



Philosophy of Art & Visual Culture

Philosophy 220, Spring 2024 (online)

Office Hours: by Zoom by appointment

University of Southern Maine

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Course Description: What is Art? What makes a photograph on the wall at the Museum of Modern Art in New York different from the one on the front page of the *Daily News*? What makes a landscape painting more (or less!) interesting than a snapshot? Our commonsense understanding of art tells us that artworks are in some way special. Art is often beautiful. It is sometimes provocative and controversial. But it is notoriously difficult to identify just what it is that makes artworks unique. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to understand why particular artworks are considered special at all. Philosophy of Art, sometimes called philosophical aesthetics, is a branch of philosophy concerned with answers to just these types of questions. In this course we will examine a range of issues that have defined philosophy of art: What is the relationship between art and representation? What does it mean to say that an artwork expresses an emotion? What role does the formal structure of artworks play in explanations of art? What is an aesthetic experience, and what role, if any, does our knowledge of a culture play in shaping these experiences? Along the way we will explore the myriad ways art and related media shape and so reflect the values of the cultures that produce it. Finally, most would agree that art must be experienced to be understood. We will spend much of the semester focused on concrete examples of artworks across a range of media from a range of different cultures that illustrate the puzzles we will explore

Course Goals: The aim of this course is to 1) introduce students to philosophical of art and 2) related issues in value theory by 2) working through some foundational works and contemporary problems. Our approach will be both historical and topical. Philosophy is a living art. Along the way the student will be introduced to characteristic philosophical methods. These methods are designed to help one think clearly and critically about arguments in general, and are indispensable philosophical tools.

Requirements: eight weekly online reading quizzes, two four page papers on assigned topics (students will be provided a choice among several prompts), an online midterm, and an online final exam. The goal of these assignments is to encourage the student to think through philosophical issues on their own.

Required Texts:

- Nigel Warburton, *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003) (AQ)
- resources & readings available digitally via the library and online.

Requirements:

Students will be required to complete the following assignments:

- eight online quizzes (20%).
- an online cumulative midterm (20%)
- two 4 page papers on topics selected from a range of options (30%)
- an online cumulative final (25%)

General Course Outline:

Welcome to Philosophy 220: Philosophy of Art & Visual Culture!!! This is an online class. All of our work will happen online and be directed via Brightspace. If you are unfamiliar with Brightspace I encourage you to use YouTube and the Brightspace Help function to learn to navigate the platform. It is a very powerful teaching tool. But it may require a little time to become acclimated to its nooks and crannies! I believe USM has posted tutorials for you. I am a big fan of using any every opportunity for sleuthing information to learn to be self-sufficient, But I can help you find them if you would like.

Online courses provide flexible learning environments. They allow students to manage their own learning schedules. But they also require students to be self-motivated. It is up to you to work through the material in a timely fashion. I want to take a moment here at the start of the course to sketch out an outline of the course structure to help facilitate this task.

1. The syllabus is a dynamic working document. I will update it each week as needed to direct you to online resources designed to supplement the material in your readings and exercises. These additions are driven by our interactions via *quizzes* and *email questions*. Make sure to check the syllabus and course content modules every week to guarantee that you are up to date on your course work.
2. *Online Lectures, Weekly Lecture Text, Links to other Online Course Material, Weekly Quizzes, Paper Assignments, and Online Exams* are all collected in the modules organized on the *Content* page of our Brightspace website. You will find a link to the Content Section on the toolbar menu on the top of the webpage. The course is organized into Learning Modules matching the three syllabus topics listed below. Each learning module contains folders organized into weekly course materials.
3. I will post a weekly *Announcement* Monday mornings. The online syllabus material for each week (lectures, assignments, and online resources) will be posted Monday mornings @ 7am unless otherwise indicated in the weekly Announcement. The materials will include a recorded *online PowerPoint lecture*, a short accompanying *text lecture*, a *list of readings* with links to where to find them when appropriate, and links to supplemental online resources.
4. Weekly online quizzes will post on Wednesdays @ 7am and will be due the following Sunday @ 11:55pm. There will be no reading quizzes weeks that other graded assignments are due. Other graded assignments include two 4 page papers, an online midterm, and an online final.
5. The readings for each week are listed in each weekly module and in the table at the back of the syllabus in the *schedule of readings*. They have been organized into groups by weekly lecture. A full bibliography of the readings with links is also listed by module/topic in the body of the syllabus.
6. We will cover four topics: introduction to philosophy of art; definitions of art; locating art; & philosophy of the arts. You will find a bibliography of references for the readings listed in the body of the syllabus with the topics.
7. Syllabus readings will draw on our textbook and online resources. Where the readings can be found online you will find links and reference information with the bibliographic listings for the readings and in the schedule of readings at the end of the syllabus.

Phew! That is a lot of material. The main points you need to keep in mind are:

- The online lecture & lecture text for each week will post Mondays.
- Online reading quizzes will post Wednesdays.
- Online quizzes are due the following Sunday at 11:55pm after which they will become unavailable.
- You are responsible each week for
 - watching online lectures
 - reading accompanying lecture texts
 - the syllabus readings
 - any assigned quiz, paper, or online exam

Some Miscellaneous Notes and Guidelines:

Moral behavior is the grounds for, and the framework of, a healthy society. In this regard it is each of our responsibility as an individual within the community of our coursework to act responsibly. This includes following the rules and guidelines set out by the University of Southern Maine for academic behavior.

Plagiarism is a serious matter. It goes without saying that each of you is expected to do his or her own work and to cite EVERY text that is used to prepare a paper for this class. In general philosophy papers are NOT research papers. Your exams and papers should not draw on any outside research or materials beyond the readings and resources listed on Brightspace and the syllabus.

The online quizzes are tailored learning experiences. Their primary function is to help you understand how to approach the material, engage the readings, and gauge your progress through the materials. They are tools to help shape your attention to the materials. They also help me understand how everyone is doing.

A paper is also a carefully tailored learning experience. It gives you the opportunity to take a deeper dive into the material utilizing a lens with a more careful analytic focus than you might bring to your weekly readings. The assigned paper topics are designed to give you a chance to stretch your legs a bit with the material and give me a chance to assess your understanding of the material. We will talk about philosophy papers in greater detail later. Generally these papers should offer a description of the syllabus/lecture discussion surrounding the issue at hand and a defense of your take on that issue. But this does not mean that they are a free forum for opinions. Your take on the issue should be framed through an evaluation of the positions on offer in the syllabus/lecture discussion. Make sure that your papers set out the issues germane to the question and that your responses address the relative virtues and shortcomings of theoretical positions discussed in class.

This is an online class. It goes without saying that your work MUST BE YOUR work. Please make sure to complete all of the assignments on your own by yourself.

Please be respectful of your peers in our any discussions we may have. Our goal is to, together, generate an inclusive learning environment where we can share ideas and explore issues germane to biomedical ethics. It is our collective responsibility to welcome everyone into this learning environment through careful listening and reflective discussion.

Finally, please have fun! Philosophy is an active pursuit. It a field of study where we apply carefully developed critical reasoning skills in the evaluation of live, real life issues. Along the way we ought to discover new and surprising things about our own beliefs and the world around us!

Materials & Assignments:

Weekly Online Lectures, Lecture Text, and Other Materials – Materials due each week will post to Brightspace Mondays and Wednesdays. These will include a series of short online lectures and associated lecture texts as well as weekly online quizzes. The readings that accompany these online materials are listed on the syllabus. I will also occasionally direct students to internet resources related to our current topic. Students are responsible to keep up with the syllabus readings, online lectures, lecture texts, and other resources by consulting BOTH Brightspace and the pdf of the course syllabus each week.

Weekly Online Quizzes (20%) – Lectures, PowerPoints, and other online course materials for each week will be posted Mondays and Wednesdays unless otherwise indicated in the weekly Announcement. These materials will include a 20 question multiple choice quiz on the week's material that will post Wednesdays. Weekly online quizzes are due the following Sunday at 11:55pm, before the materials for the ensuing week are posted. The quizzes are designed to engage students with the material and reinforce important points from the week's readings. The purpose of the weekly quiz deadlines is to focus your engagement with the materials, help you gauge your progress, and help you stay on top of things, keep up with the material, as the semester unfolds.

As a general rule there will be no quiz assigned on a week that a paper or online exam is due.

There will be no quiz the first week of class.

4 Page Paper (15%) - Write a 4 page paper (1200 word) on one of two topics to be announced on the distribution date of the paper assignment. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1" margins. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that you can analyze and evaluate a standard argument and otherwise synthesize materials from the literature on the syllabus.

Due: 02/11 @11:55pm on Brightspace

4 Page Paper (15%) - Write a 4 page paper (1200 word) on one of two topics to be announced on the distribution date of the paper assignment.. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1" margins. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that you can analyze and evaluate a standard argument and otherwise synthesize material from the literature on the syllabus

Due: 05/09 @11:55pm on Brightspace

Automatic Drawing & Conceptual Art (5%) – No drawing skill or prior artistic experience required!
Automatic Drawing & Conceptual Art is a drawing exercise designed to help students explore conceptual art, minimalism, and the nature of art more generally. The exercise borrows a drawing technique from the early minimalist artist Sol Lewitt. Lewitt would write out instructions for completing simple abstract geometric drawings on the walls of the gallery and fax them to them. Assistants would make the drawing for the show without supervision. Students make a series of drawings using intersecting straight lines, triangles, circles, and squares following instructions posted to Brightspace.

Due: 04/21-04/26 @ 11:55 on Brightspace

Online Take Home Mid-term – cumulative (20%)

Due: 03/09 @11:55pm on Brightspace

Online Final Exam – cumulative (25%)

Due: 05/09 @ Noon on Brightspace

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY: What follows is a provisional syllabus. This schedule may change, as may the readings within it, as a result of class interests and time constraints. Any changes will be announced in class prior to the date of the change of assignment. Also, importantly, I will let you know each day how to approach the readings for the next class, whether some readings are more important than others, and, occasionally, whether we will drop a reading from a session (it has happened). You can't get this information if you are not in class.

Topic 1: What Is Philosophy of Art?

Week 1

- Larry Buchanan, 10-Minute Challenge: Edward Hopper's Manhattan Bridge Loop," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2024.
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/11/04/upshot/ten-minute-challenge-election.html?unlocked_article_code=1.Yk4.jtu.ZjBgb0xnplf3&smid=url-share
- Nigel Warburton, "Introduction, Art & Philosophy," *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9-35.

Topic 2: Definitions of Art

Week 2. Art as Form

- Nigel Warburton, "Chapter 1, Significant Form," *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9-35. **(AQ)**
- Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis," *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1914), 3-37. **(available online via Project Gutenberg: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16917/16917-h/16917-h.htm#Page_38)**
- Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," *Vision and Design* (New York: Dover Publications, 1920/2011), 16-38. **(available online via the USM Library. Use the main search field on the library website to find and access the online version of the book)**

Week 3. Art as Expression

- Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (excerpt), translated by Aylmer Maude, reprinted in ed. Stephen David Ross, *Art & Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, New York: SUNY Press, 1984, pp. 180-183. **(Brightspace)**
- Nigel Warburton, "Chapter 2, Expression of Emotion," *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 37-62. **(AQ)**

Week 4. Art & the Aesthetic Attitude

- Jerome Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude," *Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (pp. 32-42), New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1960, reprinted in eds. George Dickie, Richard Sclafani, and Ronald Roblin *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (excerpt: pp. 344-341), Second Edition, New York: St. Martin Press, 1989.
 - o alternatively the full chapter is available at the *Internet Archive* as Chapter 2, "The Aesthetic Attitude" Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism* (pp. 29-64), Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1960. <https://archive.org/details/aestheticsphilos0000stol/page/64/mode/2up>
- George Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1(1), 1964: 55-65. **(available online on Jstor through the USM library website. Type the article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Noël Carroll, "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory," in *Beyond Aesthetics* (pp. 20-41). New York: Cambridge University Press (1989). **(available online as an eBook chapter via the USM Library)**

Week 5. Anti-Essentialism

- Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 15(1), 1956: 27-35. **(available online on Jstor through the USM library website. Type the article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Nigel Warburton, "Chapter 3, Family Resemblance," *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 65-85. **(AQ)**

Week 6. *Institutional Theories of Art*

- Nigel Warburton, "Chapter 4, Institutional Contexts," *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 87-118. **(AQ)**
- George Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art," *Proceedings of the 8th Wittgenstein Symposium*, 10, 1983: 57-64. **(Brightspace)**

Week 7. *Recognizing Art: Shifting Focus*

- Nigel Warburton, "Chapter 5, So What" *The Art Question* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 121-133. **(AQ)**
- Noel Carroll, "Identifying Art," *Beyond Aesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press), read excerpt: pp. 83-95. **(available online through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**

Topic 3: Locating Art

Week 8. *Art & Meaning*

- Arthur Danto, "Art and Meaning," in ed. Noël Carroll, *Theories of Art today* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 130-140. **(online resource)**
<https://www.scribd.com/document/340265814/Danto-Art-and-Meaning-Intro-Madonna-of-Future>
- Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61(19), 1964: 571-584. **(available online through Jstor through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Noel Carroll, "Form and Function," *Philosophy of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 142-153. **(available online through the USM library website. Type the book title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the chapter section)**

Week 9. *Categories of Art / Locating Art*

- Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review*, 79(3), 1970: 334-367. **(available online on Jstor through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- William P. Seeley, "Seeking Salience in Engaging Art: A Short Story About Attention, Artistic Value, & Neuroscience," *Progress in Brain Research* 237: 437-453. **(Brightspace)**
- Temma Balducci, "Janine Antoni's *Gnaw*," *What Am I Looking At*, KASU, Arkansas State University Radio, February 25, 2024.
<https://youtu.be/vvt7YaJMKOI>
- Giovanni Anselmo *Obit* – *Arte Povera* (Untitled, Structure that Eats, 1969)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/23/arts/giovanni-anselmo-dead.html?smid=url-share>

Week 10. *Art & Artifacts*

- Susan Vogel, "A Fateful Journey: Africa in the Works of El Anatsui," *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 28, 2011: 146-148. **available online through the USM library website. Type the article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access online)**
- El Anatsui, "When You Unite Things, Their Power Keeps Growing," Tate Museum, London, December 11, 2023. **(online video)**
<https://youtu.be/F74n5ISMYPk>
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Discovering El Anatsui," in ed. Lisa Binder, *El Anatsui: When I Last Wrote to You about Africa* (pp. 63-74), New York: Museum for African Art, 2010. **(Brightspace)**

Topic 3: Philosophy of the Arts

Week 11. *Dance*

- Suzanne Langer, "Virtual Powers," from *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 169-187. **(Brightspace)**

- Monroe Beardsley, "What is Going on In Dance?" *Dance Research Journal* 15(1), 1982, 31-36. **(available online through Jstor through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Noel Carroll and Sally Banes, "Working and Dancing," *Dance Research Journal* 15(1), 1982, 37-41. **(available online through Jstor through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Sally Banes, "On Your Fingertips: Writing Dance Criticism," *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 24-50. **(available online through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**

Week 12. The Puzzle of Musical Expressiveness

- Stephen Davies, "Philosophical Perspectives on Musical Expressiveness," *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 169-191. **(available online through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**
- Stephen Davies, "The Expression of Emotion in Music," *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 134-151. **(available online through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**

Week 13. Embodied Appraisals & Expressive Music

- Peter Kivy, "Emotions in the Music," *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 31-48.
- Jenefer Robinson, "The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52(1): 13-22 **(available online on Jstor through the USM library website. Type the book or article title into the main search field on the library website in quotes to find and access the online version of the article)**

Topic 4: Public Art, Public Funding, & Freedom of Expression

Week 14. Tilted Arc vs. General Services Administration & others

Case Studies:

Richard Serra vs. the General Services Administration
The Cincinnati Art Center, Hamilton County, Ohio, & the National Endowment for the Arts
The Brooklyn Museum vs. New York City
Jeff Koons vs. The Brooklyn Rail

- Readings TBA

Date	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 1/21 – 1/26	What is Philosophy of Art Warburton, Introduction: Art & Philosophy (AQ) Buchanan, 10 Min Challenge (<i>online resource</i>)	
Week 2 1/27 – 2/02	Warburton, Ch1: Significant Form (AQ) Bell, The Aesthetic Hypothesis (<i>Ebook online via library</i>) Fry, An Essay in Aesthetics (<i>Ebook online via library</i>)	
Week 3 2/03 – 2/09	Tolstoy, What Is Art? (<i>Brightspace</i>) Warburton, Ch2: Expression of Emotion (AQ)	
Week 4 2/10 – 2/16	Stolnitz, The Aesthetic Attitude (<i>Brightspace</i>) Dickie, The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude (<i>JSTOR online via library</i>) Carroll, Clive Bell's Aesthetic Hypothesis (<i>Brightspace</i>)	1 st paper due 2/11
Week 5 2/17 – 2/23	Weitz, The Role of Theory in Aesthetics (<i>JSTOR online via library</i>) Warburton, Ch3: Family Resemblances (AQ)	
Week 6 2/24 – 3/02	Warburton, Ch4. Institutional Contexts (AQ) Dickie, The New Institutional Theory of Art (<i>Brightspace</i>)	
Week 7 2/03 – 3/09	Warburton, Chapter 5, So What (AQ) Carroll, Identifying Art (<i>online library resource</i>)	midterm due 3/09
Week 8 3/10 – 3/16	Danto, Art and Meaning (<i>Brightspace</i>) Carroll, Form & Function (<i>Brightspace</i>) Danto, The Artworld (<i>JSTOR online via library</i>)	
3/17 – 3/23	SPRING BREAK!!!	
Week 9 3/24 – 3/30	Walton, Categories of Art (<i>JSTOR online via library</i>) Seeley, Seeking Salience Art (<i>Brightspace</i>)	
Week 10 3/31 – 4/06	Vogel, A Fateful Journey (<i>online article</i>) Anatsui, When You Unite Things (<i>online video</i>) Appiah, Discovering El Anatsu (<i>online article</i>)	
Week 11 4/07 – 4/13	Langer, Virtual Powers (<i>Brightspace</i>) Beardsley What is Going on in a Dance (<i>online library resource – electronic journals</i>) Carroll & Banes, Working & Dancing (<i>online library resource – electronic journals</i>) Banes, Writing Dance (<i>online library resource</i>)	
Week 12 4/14 – 4/20	Davies, Philosophical Perspectives on Musical Expressiveness (<i>online library resource</i>) Kivy, Emotions in the Music (<i>Brightspace</i>)	
Week 13 4/21 – 4/27	Davies, The Expression of Emotion in Music (<i>online library resource</i>) Robinson, Expression & Arousal of Emotion in Music (<i>JSTOR online via library</i>)	Automatic Drawings due 4/21 – 4/27
Week 14 4/28 – 5/02	Public Art & Freedom of Expression (see content module)	
Exam Week 5/03 -5/09		exam & 2 nd paper due 5/09