

Aesthetics, Syllabus
PHIL 3366-01, CRN: 21402
Credit hours: 3
M-W, 3-4:20pm
CHSS 140

Instructor: S. West Gurley, Ph.D.
Hours: M-W, 1-2:30pm
and by appointment

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Course Description: An inquiry into the nature and meaning of art which will include analyses of aesthetic experience, the relation of art to value, and an examination of aesthetic theories concerning representation, form and expression. Through close reading of several philosophical and philosophically relevant literary texts, we will meditate on and discuss a number of perennial questions that continue to occupy philosophers of art today. This course satisfies 3 semester hours of the fine arts requirement for the BA degree program.

Stated Objective: Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of the intellectual and cultural activity of philosophy.

Implied Objectives: Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories; and acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.

Required Texts: Note: I have indicated ISBN numbers so that you may purchase these texts via other reasonably priced avenues:

Martin Heidegger, <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> (Harper Perennial Classics)	9780060937287
Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner</i> (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1967)	9780394703695
Thomas Wartenburg, <i>The Nature of Art, an Anthology</i> (Cengage Learning, 3 rd edition, 2011)	9781111186524

Other texts will be made available via our Blackboard course page.

This is a “W” course, which means that at least fifty percent of the grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools I will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool I will use to assess your level of learning.

Course Requirements and Grading: The best introduction to philosophy is actually to engage in the activity of philosophy—this means that we will be doing, rather than merely talking about, philosophy. In keeping with the centuries old tradition of doing philosophy, our class periods will consist in some brief introductory comments I will make for the purpose of framing the discussion that will follow. You will be expected to engage actively in the discussion—which means that you will come to class prepared to work through the deeper issues presented by the assigned text(s) for the week, you will bring said text with you to class, you will disengage all electronic distractions, you will respectfully await an opening in the discussion before making contributions (one person at a time!), you will filter the contributions you make through the preliminary question as to its relevance to the topic under discussion. To these ends, your fullest possible attention will be required. You are encouraged to “get lost” in the assigned texts: read them multiple times, make notes in the book margins, question what the work wants us to think about, try to understand why I chose the reading for this class—all of these directives will prepare you to engage legitimately in the class discussion.

Three take-home essay exam papers will be administered as indicated in the schedule below. Prompts for these essays will be distributed well in advance of the due date so that you will have ample time to prepare. Your

weekly reflections will be the building blocks out of which the prompts will be erected. Hence, your written work will evolve over time with your acquaintance with the material. **No late work will be accepted.**

In addition to the three essays, you will be evaluated, as part of your attentiveness and participation grade, on the basis of the quality and frequency of your posts to the Blackboard Discussion forums provided. The Discussion posts will be approached as a personal reflection upon the readings, films, class discussions. You should remember that the course has a trajectory and your satisfactory contribution will be in some significant way tied to your sense of what's going on in the course. You may select any one of the readings or any theme running through the readings assigned for that session as your point of departure for a reflection. You should think of these exercises as an opportunity to work through some difficult or provocative idea or constellation of ideas in play. These exercises should not exceed 500 words. Though informal, they should nevertheless be characterized by the highest academic standards for grammar, spelling, and documentation practices and will be evaluated upon that basis.

Finally, there will be a comprehensive in-class final essay exam. I will distribute study questions for the essays in advance, though you might anticipate the nature of these questions as we proceed through the readings by thinking about the directives listed above. No make-up exam will be offered. Familiarize yourself with the date and time of the exam and be there.

The following distribution of credit will be used in calculating your final grade:

Attentiveness* and Participation (including Discussion contributions)	25%
Combined average of essays	50%
Final essay exam	25%

*NB: I use the word *attentiveness* in contrast to the word *attendance* so as to distinguish prepared and visible engagement in the discussions that we will have from mere bodily presence in the classroom. It will not be sufficient to physically make an appearance (as if you were attending a party) in order to earn the attentiveness portion of your final grade. Among the various indicators that your attentiveness is not up to par are the following: using electronic devices in class, muttering comments under your breath while someone is trying to speak, leaving the classroom during a lecture or discussion, being disrespectful to me or to your fellows, and other demonstrations of your attention being focused elsewhere—you ought to be able to consult your own attention in order to ascertain whether or not you are committing any violations. A large component of your attentiveness and participation credit will come from your weekly reflections. Obviously, if you do not come to class, you will also not earn credit for attentiveness and participation.

Departmental Grade Policy:

As of the fall semester 2009, only grades of C or better (A, B, or C) will be counted toward the student's major in Psychology or Philosophy.

Use of Telephones, Pagers and Text-Messaging devices:

2.0 The use by students of telephone, pagers, and text messagers or any device that performs these functions during class-time is prohibited unless specifically permitted by the instructor. All such devices should be turned off or put in a silent or vibrate mode and should not be visible during class. At no time should students answer a call, page, or text message during class or leave the classroom to answer a call, page or text message. Failure to comply with this policy could result in expulsion from the classroom or with three or more offenses, failure of the course.

3.0 Any use of a telephone, pager, or text messenger or any device that performs these functions during a test period is prohibited. These devices should not be present during a test or should be stored securely in such a way that they cannot be seen or used by the student. Even the visible presence of such a device during the test period will result in a zero for that test. Use of these devices during a test is considered de facto evidence of cheating and could result in a charge of academic dishonesty (see student code of conduct

<http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/StudentGuidelines2010-2012.pdf#page=29>

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4.0 If there is an emergency situation for a student, that student should inform the instructor, place the device on silent or vibrate mode, and place himself/herself in a seat near the door where an exit for a phone call would be only minimally disruptive. Other arrangements for handling potential emergency situations may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Institutional policies and requirements regarding Q-drops, dates of religious observance, academic dishonesty, disabilities accommodations, etc., may be found at the following link: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> Please familiarize yourself with the policies.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (*subject to modification at Instructor's whim!):

Week One: 17 January: Introductory exhortations. Preface to Plato

Week Two: Historical background.

22-24 January: Plato/Aristotle: Read Wartenburg, pp. 1-37.

Hume/Kant intro: Read Wartenburg, pp. 38-50.

Week Three: Historical background continued.

29-31 January: Kant: Read Wartenburg, pp. 50-61, and essays on Blackboard from Crawford and Cazeaux. "Kant and Idealism", essay from Jacqueline on Blackboard.

Week Four: More Historical background, High-modern.

5 February: Schopenhauer and Hegel: Wartenburg, pp. 62-80, essay from Inwood on Blackboard.

7 February: Nietzsche. Read Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, all, plus "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" and essay from Berrios and Ridley on Blackboard.

Week Five: Psychology.

12 February: continue Nietzsche.

14 February: Freud: Wartenburg, pp.106-112, examples of Surrealism.

Take Home Essay #1 falls due in class.

Week Six: Form, Practice and Expression.

19 February: Bell and Collingwood: Wartenburg, pp. 113-132, "Formalism" by Noël Carroll on Blackboard.

21 February: Dewey and Tolstoy: Wartenburg, pp. 98-105, 133-144.

Week Seven: Heidegger.

26 February: "Origin of the Work of Art" in Heidegger, *PLT*, pp. 17-86.

28 February: Begin reading "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in Heidegger, *PLT*, pp. 143-159.

Week Eight: Heidegger.

5 March: Discuss "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", "What are Poets for?", Heidegger, pp. 89-159.

7 March: "The Thing", Heidegger, pp. 163-184, and "Language" and "Poetically Man Dwells", pp. 187-227.

Week Nine: **No class. Spring Break**

Week Ten: Critical Theory, Marxism, and Institutional Practice.

19 March: Marx, Benjamin and Adorno: "Private Property and Communism", on Blackboard, Wartenburg, pp. 161-169, 197-203. Captures from *Triumph of the Will*.

21 March: Weitz and Dickie: Wartenburg, pp. 170-177, 217-225. **Screen *Snowpiercer*.**

Week Eleven: Art History and the power of narrative.

26-28 March: Danto and Beardsley: Wartenburg, pp. 204-216, 240-251.

Take Home Essay #2 falls due in class March 28.

Week Twelve: Post-Modernism and Post-Structuralism.

2 April: Foucault: Wartenburg, pp. 226-239, “Las Meninas” on Blackboard. **Screen *Marina***

Abramovič: The Artist is Present.

4 April: Derrida: Wartenburg, pp. 278-292.

Week Thirteen: More Post-Modernism, Post-Colonialism and Feminism.

9 April: Derrida continued and Baudrillard: Wartenburg, pp. 318-325

11 April: Korsmeyer and Appiah: Wartenburg, pp. 293-304, 326-335.

Week Fourteen: Practicing what we preach.

16-18 April: Butler, “Gender is Burning”: Butler essay on Blackboard. **Screen *Paris is Burning.***

Week Fifteen: A Theatrical Reflection

23-25 April: Butler and bell hooks: essay on Blackboard.

Take Home Essay #3 falls due in class Monday, 24 April.

Week Sixteen: Cixous.

30 April: Hélène Cixous, “The Last Painting or the Portrait of God”, under Course Documents.

2 May: Review.

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 9, 5-7pm in our classroom.