

Commented [LK2]: We could assign, as further reading, Yuriko Saito’s great work on “Everyday Aesthetics” where she explicitly goes against Kant’s separation of pure and dependent beauty.


**Week 8: Interpretation: Intentionalism and the Death of the Author**


**Week 9: Interpretation: The Open Work**


**Week 10: Art and Knowledge**

Required: Plato, Republic, Book II 376 e – Book III, 412 e.

Further Reading: Aristotle: Poetics

**Week 11: Art and Knowledge**


**Week 12:** (Open- topic and reading to be chosen by class participants)