

Introduction to Philosophy of Art Ph 240 Section A01 Fall 2020

Thinking through art

This course outline is © Thomas Heyd

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Lectures TWF 11:30-12:20
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Provisional outline: Given changing circumstances, especially as arising in relation to Covid-19, there may be some changes to this outline throughout the course.



Christo and Jean-Claude, *Surrounded Islands* (1983)

Territory acknowledgment

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples, on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. This acknowledgment entails a commitment to ongoing dialogue and reconciliation with the peoples of these lands. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the UVic Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement.

Key questions

- Is *art* anything that we choose to call 'art'? Is it something determined by 'art experts'? Or is there something that 'essentially' makes something art?
- Is a special attitude required for aesthetic experience? Is aesthetic appreciation limited to art?
- Is art based on an expression of feeling? Is it a way of representing the world? Or is it symbolic of something intrinsic of the human spirit?
- What is beauty? Is it merely 'in the eye of the beholder'? does it result from a particular type of arrangement of materials?
- Is the meaning of artworks entirely 'open to interpretation'? Are there 'better' and 'worse' ways of interpreting art? What role should the artist's intention have when onlookers evaluate artworks?
- Does technology change what art is? Is art capable of changing society? Do historical art periods signify stages of human development?
- Is aesthetics relevant in everyday life? How do we appreciate the aesthetic value of nature?

Course description

This course will be an opportunity to consider issues and debates surrounding art and artworks, and to engage with questions regarding beauty, what its importance is, and how it may – or may not – be related to art. We begin the course by asking how far back in time art-making seems to go, and whether there is sufficient reason to believe that even our Neanderthal cousins decorated their bodies, and possibly expressed themselves artistically.

These issues raise the question what it means to view something as an artwork, and why we value art. Evidence that as far back as the Ice Ages human beings apparently adorned their bodies and sometimes even designed their habitations points toward an long time human interest in the creation and appreciation of beauty.

Philosophy of art and aesthetics sometimes are thought of as a single subject but, in fact, there are many things that are described as beautiful that are not artworks. Moreover, nowadays many works of art are not intended to be measured by the traditional standards of beauty. So, one of our aims in this course will be to disentangle the relations between art and beauty.

Course objectives

- To learn about theories of aesthetics and art, and their application in our contemporary world
- To carefully examine the philosophical arguments surrounding controversial issues in art and aesthetics
- To sharpen our ability for critical analysis of assumptions and arguments, and how to assess their strength and weaknesses, supported by consideration of realistic cases

Required and optional readings

Required and optional, recommended readings are on Brightspace. Additional Readings, had copy texts, may become available through the Reserve Room. To access the website, log in with your regular network ID. Please let me know if you have any difficulty accessing the readings. Brightspace will also be used to post announcements, to give you online access to lecture notes, handouts and assignment sheets and to collect short answer assignments.

Attention: the schedule of required readings will not be on Brightspace. So, you will need to consult this outline (see schedule below).

Course organisation and student engagement

To facilitate comprehension and class discussion, assigned weekly Readings are to be read *ahead of lectures*. Constructive participation and tolerance of the views of others are expected. Everyone is encouraged to be self-reflective about his or her own beliefs, and to constructively contribute to class discussion. Throughout the course, work will be assessed on the basis of A) care in the explanation of key points, B) quality of development of points presented, C) effective and correct use of the English language and clarity, neatness, and organisation of points.

Tips for best performances

- Do readings *ahead of class periods*, read material attentively (by asking questions about the material), and do weekly assignments.
- *Participate* in class discussion with constructive contributions.
- *Contact the instructor* if failing to understand the material.

Graded student activities

1. Final take-home exam	40%
2. Mid-term test	30%
3. Experiential project	20%
4. Participation, including weekly assignments	10%

1. **The final exam** will be a comprehensive take-home exam with short and long answer questions. Questions will be handed out on the last day of classes, and the completed exam must be submitted to the Brightspace website **by NOON, no later than five (5) days after the last day of classes**. Late exams will **NOT** be accepted (they will receive 0%). Understanding of material covered and reflective analysis will be expected. Answers to questions will be assessed on the basis of the following three criteria: (1) accurate presentation of the views discussed and explanation of key points, (2) well-developed discussion of points presented, (3) effective and correct use of the English language and clarity, neatness, and organisation of points.

2. **The mid-term in-class sit-down test** will cover both readings and additional points raised in lectures. Both understanding and reflective analysis will be expected. Test questions will likely consist of a combination of shorter and longer answer, as well as some true-false and multiple choice, questions. The assessment criteria are the same as for the Final Exam.

3. **Group work experiential project**. This project is to provide an *experiential* context for students to develop skills in reflecting on artworks and natural sites, processes or objects. We will establish groups of 4-6 students (depending on class size) that will choose artworks, performances, or natural sites to consider them on the basis of course. Options include natural parks and gardens, public art, prehistoric rock art sites (petroglyphs or pictographs), Japanese gardens, as well as

concerts, dance and theatre performances, and gallery exhibitions. In all cases, choices of sites need to be approved by the instructor. Groups are expected to produce a brief group report (worth 50% of the grade) on their reflections and analysis, later followed by a presentation in the final weeks of classes (worth another 50% of the grade).

To receive a grade for the project group, members have to comply with ALL four of the following steps: a) form a group, select a topic, and have it approved by the instructor by Week 4, b) submit a one-page plan of action by Week 5, c) submit a short report by Week 9, d) give a group presentation on the assigned day in the last two weeks of classes. Further information will be forthcoming after the start of the semester. For further information, see the handout that will be placed on Brightspace.

4. Participation. Assessed on the basis of a) *regular attendance*, b) *constructive participation in class discussion*, c) *weekly assignments* based on the course readings and analysis of the issues under discussion. *Class attendance will be taken, and is particularly expected in the case of guest speakers* (justified absences on guest speaker days should be discussed with the instructor ahead of time).

Weekly response assignments. Unless indicated otherwise, you are expected to write up a brief response to a question regarding each week's readings, to help you engage with the material and concepts before lectures. Answers to questions posed should be in your own words and not copied from assigned readings or other sources, be up to half a page long, and submitted on the first day of classes weekly.

IMPORTANT: when submitting your assignments, at the head of the page please state, in this order, a) LAST NAME and first name (e.g., JONES, Peter), b) course (Phil 232), c) the date assignment is due (e.g., 9 September 2021), d) the particular readings discussed (e.g., Singer and Taylor).

Feedback will be given on the first sets of assignments, and occasionally thereafter. At the end of the semester the total of the assignments minus two will be graded on a *pass or fail* basis. *Both* quantity and quality of assignments will be taken into account in grading. All assignments that *pass* will be assigned 85%. *No late assignments will be accepted.*

Participation grade: a grade in the A range will be given if all required assignments were handed in, done at the level that deserves a pass, combined with regular attendance, and class participation was constructive; a grade in the B range will be given if most of the assignments are handed in and done at a pass deserving level, and most lectures have been attended and class participation was constructive; a grade in the C range will be given if less than 2/3 of assignments have been handed in and attendance has been less than 2/3 of the time; a grade in the D range will be given if half the required assignments and half the lectures were attended while class participation was constructive; a grade in the F range will be given if fewer assignments than 2/3 were handed in or if less than half of the lectures were attended or participation was non-constructive.

Grading scale and interpretation

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the standard University scheme:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 65-69	D = 50-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A- = 80-84	B- = 70-72		

What the grading scale means:

- A+, A, or A-** Earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
- B+, B, or B-** Earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students. B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
- C+ or C** Earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material, adequate skills to work with the course material are displayed, and the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.

- D** Earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
- F** Work that is not worthy of course credit toward the degree.
- N** An N grade indicates that the student did not complete one or more of the course's essential requirements. N is a failing grade and factors into the student's GPA as "0".
- N** An N grade indicates that the student did not complete one or more of the course's essential requirements. In this course that means that a student has not completed the Final take-home exam or the Mid-term test or the Experiential project. N is a failing grade and factors into the student's GPA as "0".

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor (or TA) in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade that you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the Chair of the Department of Philosophy. For additional information regarding grades, including N and DEF status, please see the most recent edition of the *UVic Undergraduate Calendar*.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to *percentage scores*. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference. Grades for assignments, mid-term, group work and final exam will be posted in the commentary sections of the assignment dropboxes on Brightspace. The final course grade will be calculated according to the percentages indicated above. However, this will not be done automatically on Brightspace, so ignore the 'Grades' section on Brightspace.

Other matters

Late assignment and extensions

Late weekly assignments will *not* be accepted and tests will *not* normally be rescheduled (no make-up exams). If a test is missed for serious, *documented*, reasons, the final exam will be weighted so as to incorporate the weighting of the missed exam. Documented evidence for having legitimately missed a test and an explanatory statement in writing have to be received *no more than ten days after the deadline or test missed*. Late assignments will have 5% subtracted per working day from grade unless documentation of illness or family emergency is provided.

Academic integrity and University academic regulations

"Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility... Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community." (*University Calendar*)

Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism; using the words or ideas of others without giving appropriate credit; multiple submissions; falsifying materials subject to academic evaluation; cheating on assignments, papers, tests and examinations; unauthorized use of an editor; aiding others to cheat. Please view the UVic Libraries guide <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/> to avoid plagiarism and cheating.

Tip: generally, use your own words to express your thoughts! If you must quote, be absolutely sure that you place text quoted in quotation marks or indent it. Attention: whenever you use more than 3 words or an idea of another, you are required to give full credit! Failure to do so will result in a Fail grade.

I reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software or other platforms to assess the integrity of student work. Penalties for violations vary, with first violations generally resulting in a failing grade on the work. Please view https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItem=policies. All students should complete the Integrity Matters module available in Brightspace ([here](#)) before handing in *any* coursework for evaluation. Students need to self-enrol by searching for it under the Discovery tab (drop-down menu) on

Brightspace. Before starting the course, review "[Standards for professional behaviour: Tri-Faculty Student Code of Conduct](#)".

Copyright Statement

All course content and materials are made available by the instructor for educational purposes and for the exclusive use of students registered in their class. This includes all lecture notes, exams and quizzes that I make available to you. The material is protected under copyright law, even if not marked with ©. Any further use or distribution of materials to others requires the written permission of the instructor, except under fair dealing or another exception in the Copyright Act. Violations may result in disciplinary action under the Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations policy (AC1300). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Technology in the classroom

Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies. For this reason, they are not prohibited in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students. Therefore, anyone on social media, internet surfing, etc. during lecture periods may be asked to leave and subject to disciplinary action.

Inclusivity/diversity

The Philosophy Department is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all students, staff, and faculty. We affirm the diverse identities of persons and that the rights all individuals have to be treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, class, or national origin. This basic commitment entails, among other things, specific recognition and support for trans, queer, two-spirited, and non-binary people, and we respect the rights of individuals to self-determination and self-description. Information about UVic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN. If you have any particular concerns about these matters in our course, please don't hesitate to contact me. Information on accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVic Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/equity/education/religious/index.php>.

New Student Connect Program

"The New Student Connect program is an online university community where new students from all over the world connect with others entering their first-year at UVic. The Connect program offers the opportunity for new students to connect with both peers and programming relevant to their needs." This is a good way to learn from other students "about student life, the UVic student community, services available to new students, and ways to get the right support when new students need it." For further information see: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/studentlife/initiatives/new-student-connect/index.php>

Student Mental Health Supports / UVic Support Connect

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health at some point while undergraduate students. This may especially be the case during the present Covid-19 pandemic. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, however, if at any point you believe that you could benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact the new UVic Student Wellness Centre. In addition to providing face to face help, they offer a 24 x 7 phone & online mental health counselling and support program, no matter where you are located, at any time. This is an excellent resource at your disposal on campus. They genuinely want to help, so do consider taking advantage of this free resource.

Health Services and Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL)

A note to remind you to take care of yourself, especially in the present times. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. The sooner you let any of these on-campus services know your needs the quicker they can assist you in achieving your learning goals. Resources include

- Mental health counselling Services, already mentioned above. See <https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>.
- University Health Services (UHS), which provides a full-service primary health clinic for students and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives. <http://www.uvic.ca/services/health/>

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Center for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible. CAL staff members are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations, see: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>. Please note that instructors cannot provide CAL-type accommodations without CAL documentation.

Food bank and Community Cabbage

Sometimes students run out of money for food. Health restrictions permitting, the Food bank and Community Cabbage are available at the Students' Union. These are their statements: "The UVSS Food Bank & Free Store is run by a team of dedicated staff and volunteers and offers all UVic students access to food essentials and free household items", see <https://uvss.ca/foodbank/>. "The Community Cabbage is a student organization at the University of Victoria. We serve a free weekly hot meal to the campus community prepared from reclaimed food – edible but unsellable food donated by grocery stores. A crew of volunteers turn these ingredients into a healthy and delightful vegetarian meal at a community kitchen. Anyone is welcome to come cook with us and/or eat with us!" See <https://uviccommunitycabbage.wordpress.com/about/>.

Important dates and academic advising

Important dates for the 2021-2022 Academic Year are found here: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>. Please consult the Important Dates for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc. For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your UVic CAPP report, please visit Undergraduate Advising or make an appointment with an advisor.

Schedule of lectures, assignments and tests

Please note that this schedule is subject to changes, and will adjusted as we proceed through the semester. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. *Informed* participation in class discussion will be expected, so *please read the assigned texts in advance*. All readings are from our textbook, unless otherwise indicated.

- Week 1
5-11 Sept **Introduction: When does art begin?**
Film: *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* by Werner Herzog (Director)
Readings: White, extract from *Prehistoric Art*, in particular pages 9-11
Wednesday 7 Sept, first day of classes
****Attention: prepare first assignment, due Tuesday 13 of September****
- Week 2
12-18 Sept **Art, artworks and aesthetics**
What is aesthetics? What is Philosophy of art
Is art only found in galleries and concert halls?
Is art only found in modern Western society?
Do other societies and people from other times also have art?
Readings: "Art and Artworks" from *Puzzles about Art*
****Tuesday 13 Sept: the assignment about this week's readings is DUE (ahead of lectures!)***
****Exploration of groups and topics****
- Week 3
19-25 Sept **Definition of art and artworks**
Do artworks have a fundamental nature?
Is it possible to define art?
Is art just a matter of historical accident?
Is art whatever the artworld decides on?
Readings: Danto, Dickie, Weitz, Binkley
23 Sept: last day for adding courses
Saturday 30 Sept: FIELD TRIP to art studio of Prof. Emer. Mowry Baden's: 11am-12pm. Meet in Saanich. Travelling instructions and carpooling arrangements to be made in class. REQUESTED – TO BE CONFIRMED
- Week 4
26 Sept – 2 Oct **Aesthetic experience, art objects and non-art**
Is a special attitude required for aesthetic experience?
Is aesthetic appreciation limited to art?

What distinguishes art objects from other things in our world?
Readings: Bullough, Dickie, Ziff
****Friday 30 Sept: Final date for groups to form and to select group projects****

Week 5
3-9 Oct
Art identified by emotion? Expression of emotion? Or symbol of feeling?
Is a certain emotion the indicator-sign of artworks?
Is art a symbol of feeling?
Is art the expression of emotion?
Readings: Bell, Langer, Collingwood
****Friday 7 Oct: Plan of action for group work required****

Week 6
10-16 Oct
Beauty and love: are they related? If so, how?
Review and Midterm Test
What is beauty? What has love got to do with beauty?
Readings: Plato on beauty and love, Symposium
****Friday 14 Oct: MID-TERM TEST****
Monday 10 October, Thanksgiving Day
Wednesday 12 October, Columbus' encounter with the Americas

Week 7
17-23 Oct
Beauty and aesthetic judgements
Is beauty 'in the eye of the beholder'? And, if not, then where?
What is the basis of taste? How can some artworks be 'better' than others?
Readings: selections from "Beauty, Ugliness, and Aesthetic Experience"; Hume
***Friday 20 October: FIELD TRIP, UVic Indigenous Campus Art Tour* REQUESTED – TO BE CONFIRMED**

Week 8
24 -30 Oct
Aesthetic judgments (continued) and interpretation
How can subjective aesthetic judgments claim universality?
How does interpretation work? Is it necessarily subjective?
Readings: Kant, Gadamer, selections from Meaning and Interpretation
31 Oct: Last day for withdrawing from courses without penalty

Week 9
31 Oct - 6 Nov
The role of intentions in art
Are intention and historical context relevant for interpretation of artworks?
Can computer programs make art?
Readings: Wimsatt/Beardsley, Juhl (to be reviewed)
Friday 3 November: FIELD TRIP to Bob Wise, *The office: a portable amenity kiosk for female outdoor sex workers* (2008), Visual Arts Building yard. Guide TBA REQUESTED – TO BE CONFIRMED
****Friday 4 Nov: group work reports due****
31 October: Last day for withdrawing from courses without penalty of failure

Week 10
7-13 Nov
Can art change society? Does art reflect or critique the values of society?
Does mechanical reproduction rob art of its aura and turn it into a tool for social change?
Can art become a tool for activism? How so?
Does art signal stages in world history?
Readings: Benjamin, Heyd on performance art, Hegel
9-11 November, READING DAYS
****11 November, Remembrance Day****

Week 11
14-20 Nov
Does art depend on inspiration and genius? Why were there few women artists in the past?
What is the role of inspiration in art?
Does one need to have genius to be creative?
Why are so few women included in the history of art?
Readings: Plato, Kant on creativity and inspiration, Nochlin

- Week 12
21-27 Nov **How does experience get 'aesthetic' quality? Can nature be aesthetically appreciated?**
How can everyday experience have aesthetic value?
What does aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment consist in?
Readings: Dewey, Carlson, TBA
- Week 13
28 Nov – 4 Dec **Group Work presentations + Summary-Conclusion**
Presentation schedule: TBA
****Friday, 2 Dec, last day of classes: FINAL EXAM take-home exam questions handed out****
****2 December, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women****
- Week 14
5-11 Dec *****BEFORE NOON, Wednesday 7 December: Final Exam submission to Brightspace*****
NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE ACCEPTED