

PHI 350
AESTHETICS
SPRING, 2004

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Office Hours: MWF 1:00-3:00 pm
TTH 1:00-3:00 pm

PURPOSE: The textbook for the course defines “aesthetics” as the branch of philosophy concerned with art and beauty. Sounds simple enough, right? But the investigation of the topic involves questions of aesthetic experience, taste, judgment, context, and a variety of other related topics that qualify the discussion of “art for art’s sake.” The course will include a historical review of classical understandings of aesthetic theory, beginning with Plato and Aristotle and continuing through post-modernism and post-structuralism. The goal of the course is to introduce the student to the evolution of understandings of aesthetics and to engage in a personal appreciation of the interaction of beauty, truth, and the “good” that characterize the field of aesthetics.

TEXTS: The basic text for the course is:

H. Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. *Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999. (referred to in the Class Schedule as “B&J”)

In addition, each student will read one additional text that deals with one of several sub-disciplines in the field of aesthetics. The assignment related to this additional text will be found later in the syllabus. Dr. Smith will assist the students in locating the additional texts.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. A Mid-term Examination, scheduled for **February 23**. The Mid-term will focus upon the Classical and Modern understandings of aesthetics. The examination will consist of a series of essay questions. Dr. Smith will provide a list of possible essay questions approximately one week prior to the examination, and the questions on the examination will be taken from this list. 25% of the final grade for the course.
2. The student will choose one of the following books to read and prepare a 5-10 page (typed, double-spaced) paper in which she or he responds to the claims about aesthetics being made in the book. What does the author claim to be the nature of the specific form of the arts the book addresses? Are bases presented that would allow one to determine such issues as aesthetic value, taste, and judgment? What is the value of the book itself for understanding what makes one’s area of study “tick?” As much as possible, the student should choose the

book that is most directly related to his or her major field of study. Due **March 17**, the paper will count 25% of the final grade for the course.

Music: Bennett Reimer. *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*. Prentice Hall 2002

English: Paul Ricoeur. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. TCU Press

Art: Ivan Gaskell, *Vermeer's Wager*. 2000

Interdisciplinary: *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (Twentieth Anniversary Edition). Basic Books 1999

3. Choose one of the individual philosophers discussed in the course and conduct further research into that person's aesthetic theory and its place in the wider scope of her or his philosophical system. Prepare a 5-10 page paper based upon this research. Dr. Smith will help provide resources for this research. Due **April 5**, the paper will count 25% of the final grade.
4. A final examination, which is scheduled for **Tuesday, April 27 at 10:15 am**. The final examination will consist of essay questions based upon the readings and class discussion since the Mid-term examination. As with the Mid-term, Dr. Smith will distribute a list of possible essay questions approximately one week prior to the final examination. This will provide the final 25% of the final grade for the course.

EXPECTATIONS:

1. **Class Attendance** is required in every class session at Florida Southern College. It is also extremely important in this course. The work we will be doing in the class sessions will help "unpack" some of the very dense philosophical language the student will encounter in the reading assignments. Therefore, the student will be held responsible for regular attendance and for participation in class discussions. Unexcused absences totaling more than the equivalent of **one week** of class sessions will result in lowering the student's final grade by one letter grade. Any student absent for the equivalent of one-fourth of the class sessions will receive an automatic **F** for the course.
2. **Class participation** is expected from all students. There will be no specific grade given for class participation in this course. However, the student with a "borderline" grade at the end of the semester who has been engaged in class discussions, has come to class having read the assigned material, and has demonstrated interest in the subject matter will reap the benefits of his or her participation when the final grades are distributed.

3. **Inclusive language** will be the manner in which the course is taught. I encourage each student to experiment with this means of speaking. No grade *per se*, just the appreciation of the professor and a special nod of affirmation from the cosmos.
4. All written work is due on the date assigned. **Late work** may be accepted, but only if prior arrangements have been made and good reasons have been offered for the tardiness of the assignment.
5. **Students with Disabilities** Florida Southern College does not have a special program for students with learning disabilities; however, reasonable accommodations may be requested in this course by students who have documentation of a disability on file in the ACADEMIC SUPPORT OFFICE located in Ordway 134, phone 4196. “It is the responsibility of the student to make his or her condition known to the college, to take the initiative in requesting desired appropriate accommodations, and to have the pertinent diagnostic tests or other professional evaluations to verify the need for academic accommodations.” **A release statement signed by the student is required each semester before documentation and recommended accommodations can be shared with a student’s instructors.** It is the student’s responsibility to **meet with the instructor** to determine which of the recommended accommodations can be made in each class.

GRADING: All of the assignments will be graded on a letter grade basis.

CLASS SCHEDULE

DATE	SUBJECT	READING	
January	14	Introduction and Housekeeping	
	16	The Classical Period and the “Beautiful”	B&J, 1-11
	19	Plato—The Republic	B&J, 11-21
	21	Plato- Cratylus	B&J, 22-32
	23	Aristotle	B&J, 33-46
	26	Aristotle	B&J, 33-46
	28	Longinus	B&J, 46-49
	30	The “Modern” Period—Some Characteristics	B&J, 49-65
February	2	The “Modern” Period—Again	B&J, 49-65
	4	Burke—The “Sublime” and the Beautiful	B&J, 66-75
	6	Hume—On Taste	B&J, 75-83
	9	Kant- Critique of Judgment	B&J, 84-90
	11	Kant—More on Aesthetics	B&J, 84-90
	13	Hegel on Aesthetics	B&J, 90-96
	16	Schopenhauer	B&J, 97-102
	18	Nietzsche—Art, Will, and Power	B&J, 102-106
	20	Nietzsche—Further Thoughts	B&J, 102-106
	23	MID-TERM EXAMINATION	
	25	The Analytic Approach to Aesthetics	B&J, 108-120

	27	NO CLASS; WILLIS LECTURE	
March	1	Point of View—Beardsley	B&J, 120-130
	3	Dickie—The Myth of Aesthetic	B&J, 130-140
	5	The Artworld	B&J, 140-161
	8-12	SPRING BREAK	
	15	The Work of Art	B&J, 161-178
	17	PAPER #1 DUE Expression and Emotion	B&J, 178-189
	19	Contemporary Aesthetics—Myths of Modernism	B&J, 192-195
	22	“Avant-Garde”	B&J 195-207
	24	From Work to Text	B&J, 207-212
	26	Architecture and the Aesthetic	B&J, 212-218
	29	Postmodernism—Some Assumptions	B&J, 218-222
	31	Foucault—“Ceci n’est pas une pipe”	B&J, 223-229
April	2	Postmodernism and Visual Arts	B&J, 239-251
	5	Critique and Deconstruction	B&J, 251-256
	7	Heidegger	B&J, 257-263
	9	NO CLASS; GOOD FRIDAY	
	12	Derrida	B&J, 268-278
	14	Walter Benjamin	B&J, 282-290
	16	Adorno and Aesthetic Theory	B&J, 290-293
	19	Feminist and Marxist Theory	B&J, 301-309
	21	Francois Lyotard	B&J, 312-337

