

**PHIL 336  
Aesthetics**

Fall 2015

Monday and Wednesday 10:05-11:25, ARTS 260

Instructor: Joseph Carew

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Office Hours:

Wednesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00, Leacock 927

**Course Description**

This course will provide an overview of four major developments in the German aesthetic tradition: Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*, and Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*. These works are of particular interest for aesthetics not only because they argue that art is a human activity of utmost philosophical and existential importance, but also because they have had considerable influence on philosophy, especially in the continental tradition, art historical studies, critical theory, and even the history of art itself. They propose groundbreaking theories concerning the universality of aesthetic judgments, art's capacity for salvation and ultimate truth, the historical role art played in the development of human rationality, and the foundational role it plays in establishing the ethical life of a community, to name just a few noteworthy points.

Throughout the semester, we will also critically assess the ways in which these philosophical theories of art and its production may have undesirable consequences: the exclusion of certain groups, in particular women, from the history of art and the art world; a leveling out of the rich diversity of artistic experience; the end of great art; or, in the case of Heidegger, a possible relationship to Nazism. Gaining knowledge of the four above-mentioned texts and prominent critiques of them will therefore provide a solid foundation for engaging in contemporary academic debates in aesthetics both inside and outside of philosophy, while also supplying new resources to question their own personal relationship to art.

Topics include (but are not limited to):

- Whether art is objective or subjective
- Art and its capacity to depict truth
- The beauty of nature vs. the beauty of art
- Aesthetic experience as a *sui generis* state of mind
- Artistic genius
- Feminist critiques of art
- The existential purpose of art
- The cultural function of art
- Whether art has any contemporary meaning

**Texts**

All required readings are available online via myCourses.

**Student Evaluation**

The final grade will consist of four components:

- Participation 10%
  - Midterm Exam 20%
- In class on October 5*

- Term Paper 40% Due December 2
- Take-Home Final Exam 30% Due December 16

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be familiar with several major historical developments in German aesthetics and, by consequence, some of the most crucial debates in aesthetics, especially from a continental perspective. They will also be aware of some of the potentially problematic implications of these developments. The two exams are meant to assure that students have sufficiently internalized this knowledge for their future studies. Students will also improve their critical reading and writing skills by analyzing texts and creatively putting them to use in order to explore their own philosophical interests and existential concerns through course material. The term paper, the topic of which can be freely decided by each student in consultation with me, is to promote the development of such skills. Philosophy is not just a body of knowledge, but also a distinctive methodology best learned by practicing it.

### Course Schedule

September 4: What is Aesthetics? Why German Aesthetics?

September 7: Labor Day, No Class

#### Section 1: Kant

September 9: The Place of Aesthetics in Human Cognition

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the second edition.
- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Preface and Introduction.

September 14: Aesthetic Judgments I: Disinterestedness and Universality

- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 1-9.

September 16: Class Cancelled

September 21: Aesthetic Judgments II: Purposiveness and Necessity

- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 10-22.

September 23: The Sublime

- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 23-30.

September 28: Art, Nature, and Genius

- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 43-53.

September 30: The Myth of Genius: Unmasking Exclusionary Practices

- Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

October 5: Midterm

## Section 2: Schopenhauer

October 7: An Introduction to Schopenhauer's Pessimistic Metaphysics of Will

- Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, Chapter 1.
- Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, §§18-24.

October 12: Thanksgiving, No Class

October 14: Art as Pure Knowledge and Momentary Release from the Will

- Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, §§33-38.

October 19: The Arts and Music as the Mouthpiece of the Absolute

- Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, §§42-45, §§51-52.

October 21: Criticisms of Disinterestedness in Aesthetics

- Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, "Third Essay," §§5-8.
- Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Pleasure: Reflections on Aesthetics and Feminism."

## Section 3: Hegel

October 26: Logic and System: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Spirit

- Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Second Preface.
- Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction.

October 28: Hegel on the Scientific Status of Art

- Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, Part I, Introduction, Chapters 1-2.

November 2: Spiritual Beauty and the Critique of Natural Beauty

- Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, Part I, Introduction, Chapter 3.
- Hegel, *The Philosophy of Nature*, §§247-250.

November 4: The History of Art I: The Symbolic Period

- Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of 1823*, excerpts.

November 9: The History of Art II: The Classical Period

- Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of 1823*, excerpts.

November 11: The History of Art III: The Romantic Period and the "End" of Art

- Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of 1823*, excerpts.

November 16: Has Great Art Really Come to an End?

- Arthur C. Danto, "The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense."

## Section 4: Heidegger

November 18: Destroying the Traditional Concept of the Work of Art

- Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Introduction and "Thing and Work."

November 23: How Art Makes Our World Explicit

- Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, “The Work and Truth.”

November 25: Art as the Happening of Truth

- Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, “Truth and Art,” “Epilogue,” and “Addendum.”

November 30: Is Heidegger’s Aesthetics Anti-Semitic?

- Heidegger. “References to Jews and Judaism in Martin Heidegger’s Black Notebooks, 1932-48.”
- Robert Bernasconi, “Race and Earth in Heidegger’s Thinking During the Late 1930s.”

### **Concluding Remarks**

December 2: The Relevance and Challenge of German Aesthetics for Today

- Term Paper Due

December 7: Review Class for Final Exam