

PHRA 4321 PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS I

Anselm Ramelow, O.P.
Fall 2019
TH 12:40-3:30pm
DSPT class room TBD
3 units

Office Hours:

By appointment; I can be reached under (415) 567 7824 (St. Dominic's Parish, please ask for Fr. Anselm) or aramelow@dspt.edu.

I am also generally available after class.

Course description:

Aesthetics has become a major field of philosophical investigation since the 18th century, particularly since Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. This class will, however, try to integrate these insights with older metaphysical traditions of talking about art and beauty.

Aesthetics does not only explore the important question of value judgments in aesthetics. It also leads philosophy into the investigation of very concrete phenomena and problems: the structure of the human mind and the concrete materials of art and music, but also the society and its problems that are reflected therein.

Nevertheless, philosophy and the arts find it difficult to talk to each other. This class will try to bridge the gap. The first part will focus on the philosophy of beauty in general. The following semester (Spring 2020) will explore the concrete fields of architecture, painting, music and literature. *Philosophical Aesthetics I is a prerequisite for the class in spring 2020.*

The format of the class is a seminar; attendance and participation in the discussion is therefore important. Intended audience: MDiv, MA/MTS, PhD/ThD.

As an outcome, the student will have gained an understanding of the development of philosophical aesthetics and will be able to relate various thinkers and their positions. The student will have been exposed to the vast implications of this field of thought and gained insight into many fruitful applications of the questions of philosophical aesthetics. A further outcome for the student should be the ability to articulate him-/herself reflectively about art, music and other areas of aesthetics, be it orally or in research and writing.

Evaluation is based on:

- 1) **Class participation and contribution to the discussions.**
- 2) Taking turns in **preparing texts** that are to be discussed in class and possibly by a presentation on the paper research.

1) and 2) include an evaluation of the following DSPT [Institutional Goals](#):

B.1 Collaborative Leadership:¹

based on class participation and work on paper proposal
your contribution to the common good of the class:

¹ For some rubrics of assessing for the [Institutional Goals](#), please refer to [the DSPT website](#).

- class preparation
oral participation as appropriate
- A.2 **Intellectual Humility:**
listening to your peers in class
- 3) a 15-20pp **research paper** (75% of grade)²
This includes an evaluation of these DSPT [Institutional Goals](#):
- A.1 **Integrative Thinking** (as explained in the paper guidelines)
- A.2 **Intellectual Humility:**
Every academic work includes listening to the scholarly community; this is demonstrated in your research and the use of your sources (books and journal articles) in the research paper.
- A.3 **Self-Direction**
Finding your own paper topic will demonstrate this ability.
- B.1 **Collaborative dimension**
Integrating feedback on your paper proposal.

Students will take turns in the **class preparation**: the format will be a *three sentence summary* of the main point the text is trying to make. These three sentences should be printed out and distributed to the other students at the beginning of class. This will not only help us to focus our discussion, it should also be a good exercise in trying to grasp the issue at hand. Further details of the text will be developed from there in the session. An additional expectation is that you give at least one **example** (more is not always better) to illustrate the author's theory/issue (we will have a "smart" classroom). This can be prepared in consultation with me (long literary examples or long pieces of music are less practical; poems or images are always easiest). I will often have examples on my own as well.

The **research paper** can consist in a comparison of two authors on a particular topic of aesthetics. It could be also the investigation into a particular problem of aesthetics, with the use of relevant authors and resources. It can also be (and this is more difficult) a case-study of a specific work of art, music or literature, provided it includes research on this work, and the application of one or more of the theories that are studied during the semester.

For this purpose, I ask you to give me a **paper proposal** by TH 10/31. This proposal should consist of a short paragraph, describing the topic of your choice, and a **bibliography**. The bibliography is most important. Please make your bibliography *as specific as possible*. Do not quote general handbooks or the textbooks of the class. As one possible research tool I recommend the "[philosopher's index](#)" that is available on the GTU library website. But for this field there are obviously many more resources, partly even outside of philosophy (e.g. art history).

The **dead line** for the **paper** is **TH 12/12**

Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance and participation will impact the grade.

I would like you to forgo the use of laptops during the class sessions.

² Please refer to the attached **paper guidelines** and the [Research Readiness Paper Review Form](#).

Bibliography

Required and available at the GTU bookstore:

Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Anthology (Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies); by Richard Kearney (Editor), David Rasmussen (Editor)

ISBN-13: 978-0631216100; paperback,

list price: 53.13\$ (with many cheap used copies available)

Some of these texts will also be used in the second semester; especially those on literature (e.g. Sartre, Lukács, Ricoeur, Barthes).

There will **reader** available at **Vick Copy** (1879 Euclid, corner of Hearst and Euclid) at the beginning of the semester.

For additional **background information** please consult:

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards

(New York: Macmillan [1967])

And on the **internet**:

[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

Class Schedule

The class schedule is subject to revision. The page numbers of the Reader might also change.

| | |
|----------|---|
| TH 9/5 | <u>Introduction: problems, issues, examples</u> |
| TH 9/12 | <u>Plato, Plotinus</u> Reader: p. 3-14 (<i>Republic</i>), 51-58 (<i>Symposium</i>), 59-68 (Plotinus, Augustine) recommended: p. 15-50 (from <i>Ion</i> and <i>Hippias Major</i>) |
| TH 9/19 | <u>Aristotle, Aquinas and Thomism</u> (Maritain, Gilson) ³ Reader: p. 69-126, 205-219 |
| TH 9/26 | <u>Thomism</u> <i>continued</i> |
| TH 10/3 | <u>Hume, Kant</u> Reader: p. 127-140 Kearney/Rasmussen p. 3-24 helpful for further information: http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/phil%20of%20art/hume_and_kant.htm |
| TH 10/10 | <u>Kant, Schiller</u> Kearney/Rasmussen p. 24-45 |

³ Helpful on the transcendentals: L. Feingold: <http://www.hebrewcatholic.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/13.05-Transcendental-Properties-of-Being-pdf.pdf>

- TH 10/17 Schelling and Hegel, (Croce)
 Kearney/Rasmussen p. 127-138 and 99-126, (271-275)
 Reader: p. 141-143 (“Oldest System Program” et al.)
- TH 10/24 **Reading Week**
- TH 10/31 Schopenhauer and Nietzsche
 Kearney/Rasmussen p. 46-98 and 143-160
 Reader: p. 144-160
 paper proposal due
- TH 11/7 Heidegger and Gadamer
 Kearney/Rasmussen p. 182-211 and 321-339
- TH 11/14 Freud and Wittgenstein
 Kearney/Rasmussen: p. 216-221, 212-215
- TH 11/21 Marxism and Frankfurt School: Benjamin, Adorno [and Marcuse]
 Kearney/Rasmussen: p. 166-181, 242-254, [235-242]
- I will have to travel to the ACPA Conference that week*
 we will need to find another day to meet.
 Wednesday Nov 20 might be a possibility;
 we will discuss this in the first session
- TH 11/28 **Thanksgiving, no class**
- TH 12/5 Evolutionary Aesthetics
 Robert Spaemann: *What does it mean to say that ‘Art imitates nature’?*
 Reader: p. 161-182 (Spaemann and Stanciu)
 and p. 220-241 (Grammer/Voland, Thornhill)
- TH 12/12 Analytical Philosophy
 Marga Vega: *The Ontology of Art: An Anthropological Perspective*
 Reader: p. 183-204
 paper due; evaluations

Paper Guidelines

The topic of your paper can be a comparison of two philosophers on a given issue. There are many other possibilities, although I discourage papers that are merely descriptive of one philosopher's thought. I would like you to integrate two thinkers or a conversation around an issue across the ages. I do encourage you to use topics of your own interest or background. There are many graduate student conferences now; you might want to write a paper with an eye to presenting it in such a venue. An increasing number of students have done so successfully. The topic is, however, subject to approval. You can talk to me before or after your proposal.

The paper is a **research paper (15-20 pages, 12pt, double space)**. Hence I expect you to research and use secondary literature. This is to be documented in the use of footnotes (**not endnotes!**) and in a **bibliography**.

The **bibliography** is most important. Please make your bibliography *as specific as possible*. I would like to see at least **three pertinent journal articles** in your bibliography; this is more important than generic books. As a help: please use the "[philosopher's index](#)" at the [GTU library](#), although this might only provide you with a starting point. Topics without pertinent literature are not viable; if it requires extensive research on primary texts, you should leave it for your dissertation.

To avoid some common pitfalls: please **focus on your topic**. There is no need for biographical introductions on philosophers. (Biographical details can, of course, be brought in, if they explain some subject matter.)

Please avoid flowery or cryptic **language**. Be as sober as possible. Building literary smoke screens will not make your paper appear more profound, but only less intelligible. Focus on making arguments and positions clear.

Do some **proofreading**. If English is your second language, it can be a good idea to ask someone else to help you. Please do write complete sentences that have a grammatical structure. (Unfortunately that does not always seem to be self-understood.) Shorter sentences can make that easier. Grammatical correctness is more important than political correctness (e.g. do not use "they" as a singular).

Subdividing it into chapters (with headlines) can help the structure of your paper. It will help the clarity of your own thought process – as well as that of the reader. Please use page numbers.

Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade.

Proposal

The proposal is due the class after reading week. It consists in 2 or 3 sentences, stating your topic, plus a pertinent bibliography. (Please do not include the textbooks of the class.) This exercise is meant to help you to clarify your topic and focus your bibliography; after that, the paper should come easy. It is also a good exercise for a future thesis proposal. The topic is subject to approval.