

PHIL 216 Introduction to Aesthetics
Biola University, Fall 2006

Section 01: MW 3:00-4:15pm

Section 03: MW 1:30-2:45pm

Instructor: John McAteer

Office Hours: MW 4:15-5:15, *by appointment only.*

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the philosophical study of art and aesthetics. First we will explore the major problems, movements, figures, and concepts in the history of philosophical aesthetics, focusing especially on Plato, Augustine, Hume, and Kant. Then we will examine the problems and positions in the debates within contemporary philosophical aesthetics, focusing especially on the value of art, the ontology of beauty, the epistemic status of art criticism, and the relationship between aesthetics and ethics. Finally, consistent with Biola University's mission as a Christian institution, we will explore the role of art and aesthetics in Christian theology, worship, and discipleship.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the methods of philosophy as exemplified by the *assigned reading* and *class lecture*.
2. Before the end of the course students will be able to practice these philosophical methods with at least minimal facility in their *class discussions*, *essay exams*, and *term papers/presentations*.
3. Through their performance on the *midterm exam*, students will demonstrate a familiarity with and basic understanding of the major problems, movements, figures, and concepts in the history of philosophical aesthetics, focusing especially on Plato, Aquinas, and Kant.
4. Through their performance on the *final exam*, students will demonstrate a familiarity with and basic understanding of the problems and positions in the debates within contemporary philosophical aesthetics, focusing especially on the value of art, the ontology of beauty, the epistemic status of art criticism, and the relationship between aesthetics and ethics.
5. In *class discussion* students will explore, articulate, and defend their own positions in the major debates within contemporary philosophical aesthetics.
6. Students will explore the role of art and aesthetics in Christian theology, worship, and discipleship in *all course requirements* but especially in a *term project* consisting of the student's choice of either an academic paper, an essay in art criticism, or the production of an original artwork.

Course Requirements:

1. Read all assigned texts completely, carefully, and on time.
2. Attend class lectures regularly and participate in class discussion.
3. Complete a midterm and final exam, each worth 1/3 of your overall grade. *Note: the exams are designed to fail students who have not fulfilled course requirements 1-2.*
4. Complete a term project worth 1/3 of your overall grade. First carefully read the following selections from Thiessen's *Theological Aesthetics*: 1.1-1.5, 3.1-3.3, 5.1-5.4, 8.2, 8.5, 9.1-9.4, 10.1-10.2, 16.3-16.4, 18.1, and 18.9. Then critically reflect on the readings, formulating your own view about at least one of the philosophical and theological issues debated by the authors. (Some possible issues are: the possibility of imaging an invisible God, the question of icons and idolatry, the role of art and artists in worship, etc.) Finally choose one of the following three options:
 - a. Write an 8-10 page paper setting out your own view on a controversial subject. First briefly set up the issue under debate and give what seems to you to be the strongest argument for each of the opposing viewpoints. Then give what seems to you to be the strongest objections to each argument. Finally explain which viewpoint seems best to you in light of the relative strengths of the preceding arguments and objections. Be sure to reply to the objections against your view. This paper will look much like one of the papers we will read from Kieran's *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. **Due Monday 12/4/06.**
 - b. Find an artwork (in any medium) which engages critically with the readings and somehow contributes to or illuminates one of the issues under debate. Then write a 5-7 page critical essay which explains your position with regard to the readings, analyzes the artwork, and explains how your artwork exemplifies your views about the issue under debate. Finally present and explain your artwork to the class in a 5-7 minute lecture during the last week of the course. Note: if your artwork is in a medium such as film, theater, dance, performance art, etc., you may have to describe the piece to the class; otherwise bring the piece (or a reproduction of it) to class for exhibition. **Due the week of 12/4/06.**
 - c. Create an original artwork (in any medium) which engages critically with the readings and somehow contributes to or illuminates one of the issues under debate. Then write a 2-3 page artist's statement which explains your position with regard to the readings and how your artwork exemplifies your views. Finally present your artwork to the class for review and discussion during the last week of class. Note: if your artwork is in a collaborative medium such as film or theater, you may work in a group, but be sure to document your contribution to the collaboration in your own artist's statement. **Due the week of 12/4/06.**

Course Texts:

1. Deweese, Garrett J. and J.P. Moreland. *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult* (IVP, 2005), – ISBN: 0830827668
2. Kieran, Matthew. *Revealing Art* (Routledge, 2005) – ISBN: 0415278546
3. Kieran, Matthew, ed. *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Blackwell, 2005) – ISBN: 1405102403
4. Thiessen, Gesa Elsbeth, ed. *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Eerdmans, 2004) – ISBN: 0802828884

Other Readings On Library Reserve:

5. Beardsley, Monroe C. *Aesthetics: Problems in Art Criticism* (Harcourt Brace, 1958)
6. Hume, David. *Selected Essays*, new ed. (Oxford, 1998)
7. Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar. (Hackett, 1987)
8. Plato. *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 2003)
9. Schmemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd expanded edition (St. Vladimir's Press, 1997)

Course Schedule:

I. Philosophical Foundations

Wed	8/23	Intro to course
Mon	8/28	Moreland, J.P. “Where do I Start?” [<i>Philosophy Made Less Difficult</i> Ch 1]
Wed	8/30	Moreland, J.P. “What is Real?: Metaphysics” [<i>Philosophy</i> Ch 2]
Mon	9/4	<i>No Class: Labor Day</i>
Wed	9/6	Deweese, Garry. “How do I Know?: Epistemology” [<i>Philosophy</i> Ch 3]
Mon	9/11	Deweese, Garry. “How Should I Live?; Ethics” [<i>Philosophy</i> Ch 4]

II. Historical Background

Wed	9/13	Plato: <i>Republic</i> Books VII and X. [Library Reserve]
Mon	9/18	Christian Platonism: <i>Theological Aesthetics</i> 1.7, 1.10.5, 1.11, 6.4, 6.6.1, 6.7, 6.9, 6.10, 13 (entire), and 19.5
Wed	9/20	David Hume: “Of the Standard of Taste” [Library Reserve]
Mon	9/25	Immanuel Kant: “Analytic of The Beautiful” from <i>Critique of Judgment</i> [Library Reserve]
Wed	9/27	Contemporary Theology of Art: <i>Theological</i> 16.1, 16.2, 16.8, 16.10, 17.4, 18.11, and 19.8
Mon	10/2	In-class movie: <i>Babette's Feast</i> [Read 1 Corinthians Ch 8-13]
Wed	10/4	Alexander Schmemmann: <i>For the Life of the World</i> , Ch 1 [Library Reserve; also read Gospel of John Ch. 6]
Mon	10/9	Midterm Exam

III. Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art

Part 1: The Nature of Artistic Expression

- Wed 10/11 Gordon Graham and David Davies: "How Are Artistic Experience and Value Interrelated?" [*Contemporary Debates* Ch 1-2]
- Mon 10/16 Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson: "What Constitutes Artistic Expression?" [*Debates* Ch 11-12]
- Wed 10/18 *No Class: Torrey Conference*
- Mon 10/23 Matthew Kieran: "Originality and Artistic Expression" [*Revealing Art* Ch 1]

Part 2: Beauty and Aesthetic Experience

- Wed 10/25 Marcia Muelder Eaton and Carolyn Korsmeyer: "In What Does True Beauty Consist?" [*Debates* Ch 3-4]
- Mon 10/30 Noel Carroll and Gary Iseminger: "What is the Nature of Aesthetic Experience?" [*Debates* Ch 5-6]
- Wed 11/1 Matthew Kieran: "Beauty Resurrected" [*Revealing* Ch 2]

Part 3: Art and Truth

- Mon 11/6 Berys Gaut and Peter Lamarque: "Should We Value Works As Art For What We Can Learn From Them?" [*Debates* Ch 7-8]
- Wed 11/8 Monroe C. Beardsley: Selections from *Aesthetics* [Library Reserve]
Robert Stecker and Daniel O. Nathan. "Is Artistic Intention Relevant to the Interpretation of Artworks?" [*Debates* Ch 17-18]
- Mon 11/13 Matthew Kieran: "Insight in Art" [*Revealing* Ch 3]

Part 3: Art and Morality

- Wed 11/15 Eileen John and Daniel Jacobson: "What are the Relations Between Moral and Aesthetic Values in Art?" [*Debates* Ch 21-22]
- Mon 11/20 Matthew Kieran: "Art and Morality" [*Revealing* Ch 4]
- Wed 11/22 *No Class: Thanksgiving recess*

Part 4: The Relativity of Taste

- Mon 11/27 Alan H. Goldman and George Dickie: "Are There General Principles of Evaluation?" [*Debates* Ch 19-20]
- Wed 11/29 Matthew Kieran: "The Truth in Humanism" [*Revealing* Ch 5]

IV. Art, Worship, and Images of God: Student Artwork Presentations

- Mon 12/4 Presentations [*Term Papers Due*]
- Wed 12/6 Presentations, continued
- Mon 12/11 *Final Exam*