

## Philosophy 3162 – Aesthetics: Philosophy of the Arts

**Instructor:** Dr. Chris Venner  
**Location:** 2020 K Street Room 8  
**E-mail:** cvenner@gwu.edu  
**Office:** Phillips Hall 510B

**Course Number:** 3162-10  
**Time:** MW 4:45-6pm  
**Phone:**  
**Office Hours:** W 3-4pm, Th 2-3pm

### Course Description:

The goal of this course is to give students an historical overview of the Western aesthetics tradition. We begin with Plato and Aristotle, who theorized art as an imitation of an independently existing reality. We then move to the German Idealist tradition, including Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, all of whom theorized art as the by-product of particular cognitive processing strategies. Finally, we survey the contemporary period, focusing on movements that put forward concrete methodologies for analyzing works of art: phenomenology, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and structuralism.

Class time will be divided between lecture and discussion.

### Grading:

Individual Assignments = 40 points (5 \* 8 points each)

- You must submit your assignments in-person at the beginning of class on the day we discuss that reading.
- There are six (6) individual assignments due this semester. I will drop your lowest individual assignment grade.

Semester Paper = 50 points

Participation = 10 points

### Books on Order:

Kant, *Critique of Judgment*

Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*

Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*

Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*

**NOTE:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus during the course of the semester.

## Schedule of Classes

- 8/25: Introduction to Course

### Ancient Philosophy

- 8/27: Plato, [Republic, Book 10](#)
  - stop at discussion of immortality of the soul.
- 9/1: **No class – Labor Day!**
- 9/3: Plato, [Ion](#)
- 9/8: Aristotle, [Poetics](#)
  - stop after section XVIII

### Modern Philosophy

- 9/10: Kant, “Analytic of the Beautiful,” in *Critique of Judgment* § 1-22, pp. 43-95
- 9/15: Kant, “Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments,” in *Critique of Judgment* § 46-54, pp. 174-207
- 9/17: Kant, “Analytic of the Sublime,” in *Critique of Judgment* § 23-29, pp. 97-140
- 9/22: Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, chapters I-V, pp. 3-97 [skim]
- 9/24: Schopenhauer, *World As Will and Representation*, § 30-44, pp. 169-220 [skim]

### Contemporary Theory:

#### *Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Deconstruction*

- 9/29: Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” .pdf file
- 10/1: Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?” .pdf file
- 10/6: Merleau-Ponty, .pdf file
- 10/8: hermeneutics reading TBD
- 10/13: deconstruction reading TBD
  - **stage 1 of semester paper due**

#### *Marxism and Postmodernism*

- 10/15: Lukacs, “Ideal of the Harmonious Man in Bourgeois Aesthetics,” .pdf file
- 10/20: Benjamin, [“Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”](#)
- 10/22: Deleuze and Guattari, [“1440: The Smooth and the Striated”](#)

#### *Psychoanalysis*

- 10/27: Freud, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” .pdf file
- 10/29: Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” .pdf file
- 11/3: Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, read Chapters 1, 2, and 5

#### *Formalism, Structuralism, and Post-Structuralism*

- 11/5: Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, .pdf file
- 11/10: **stage 2 of semester paper due in class**
- 11/12: Levi-Strauss, [“Structural Study of Myth”](#)
- 11/17: Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” .pdf file
- 11/19: Spicer, “Renaissance Elbow,” handout
- 11/24: **stage 3 of semester paper due and in-class peer-review workshop**

- 11/26: **No class – Thanksgiving holiday!**
- 12/2: reading TBD
- 12/4: **stage 4 of semester paper due and class evaluation**

**Final Draft of Semester Paper Due!**

- **Please note:** you must turn in the final draft of the semester paper **in-person** in my office by the end of the designated final exam time – you may not email it to me, or put it under my office door, or leave it in my department mailbox.