

Philosophy of Art 343

Syllabus

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South College E470
MWF 11:15-12:05
Office Hours: MW, 1-2

Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to philosophical questions about art. We will focus primarily on trying to understand the nature of art. The main question will thus be, “What is art?” We will begin by looking at a variety of answers to that question. Some have said that the essence of art is to represent, others that it’s the expression of emotion, others that it’s a specific kind of form or structure, and others that it’s the provocation of aesthetic experience. Some doubt that there are necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as art. They think the question “What is art?” does not have a tidy answer.

Once we’ve looked at some of these views, we’ll pivot to a prolonged examination of a contemporary book in the philosophy of art, Dominic McIver Lopes’s *Beyond Art*, which advocates for a “buck passing” theory of art. We’ll also take some time to discuss the ethics of art, trying to figure out what to do about immoral art and artists.

Objectives

The goals of this course include enabling you to:

- Identify, properly interpret, and evaluate various philosophical views about art and arguments for those views.
- Engage in reflective and respectful discussion with your peers on the topic of philosophy of art.
- Develop your own views in the philosophy of art and an increased ability to communicate them and argue for them by verbal and written means.

I’ll measure your progress in these by recording your performance on the assignments mentioned below.

Textbooks

You should buy the following books:

PA = Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*. ISBN: 0415159644

GA = C. Thi Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art*. ISBN: 9780190052089

Both are required. They'll make up a lot of our reading this semester. There will be other required readings, all of which will be made available ahead of time on Moodle.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on Socratic Note-Taking assignments, Discussion Write-ups, in-class interaction, a book review, and two papers, according to the following distribution:

SNTs		15%
DISCUSSION WRITE-UPS		15%
IN-CLASS INTERACTION		10%
BOOK REVIEW		15%
PAPERS	MIDTERM PAPER	20%
	FINAL PAPER	25%

Socratic Note-Taking

During the first half of the semester, you'll turn in Socratic-style responses to our readings. Socratic note-taking involves asking yourself questions about the reading as you are reading it and then answering those questions as best you can. The timeline for SNT responses can be found below. More detailed instructions on SNTs are available on Moodle.

Discussion Write-ups

The class will proceed by a series of condensed units. Each unit will look at a particular question or group of related questions. At the end of each unit we will have a day devoted to student discussion. In order for students to be (and feel) more prepared for this day, I will have each of you bring written answers to questions that will be discussed on that day. The questions will be available on Moodle before the discussion. You'll submit your answers on Moodle before the start of the Discussion Day and receive feedback there.

Book Review

You'll write an academic-style book review of the book we read in the latter half of the course, Dominic McIver Lopes's *Beyond Art*. This will involve summarizing the main claims of the book, providing some analysis of the arguments, and evaluating the plausibility of the project as a whole. The word limit will be 1,500 words. Further instructions will be available on Moodle.

Papers

Both papers will be 2,000 word maximum (roughly 6 page), taking a stance on a particular question from the course (or another question in which you have interest). Prompts will be provided and made available on Moodle a few weeks ahead of the due date for the midterm paper. If you'd like to write on something not included in one of the prompts, you may do so, but only with instructor approval at least two weeks ahead of the due date.

You will develop your own topic for the final paper. This will involve proposing a topic, literature to cite, and developing an outline, all to be turned in as a scheduled part of the assignment prior to the finished version of the paper due during exam week. You must turn in each part of the assignment by the time specified on the Course Schedule below. The purpose of the final paper is to go beyond merely evaluating the views of other philosophers in the field and to attempt to make one's own contribution to the literature.

Late Work

Turn things in on time. **The penalty for late work is one third of a letter grade per day.** I want to build in an incentive not to get behind. Work is to be submitted on Moodle on the day it is due by the start of class. Work will be considered one day late if it is to me between any time in the 24 hours after the due date, two days late if to me between 24-48 hours of the due date, and so on.

Extensions

I am happy to grant extensions on assignments for a variety of reasons if you communicate with me ahead of time. Think of your essays as projects, and of me as your project manager. I'm trying to help you manage your time and resources to do well on your projects, and the only way I can do that is if you are communicating with me.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance for the course is mandatory. The well-functioning of our classroom environment depends on students studying the material, showing up, and being active and enthusiastic participants in class discussion. Your ideas, questions, and interactions with your classmates are crucial, both for your education and for theirs. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your in-class interaction grade. Excuses will be granted for students who alert me ahead of time by email or word of mouth; only for health reasons, school functions, family emergencies, or religious reasons; and only with official documentation when appropriate. Exceptions may be made for last minute emergencies.

Participation involves not just showing up, but being a prepared and active member of class. That means studying the reading ahead of time, showing up on time, paying attention, answering and asking questions, and allowing for others to do the same. An ideal classroom has a balance between participants, so that voices are heard fairly equally. This means if you tend to be more quiet you need to endeavor to say more, and if you tend to be more of a talker you should probably try to listen more and ask questions of other students.

Technology

I have a Partial No-Screen Policy and a Full No-Cell-Phone Policy in class. That means (1) I never want to see a cell-phone out during class, and (2) sometimes I won't want to see any screens out, but other times it'll be fine (most often during discussions, if people are doing research, or if we're planning something).

During periods when the No-Screen Policy is active, notes should be taken by hand. If justification is wanted, laptops, phones, and tablets **distract people**, they **detract from face-to-face connection and empathy**, and they **worsen your retention of information compared to hand-writing notes**. I personally find them distracting, and I like to look people in the face when I'm talking to them, so that's the main reason for these policies.

If any student has a disability that makes it such that the Partial No-Screen Policy or the Full No-Cell-Phone Policy are detrimental to their ability to function well in the classroom, please email me or come to me privately. I'll lift the ban for the whole class in that case.

Academic Dishonesty

Don't plagiarize. I'll know if you do, and you will receive a 0 on the assignment (and possibly fail the course) when I catch you. It's also immoral and you'll be worse off as a person if you do it. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. If you aren't sure whether something counts as plagiarism, ask me. Simple cases are things like copying words or ideas from others, using a paper (or section of a paper) you wrote for another class, or helping anyone else do any of those kinds of things. You can research our school's stance on plagiarism and related issues here:

<http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you desire accommodations for this class on the basis of physical, learning, psychological or emotional disability, you should contact Disability Services. Disability Services is located at:

161 Whitmore
181 Presidents Drive
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-9313

It can be reached by calling 413.545.0892. Visit <https://www.umass.edu/disability/students> for more information. Make sure to plan ahead if you are going to ask for adjustments to assignment requirements.

Tentative Course Schedule

We're scheduled to meet 39 times over 13 weeks. On the following page you will find a schedule of how—tentatively—the readings and assignments will break down over those weeks. Each reading must be finished by the beginning of class on the day on which it's due.

Day	Unit	Reading Due	Assignment Due
01/22 – Wed			
01/24 – Fri		PA – Introduction (1-17)	
01/27 – Mon	1—Representation	PA – Ch. 1: Part I (18-32)	SNT 1
01/29 – Wed		Sherri Irvin (2005)	SNT 2
01/31 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 1
02/03 – Mon	2—Expression	PA Ch. 2: Part I (58-78)	SNT 3
02/05 – Wed		Gregory Currie (1997)	SNT 4
02/07 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 2
02/10 – Mon	3—Form	PA Ch. 3: Part I (107-136)	SNT 5
02/12 – Wed		Richard Eldridge (1985)	SNT 6
02/14 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 3
02/18 – Tue	4—Aesthetic Experience	PA Ch. 4: Part I (155-181)	SNT 7
02/19 – Wed		Nguyen (2019)	SNT 8
02/21 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 4
02/24 – Mon	5—Contemporary Work	PA Ch. 5: Part I (206-223)	SNT 9
02/26 – Wed		PA Ch. 5: Part II (224-248)	SNT 10
02/28 – Fri		Adajian (2005)	SNT 11
03/02 – Mon		Skidelsky (2007)	SNT 12
03/04 – Wed		Abell (2012)	SNT 13
03/06 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 5
03/09 – Mon	6—Immoral Artists	“Philosophers On The Art of Morally Troubling Artists”	SNT 14
03/11 – Wed		Archer and Matheson (2019)	SNT 15
03/13 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 6 Midterm Paper
03/23 – Mon	7—Cultural Appropriation	Young (2005)	SNT 16
03/25 – Wed		Nguyen and Strohl (2019)	SNT 17
03/27 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 7
03/30 – Mon	8—Games & Agency	GA Ch. 1	Final Paper Topic Proposal
04/01 – Wed		GA Ch. 2	
04/03 – Fri		GA Ch. 3	
04/06 – Mon		GA Ch. 4	
04/08 – Wed		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 8
04/10 – Fri	9—Agency & Art	GA Ch. 5	
04/13 – Mon		GA Ch. 6	Final Paper Thesis and Literature Proposal
04/15 – Wed		GA Ch. 7	
04/17 – Fri		Discussion Day	Discussion Write-up 9
04/22 – Wed	10—Social & Moral Transformations	GA Ch. 8	
04/24 – Fri		GA Ch. 9	Final Paper Outline
04/27 – Mon		GA Ch. 10	
04/29 – Wed		Discussion Day	Book Review
05/05 – Fri		No Class	Final Paper