

# NPHI 2830A: Introduction to the Philosophy of Art

## Fall 2011 (Online)

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### Course Description

In this course, we focus on the visual arts, music, and literature, exploring the various theories that have emerged about the arts and nature throughout the ages. We talk about the place of the arts and artists in society and the philosophical questions that arise. What is the relation of art to nature? What makes objects beautiful? Is beauty a necessary feature of art? Are there ways to determine quality in works of art? Is there such a thing as truth and authenticity in art? What is artistic expression? Is there a connection, as some suggest, between aesthetic and moral judgment? This course will be of interest to students of philosophy, literature, visual and media studies, music, art and literary criticism.

### Course Objectives

- To examine critically the nature of and motivation behind philosophical thinking about the arts.
- To become acquainted with the ideas of some important Western philosophers and artists.
- In the process of becoming acquainted with these theories, to learn how to think philosophically about the arts.
- To stimulate philosophical thinking about the arts in a contemporary context.

### Required Texts

- Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robt. Fagles, Penguin Classics
- Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath, Penguin Classics
- Course Packet

**Important Note** — Be sure to get the **Heath** translation of Aristotle and the **Fagles** translation of Sophocles. Ancient Greek translations vary considerably, particularly in Aristotle's writings. And it's crucial that we have the same pagination for both works. These are required texts. If you have questions, let me know. Other readings will be provided electronically.

### Requirements for Credit Students

There will be weekly readings and discussion posts [40% of the course grade], two short philosophical essays [20% of the course grade], and two longer philosophical essays [40% of the course grade]. What follows are additional details on the process and assignments. Please read carefully and let me know if you have questions.

**Participation and Discussion Posts** — The basic requirement for participation is to engage in close reading and analysis of the assigned texts, and to actively participate in our collaborative, online seminar discussions. Each **Sunday** I'll post an introduction to the material for the week. I'll also post discussion questions no later than noon each **Monday**.

To be a fully engaged and active participant, you should expect to post 2-4 responses each week in the discussion forum, at least 1 addressing the **initial discussion question(s)** that I raise, and at least 1 response **to another student**. Your postings should be short, thoughtful, and to the point. The aim in this part of the course is to sustain a lively exchange that helps all of us think through the issues and texts as we would if we were meeting face to face.

You should complete your reading of the assigned material by **Sunday** each week. Class discussion will occur **Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday**. If you are unable to participate for any reason, please contact me by email. Remember that class participation counts as 40% of your grade. In an online course, if you are not participating in the discussion, you're not present in class. The success of the course as whole depends on our collective engagement and effort.

**Focused Philosophical Essays** — You are required to write 2 short and narrowly focused philosophical essays, each approximately 1 page (single-spaced). Students will post these essays to their personal wiki pages where they will be visible to the entire class. Topics will be posted and due dates announced on the website. These focused writings count as 20% of your final grade.

**Mid-Term and Final Essays** — You are also required to write 2 longer, more extended philosophical essays, the first coming around the mid-term and the second at the end of the semester. Each essay will be 5-7 pages (double-spaced). A full description of the assignments, topics, and due dates will be posted on the course website. These essays count as 40% of your grade. **Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per week late. No papers will be accepted after the last day of class without specific arrangements made in advance with me.**

## Schedule of Topics

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Note: The week begins on **Monday**. This sets the timing and due dates for our online schedule.

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**Week 1 (29 Aug - 4 Sep): Orientation and Introduction**

**Week 2 (5 - 11 Sep): The Classical World: Art, Beauty, and Inspiration (Plato)**

**Week 3 (12 - 18 Sep): The Classical World: Art, Beauty, and "Imitation" (Plato)**

**Week 4 (19 - 25 Sep): The Classical World: Poetry and Tragedy (Aristotle)**

**Week 5 (26 Sep - 2 Oct): The Classical World: Antigone**

**Week 6 (3 - 9 Oct): The Modern World: British Empiricism**

**Week 7 (10 - 16 Oct): The Modern World: German Idealism (Kant)**

**Week 8 (17 - 23 Oct): The Modern World: German Idealism (Kant & Hegel)**

**Week 9 (24 - 30 Oct): The Modern World: German Idealism (Hegel)**

**Week 10 (31 Oct - 6 Nov): Late Modernity: Critical Theory**

**Week 11 (7 - 13 Nov): Contemporary Issues: Is Art Universal?**

**Week 12 (14 - 20 Nov): Contemporary Issues: Art and Ethics**

**< Thanksgiving Break — 21 - 27 Nov >**

**Week 13 (28 Nov - 4 Dec): Contemporary Issues: Art After the End of Art**

**Week 14 (5 - 11 Dec): Summary and Review**

**Week 15 (12 - 18 Dec): Final Essay/Study Period**

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### **Students with Disabilities**

In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who may need academic accommodations should contact the office of Student Disability Services. Students requesting any accommodations will need to discuss them with Jason Luchs, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter. All conversations will be kept confidential.

Mr. Luchs can be reached at 79 5th Avenue on the 5th floor ([luchsj@newschool.edu](mailto:luchsj@newschool.edu), 212.229.5626 x3135). You may also access more information at <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability/>.

### **Incompletes**

A grade of Incomplete ("I") indicates that your instructor has granted you an extension to complete outstanding work for a course. The grade of Incomplete will not be assigned automatically. It will only be assigned at the request of the student **by the last day of class**.

### **Incomplete grades cannot be granted for students who are graduating seniors.**

If circumstances require you to request a grade of Incomplete—and the instructor approves your request—the terms of the Incomplete should be agreed upon in writing, using the "Request for a Grade of Incomplete" form ([http://www.newschool.edu/forms/registrar\\_incomplete\\_grade.pdf](http://www.newschool.edu/forms/registrar_incomplete_grade.pdf)). This ensures that both the student and the instructor understand the exact nature of the required work, the manner in which it is to be submitted, and the date by which it must be submitted.

Your instructor will determine the deadline for submission of outstanding work. Students with a grade of Incomplete who do not complete their work by the agreed-upon deadline will receive a grade of Withdrawal/Failure ("WF"). Students who complete outstanding work according to the terms of the Incomplete will receive a letter grade. (The "I" will be converted to a letter grade after your instructor submits a Change of Grade form on your behalf.)

### **Libraries**

The New School Library offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage (<http://library.newschool.edu/events/>) each semester. The library also provides one-on-one support for students who in conducting research for a paper or project require additional assistance. Students can contact the library about scheduling a one-on-one appointment with a reference librarian at the following link: <http://library.newschool.edu/reference/request.php>.

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas in any academic work. (This could be using using books, journals, internet postings, or other students' papers.) For further information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the *MLA. Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2nd edition), Chapter 6, on documentation.

The New School Writing Center also provides online resources about avoiding plagiarism. See <http://www.newschool.edu/writingcenter/virtual-handout-drawer/>

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

### **Writing Center**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the University Writing Center, located at 65 5th Avenue, room 105. To make a phone or in-person appointment, you can e-mail the writing center at [writingcenter@newschool.edu](mailto:writingcenter@newschool.edu) or call 212 229 5121. For further information, please visit the Writing Center web site: [www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/](http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/).

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All links above were verified and up-to-date as of 12 Aug 11.