

The Philosophy of Art

Syllabus Précis

Instructor: Dr. Aaron Smuts

Description

In this course we will explore several issues concerning the nature of art and our experience of artworks. We will begin the semester with a brief survey of the major answers to the principal question in this area of philosophy, namely: What is art? Then, we will critically evaluate several arguments that purport to show that popular art is necessarily defective. In the following section, we will explore three paradoxes concerning our emotional reactions to art: How do we feel genuine fear for characters that we know are not real? Why do we sometimes seek out artworks that make us sad? And, how is it that we can feel suspense on repeated viewings of an action movie. Following our discussion of art and emotion, we will ask if art can be a source of knowledge, paying particular attention to the putative moral educative functions of art. Finally, we will explore a few issues around criticism: Do artists' intentions matter? Are some critical judgments better than others, or are they all equally subjective?

Texts

1. Noel Carroll. *A Philosophy of Mass Art*. (Oxford, 1998). [MA]
2. Noël Carroll. *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (Routledge, 1990). [PH]
5. Numerous articles posted on Blackboard. [BB]

Schedule

Topic I: What is Art?

Week 1: Aesthetic Experience— Carroll, "Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience" [BB] | Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude" [BB] | Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude" [BB]

Week 2: Open Concept Theories — Weitz, "Art as Indefinable" | Davies "Weitz's anti-essentialism" | Gaut, "The Cluster Concept" [BB]

Week 3: Institutions and Narratives — Danto "Art as Theory" | Dickie "Art as Institution" | Carroll, "Identifying Art"

Topic II: Popular Art

Week 4: MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture" [BB] | Carroll, *Mass Art*, ch. 1, pp. 1-30

Week 5: Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch" [BB] | Collingwood, excerpts from *The Principles of Art* | Carroll, *Mass Art*, ch. 1, pp. 31-70

Week 6: Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment and Mass Deception" [BB] | Carroll, *Mass Art*, ch. 1, 71-109

Topic III: Art and Emotion

Week 7: The Paradox of Fiction — Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* Ch. 2 (pp. 59-88) | Walton, "Fearing Fictions" [BB] | Radford, "How Can we be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" [BB]

Week 8: The Paradox of Painful Art — Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* ch. 4 | Hume, "Of Tragedy" [BB] | Smuts, "Art and Negative Affect" [BB]

Week 9: The Paradox of Suspense — Carroll, "The Paradox of Suspense" [BB] | Yanal, "The Paradox of Suspense" [BB] | Smuts, "The Desire-Frustration Theory of Suspense" [BB]

Topic IV: Art and Knowledge

Week 10: Wilson, "Art and Knowledge" [BB] | Lamarque and Olsen, "Literature, Truth, and Philosophy" [PoL] | Gaut, "Art and Knowledge" [BB] | Stolnitz, "On the cognitive triviality of art" [BB]

Week 11: Art and Morality — Carroll, "Wheel of Virtue" [BB] | Carroll, "Sympathy for Soprano" [BB]

Topic V: Criticism

Week 12: Authorial Intention — Carroll, "Art, Intention, and Conversation" [BB] | Levinson, "Intention and Interpretation"

Week 13: Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" [BB] | Daniel Kaufman, "Normative Criticism" [BB] | Carroll, selections from *On Criticism* [BB] |

Week 14: Goldman, selections from *Aesthetic Value* [BB] | Bender, "Sensitivity, Sensibility, and Aesthetic Realism" [BB]