

# Theory and Philosophy in Plain Language for Artists

## Course Description

This course focuses on aesthetic theory and philosophy from Classical times to the present day with particular emphasis on the connection between aesthetics and the making of art.

## Prerequisites

Graduate standing in an arts-related field such as art and design, music, theatre, and dance.

## Overview of Course

The purpose of this course is to give artists a solid foundational understanding of aesthetic theory and philosophy in order to broaden their personal knowledge base and enable them to apply this understanding to their chosen fields of art.

In this course students will not just be the passive recipients of information, but will engage in active learning. The texts students read will read may well be among the most challenging you will encounter in your educational career, not only because of the advanced reading level, but also because the ideas proposed by the philosophers will stretch your ideas of what art is and how this applies to your personal study of and experience with art.

This course is structured towards the study of visual art, but information presented can also be applied and adapted to other areas such as music and theatre, as well as to art history, visual studies, art education, and studio art. Terminology used in the “Questions for Discussion” at the end of each lesson frequently includes allusions to “art practice”, and so students are invited to interpret this phrase in terms of their own personal experience with art in whatever form that may take.

## Course Requirements

Because the material you are expected to master in this course is very challenging, a bit more explanation than is usual for a syllabus is included below.

- A) Students will read approximately 50 pages of text per week, from either one of the two course textbooks or selected PDF files. PDF files will be made available online, as will all other course materials.

In order to fully comprehend each article, you must engage in active reading.

- 1) Read one section or paragraph of the article (no more than 1/4 of the page).
- 2) Stop to think about it: what was the author trying to say?
- 3) Write a short summary (one to three sentences) of the paragraph or section—you must put these ideas in their own words.
- 4) Be alert for significant (brief) quotes within the section. Copy these exactly, including page numbers.
- 5) As you think about each section, write down any questions that come to mind, connections to the material, or ideas about how the author’s statements apply to what you already know or do in regards to art.
- 6) At the end of the article, write a short summary of the author’s main idea or point of view.

- 7) If the article is particularly troublesome to understand, **after** completing steps 1-6, you may search for information on the web or in the main library in order to enhance your understanding. You should be sure to keep a record of the websites or other materials used and be prepared to share these with the class. [Note: this is NOT a substitute for reading the actual article!]
- 8) Be prepared to submit any and all notes to the course instructor. These are considered as proof of your active reading. Typed or word processed notes are preferred. If handwritten, these must be legible and you should keep a photocopy for your records.
- 9) You are encouraged to maintain a running glossary of philosophical terminology and to keep this accessible during reading and discussion, adding to it as needed throughout the course.

B) Each week students will participate in a Collaborative Learning Group (CLG): a group of three to six fellow students in the course who will meet prior to each class session in order to discuss the assigned readings and to formulate questions or commentary for the class.

- Each CLG must appoint a leader and a scribe (note-taker). These roles may rotate as determined by the individual CLG members.
- Group notes will be handed in to the instructor on a weekly basis.
- The leader of the CLG will be responsible for reporting the group's discussion to the class as a whole.
- It is the responsibility of each CLG to determine appropriate meeting times and places.
- Meetings must occur prior to the class on the given topic, so each student's personal reading schedule should account for reading the assigned text the week prior to class. For instance, if we will be discussing Kant during Lesson 6 (Week 4 of the course), students should have read that selection by the end of Week 3.
- The instructor must be kept informed of meeting times and places. Periodic unannounced visits by the instructor may occur.
- CLG members are responsible for completing their active reading in a timely manner and coming to the group with their personal notes in hand, prepared for discussion.

C) In addition to the active reading assignments and participation in CLGs, each student will:

- 1) Select a particular philosopher, theory, or topic from the course.
- 2) Write a 20-page research paper on this topic (using proper format guidelines).
- 3) Share this research with the class via a 15-minute class presentation.
- Requirements for this project will be presented to the class during Week 10, with presentations to be held during Week 15. No new readings or assignments will be given during Week 14 in order to allow students additional time to complete the project and to seek help from the instructor and their CLG members.
- CLGs should plan to meet prior to Week 15 to pre-present their work to one another and solicit peer input and feedback in order to improve their final products.

### **Texts and Materials**

Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. (2008). *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Lamarque, P. and Olsen, S. (2007). *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Additional readings will be provided by the instructor in PDF format.

### Course Outcomes and Assessments

Course Outcome	Course Objective	Assessment	Weight
Develop a theoretical basis for art and design practice	1. Students will read, discuss, and understand texts presenting various aesthetic theories and philosophies.	Instructor evaluation of student notes taken during active reading; instructor evaluation of class participation and discussion.	20%
	2. Students will participate in active learning via: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Active reading</li> </ol>		
Develop an intellectual community	b. Cooperative Learning Groups	Peer-evaluation	20%
	c. Participation in class activities	Instructor evaluation	20%
Develop a practical basis for art and design practice	d. Completion of research project	Instructor evaluation	20%
	e. Presentation of research findings	Instructor evaluation	20%
Prepare for professional research, development, and distribution	3. Students will form connections between the aesthetic theories and philosophies presented in class and their own experience in or study of art.	Evidence determined by research project and presentation	(included in 2d and 2e, above)

### Assessment and Grading Criteria

A = Excellent (100-90%)

B = Above Average (89-80%)

C = Average (79-70%)

D = Inferior (69-60%)

F = Failure (59% or below)

### Summary of Readings

Week #	Lesson #(s)	# of pages
1	Course intro 1 Plato and Aristotle (p. 16-56)	40
2	2 Plotinus (p. 57-63), Bonaventure (p. 72-26), Longinus (PDF) 3 Petrarca (PDF) and Alberti (PDF)	52
3	4 Shaftesbury (p. 77-86) and Hutcheson (p. 87-102) 5 Burke (p. 113-122) and Lessing (p. 123-130)	42

4	6 Kant (p. 131-160) 7 Hegel (p. 180-192), Schiller (p. 167-169), and Schelling (p. 179-179)	52
5	8 Schopenhauer (p. 193-216) and Nietzsche (p. 222-232) 9 Tolstoy (p. 233-242) and Bullough (p. 242-259)	59
6	10 Bell (p. 261-269), Hanslick (p. 217-221), and Croce (p. 270-281) 11 Benjamin (p. 327-343) and Heidegger (p. 344-357)	54
7	12 Gadamer (p. 370-387), Collingwood (p. 282-295), and Dewey (p. 298-315)	46
8	13 Wimsatt & Beardsley (p. 547-555) and Carroll (p. 568-584) 14 Mandelbaum (PDF) and Levinson (p. 35-46)	44
9	15 Danto (p. 27-43) and Dickie (p. 47-54) 16 Margolis (p. 73-77) and Levinson (p. 78-91)	48
10	17 Kivy (p. 92-101) and Currie (p. 103-122) Project intro	28
11	18 Sibley (p. 127-141), Walton (p. 142-157), and Pettit (p. 158-172)	45
12	19 Dickie (PDF) and Beardsley (PDF) 20 Beardsley (p. 189-199) and Levinson (p. 200-222)	51
13	21 Sibley (p. 243-252) and Gaut (p. 283-294) 22 Carroll-1 (PDF) and Carroll-2 (PDF)	
14	Research and writing	N/A
15	Project presentation	N/A
16	Final exam week (continued presentations, if necessary)	N/A

Page numbers in Lessons 1 – 13 refer to Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. (2008). *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Page numbers in Lessons 14 – 22 refer to Lamarque, P. and Olsen, S. *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

PDF articles will be posted electronically for

- Lesson 2-Longinus
- Lesson 3-Petrarca, Alberti
- Lesson 14-Mandelbaum
- Lesson 19-Dickie, Beardsley
- Lesson 22-Carroll-1, Carroll-2

## Lesson Schedule

Week #	Lesson #(s)	Topic	Active Learning Components
1	Course intro 1 Plato and Aristotle (p. 16-56)	1-Classical Aesthetic Philosophy	Weekly: 1) Think-Pair-Share (TPS) of “Questions for Discussion” (QD) 2) Cooperative Learning Group (CLG) leaders report their group’s discussion highlights
2	2 Plotinus (p. 57-63) Bonaventure (p. 72-26) Longinus (PDF) 3 Petrarca (PDF) Alberti (PDF)	2-Truth, Beauty, and the Sublime 3-Poetry and Painting	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small group comparison of Alberti’s ideal course of instruction for painters and actual art education today
3	4 Shaftesbury (p. 77-86) Hutcheson (p. 87-102) 5 Burke (p. 113-122) Lessing (p. 123-130)	4-Beauty 5-The Sublime	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups brainstorm present-day examples of the Sublime
4	6 Kant (p. 131-160) 7 Hegel (p. 180-192) Schiller (p. 167-169) Schelling (p. 179-179)	6-Critique of Judgment 7-Philosophy of Art	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups discuss present-day impact of Kant (university art curricula, departmentalization, and related topics)
5	8 Schopenhauer (p. 193-216) Nietzsche (p. 222-232) 9 Tolstoy (p. 233-242) Bullough (p. 242-259)	8-The Nature of Art 9-Art and Emotion	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups discuss relevance of this week’s philosophers to their arts practice.
6	10 Bell (p. 261-269) Hanslick (p. 217-221), Croce (p. 270-281) 11 Benjamin (p. 327-343) Heidegger (p. 344-357)	10-Form 11-Aura and Artifactuality	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups formulate working definition of “art”
7	12 Gadamer (p. 370-387) Collingwood (p. 282-295) Dewey (p. 298-315)	12-Expression and Experience	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report
8	13 Wimsatt & Beardsley (p. 547-555)	13-Intentionalism in Art	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report

	Carroll (p. 568-584) 14 Mandelbaum (PDF) Levinson (p. 35-46)	14-Definition of Art	3) Team Debate: Intentionalism
9	15 Danto (p. 27-43) Dickie (p. 47-54) 16 Margolis (p. 73-77) Levinson (p. 78-91)	15-The Artworld  16-Types and Tokens	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups draw diagram of the Artworld.
10	17 Kivy (p. 92-101) Currie (p. 103-122)  Project intro	17-Art and Action	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report
11	18 Sibley (p. 127-141) Walton (p. 142-157) Pettit (p. 158-172)	18-Aesthetic Properties	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups list standard, variable, and contra- standard properties for various media (one type per group), then share with class.
12	19 Dickie (PDF) Beardsley (PDF) 20 Beardsley (p. 189-199) Levinson (p. 200-222)	19-Intentionalism in Art-2  20-Intention and Interpretation	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Small groups create large chart of artist—artwork— audience relationship; share with class.
13	21 Sibley (p. 243-252) Gaut (p. 283-294)  22 Carroll (PDF) Carroll (PDF)	21-Judgment and Ethics  22-Contemporary Aesthetic Philosophy	1) TPS-QD 2) CLG report 3) Pick the theory, philosophy, or philosopher you disliked most during the course. Present your objections in graphic or visual form.
14	Research/writing	Allow time for students to engage in peer-editing and consult with one another to refine and revise their research papers	Complete final editing of research papers and prepare presentations for the next class period.
15	Project presentation (2 weeks)	As students make their presentations, peers fill out an evaluation and feedback form. These are given to the instructor, who will evaluate them before giving them to the student.	Write a 1-page reflection paper about your experience in this class.

## Policies and Procedures

### Late Work Policy

Work must be submitted on the stated due date. Assignments may be subject to a 10% reduction in grade per day the assignment is turned in after the day it is due. It is therefore in your best interests to turn in your work on time. If you know that your work will be delayed due to a reasonable mitigating circumstance for which you have documentation, please contact me prior to the due date so that we may discuss your options. Mitigating circumstances would include the death or serious illness of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, or child), your own serious mental or physical illness, a major weather emergency, or your own military deployment. Malfunctioning computer equipment, software, or lack of an internet connection will not count as mitigating circumstances. For further information please contact me directly.

### Guidelines for Written Work

All written materials and assignments must be typewritten or word-processed utilizing the following format. Except for the active reading notes, NO handwritten papers will be accepted.

- 1-inch margins
- Times New Roman, size 12, black
- Double spaced
- Heading: your full name, the date, and the assignment title at the top of the first page
- Correct use of citations, if applicable
- Included illustrations, if any, must be located at the end of the document (not in line with text), accompanied by correct citations, and DO NOT count towards total page length of the assignment.

EVERYTHING that is not the student's own work, words, or ideas must be CITED correctly including all images used in written work and presentations.

APA format for citing works of art:

Format: Artist (last name, first name), artist's role (in parentheses i.e. Artist, Architect), title, the work type, in brackets [Painting, Cathedral, Chair], country/city/state of origin, and repository. Include URL or other identifying material about source, if needed.

Example: Cattelan, Maurizio. (Artist). (1997). *Novecento (Twentieth Century)*. [mixed media]. Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://www.bos2008.com/app/biennale/artist/61>

To find the correct way of citing other materials according to APA format, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Wikipedia is NOT an acceptable source in scholarly research or writing. Do not use it. Do not cite it.