Seminar on Aesthetics

**Course code:** ART471/PHI 660

**Semester and year:** Fall 2019

**Day and time:** Monday 6:30-9:15pm

**Instructor:** Tomas Hribek

**Instructor contact:** [hribek@flu.cas.cz](mailto:hribek@flu.cas.cz) / tomas.hribek@aauni.edu

**Consultation hours:** Monday 6:00-6:30pm

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Credits US/ECTS** | 3/6 | **Level** | Advanced |
| **Length** | 15 weeks | **Pre-requisite** | TOEFL iBT 80 |
| **Contact hours** | 42 hours | **Course type** | Bachelor, Master Required/Elective |

# Course Description

This course introduces the topics that have been most influential in contemporary aesthetics over the last half century or so. We shall cover the themes that belong to the core of the discipline, such as the identification of art, ontology, aesthetic experience, interpretation, artistic and aesthetic value, the relation between art and knowledge, and the nature of fiction and imagination. In addition to these themes, we shall study the recent work on environmental aesthetics and the aesthetics of everyday life as well. A lot of attention has also been paid during the last few decades to the aesthetic issues involved in specific art forms, such as painting, photography, film, literature, and even popular art forms such as comics. We shall study the texts by philosophers working within a particular tradition, the so-called analytic tradition. This is now a dominant methodology within philosophy, including the philosophical aesthetics. The work in this tradition is characterized by aiming at a relatively high level of rigor, precision and clarity. Hopefully we can learn to achieve some of these qualities in our own thinking and writing about art and aesthetics.

# Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

* Have a comprehensive understanding of the current philosophical aesthetics.
* Critically analyze academic texts not only in the field of aesthetics, but in contemporary philosophy in general.
* Improve their ability to write structured, academic papers in a wide area of humanities and social sciences.
* Recognize the philosophical import of modern and contemporary visual art, music and literature.

# Reading Material

## Required Materials

* Peter Lamarque & Stein Haugom Olsen (ed.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Analytic Tradition* 2nd Ed. (Blackwell 2019)

## Recommended Materials

* Steven M. Cahn & Aaron Meskin (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology* (Blackwell 2008)
* Gordon Graham, *Philosophy and the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* 3rd Ed. (Routledge 2005)
* Arthur C. Danto, *What Art Is* (Yale 2014)

# Teaching methodology

Students are required to read the assigned materials prior to each class, so they can actively participate. Rather than a lecture, each class should mainly consist of a collective critical analysis of the readings. We shall also make use of a lot of pictures (PowerPoint), music samples etc.

# Course Schedule

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| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Class Agenda** |
| Sep 2 | **Topic:** An overview of topics  **Description:** The topics and methods of contemporary aesthetics.  **Reading:** n/a  **Assignments/deadlines:** n/a |
| Sep 9 | **Topic:** Identifying art  **Description:** What does the word “art” even mean? Can it be defined?  **Reading:** Danto, “The Artworld”, Dickie, “The New Institutional Theory of Art”, Dutton, “But They Don’t Have our Concept of Art”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Sep 16 | **Topic:** Ontology of Art  **Description:** What is the nature of a work of art? Is it physical, mental, or abstract?  **Reading:** Levinson, “What a Musical Work Is”, Dodd, “Defending Musical Platonism” and Thomasson, “The Ontology of Art and Knowledge in Aesthetics”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Sep 23 | **Topic:** Aesthetic Properties and Aesthetic Experience  **Description:** What are aesthetic properties? How do they relate to other kinds of properties? What makes an experience aesthetic?  **Reading:** Sibley, “Aesthetic Concepts”, Walton, “Categories of Art” and Carroll, “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Sep 30 | **Topic:** Intention and Interpretation  **Description:** What is the role of author’s intentions in artistic creation?  **Reading:** Beardsley, “Intentions and Interpretations: A Fallacy Revived”, Petterson, “The Literary Work as a Pliable Entity: Combining Realism and Pluralism” and Davies, “Author’s Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Oct 7 | **Topic:** Values of Art  **Description:** What is the value of art? What is the difference between aesthetic and artistic value?  **Reading:** Meiland, “Originals, Copies, and Aesthetic Value”, Budd, “Artistic Value” and Gaut, “The Ethical Criticism of Art”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Oct 14 | **Topic:** Art and Knowledge  **Description:** Do we learn anything from art?  **Reading:** Stolnitz, “On the Cognitive Triviality of Art”, Freeland, “Art and Moral Knowledge” and Lamarque, “Cognitive Value in the Arts: Marking the Boundaries”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. Mid-term exam in class. |
| Oct 21 | **Mid-term break** |
| Oct 28 | **Holiday** |
| Nov 4 | **Topic:** Fictionality and Imagination  **Description:** What is fiction? What is the role of imagination in art?  **Reading:** Walton, “Fearing Fiction”, Currie, “Ann Brontë and the Uses of Imagination” and Friend, “Fiction as a Genre”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Nov 11 | **Topic:** Pictorial Art  **Description:** How do pictures represent? How do they differ from other kinds of representation?  **Reading:** Wollheim, “On Pictorial Representation”, Abell, “Pictorial Realism” and Davies, “Telling Pictures: The Place of Narrative in Late Modern ‘Visual Art’”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Nov 18 | **Topic:** Photography and Film  **Description:** What makes photography and film artistic?  **Reading:** Scruton, “Photography and Representation”, Phillips, “Photography and Causation: Responding to Scruton’s Scepticism” and Gaut, “Cinematic Art”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Nov 25 | **Topic:** Literature  **Description:** What is the nature of the literary work of art?  **Reading:** Robinson, “Style and Personality in the Literary Work”, Olsen, “Literary Aesthetics and Literary Practice” and Lamarque, “The Elusiveness of Poetic Meaning”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Dec 02 | **Topic:** Music  **Description:** What is the nature of the musical work of art?  **Reading:** Kivy, “The Profundity of Music”, Zangwill, “Against Emotion: Hanslick Was Right about Music” and Robinson, “Listening with Emotion: How Our Emotions Help Us to Understand Music”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Dec 09 | **Topic:** Popular Arts  **Description:** The aesthetics of popular cinema, pop music and comics.  **Reading:** Carroll, “Defining Mass Art”, Bicknell, “Just a Song? Exploring the Aesthetics of Popular Song Performance” and Meskin, “Comics as Literature?”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. |
| Dec 16 | **Topic:** Aesthetics of Nature and Everyday Aesthetics  **Description:** How should we experience environment aesthetically?  **Reading:** Carlson, “Appreciation and the Natural Environment”, Matthews, “Scientific Knowledge and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature” and Saito, “Everyday Aesthetics”  **Assignments/deadlines:** Read the texts prior to class. Final exam in class. Essay due in class. |

# Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Workload (average)** | **Weight in Final Grade** | **Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes** | **Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes\*** |
| Attendance and Class Participation | 42 | 10% |  | 2 |
| Mid-term exam |  | 25% | (See academic outcomes) | 1 |
| Final exam |  | 25% | (See academic outcomes) | 1 |
| Essay |  | 40% | (See academic outcomes) | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | **150** | **100%** |  |  |

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

# Detailed description of the assignments

## Exams:

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area** | **Percentage** |
| Accuracy of knowledge | 100% |

## Essay:

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area** | **Percentage** |
| Accuracy of exposition | 40% |
| Critical analysis | 30% |
| Composition and structure | 20% |
| Citations and references | 10% |

# General Requirements and School Policies

## General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

## Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”.

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

## Attendance

Attendance is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if most absences are excused). Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus.

## Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he must submit to the Assistant Dean an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Assignments missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up which may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

## Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

## Electronic devices

Electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops…) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams.

## Eating is not allowed during classes.

## Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

## Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.

2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.

3. FIND–REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.

4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.

5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.

6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.

7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.

8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources

9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.

10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/.

## Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

# Grading Scale

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage\*** | **Description** |
| A | 95 – 100 | **Excellent performance**. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject. |
| A– | 90 – 94 |
| B+ | 87 – 89 | **Good performance**. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort. |
| B | 83 – 86 |
| B– | 80 – 82 |
| C+ | 77 – 79 | **Fair performance**. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work. |
| C | 73 – 76 |
| C– | 70 – 72 |
| D+ | 65 – 69 | **Poor**. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student’s work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives. |
| D | 60 – 64 |
| F | 0 – 59 | **Fail**. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course. |

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Prepared by and when:** Tomas Hribek, July 10, 2019

**Approved by and when:** School of Journalism, Media & Visual Arts, July 10, 2019