

PHI 3800 U02: Aesthetics – Fall 2020 Philosophy

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Scarbrough

Class: Wednesdays 2-4:45

Location: <https://fiu.zoom.us/my/escarbro>

Office Hours: T/Th 4-5 W 5-6, Zoom

Email: escarbro@fiu.edu

Web Site: <http://myweb.fiu.edu/escarbro>

Course Description:

This class is an introduction to aesthetic theory. While we will spend a considerable amount of time discussing paintings and other objects you would see at a museum, we will also discuss the aesthetics of nature and human beauty. In an experiment, the first half of this course will be core literature (much historical) in aesthetics. The second half of the course will be “choose your own adventure.” After our requisite background, students will get to choose between a variety of contemporary topics in aesthetics.

The first half (or 60%) of the class will ask the following ‘core’ questions:

- I. **Beauty:** What is beauty? Is beauty objective reality, or is it merely "in the eye of the beholder" -- i.e. a subjective psychological response that reveals nothing about the real world?
- II. **Art:** What is art? How do we distinguish an art object from other artifacts? What role does/should art play in society? Who should get to choose public art? Why do fakes and forgeries bother us so much?
- III. **Nature:** Is our aesthetic experience of nature different in kind than our experience of art? Do we do something (morally/aesthetically) inappropriate if we view nature the way we view a beautiful landscape painting? Can aesthetic arguments be made to protect nature? What is the difference between beauty and the sublime in nature?
- IV. **Human Beauty:** When we say a person is beautiful, what do we mean? Physical beauty? A beautiful soul? How is our perception of human beauty shaped by our culture? How does gender, race, and sexual orientation inform our concept of human beauty? Is our concept of beauty historically contingent or evolutionarily based?

Other topics (you will have a choice between):

- **Jokes:** How does humor work? Is it an appropriate object of aesthetic attention? Are any jokes “off limits?” How do racists jokes function?
- **Street Art:** Are the Wynwood Walls street-art? What makes an artwork count as “street art”? Does street art have to be illegally produced? Can street art be placed into a museum? Can a street artist sell-out?

- **Monuments:** Who should choose public monuments – and what should they represent? When they valorize slave owners and colonizers, should we take them down? What should we do with the statues once they are removed?
- **Fakes and Forgeries:** If a painting is a ‘fake’ (say, a fake Picasso), does it make it aesthetically inferior? Why or why not? If art was cheap and there was no art market, would we care if a painting was a forgery?
- **Architecture:** How ought we appreciate buildings? Should form follow function or function follow form? Is an aesthetically beautiful building a necessarily comfortable building? How is architecture used to make political statements?
- **Music:** What counts as a musical work of art? (Ontology of music). Why does music move us to tears – where does music get its expressive force? What counts as authenticity in music?
- **Dance:** What counts as a dance-work? How can dance move us –especially abstract or modern dances (non-narrative art)?
- **Video games:** Are video games a waste of time? How does the participatory nature of video games make them a uniquely powerful art experience?
- **Magic:** There is really only one article on magic – but doesn’t it sound like a fun topic?
- **Gardens:** Gardens are part natural, and part man made – as such our appreciation of them is hybrid (like ruins). How ought we appreciate gardens? How do different types of gardens (Japanese, English) engender different types of appreciation?
- **Disgust:** So often course in aesthetics focus on the pleasant aesthetic experience (like beauty and pleasing style) but disgust is also an aesthetic reaction. Articles in disgust often focus on disgusting food, disgusting images, and disgusting people.
- **Rebuilding Destroyed Works of Art:** Issues in reconstruction are tricky. What are we trying to preserve when we conserve works of art? Should we always aim at reconstruction or should we allow some works of art to remain in a destroyed or partially destroyed state?
- **Plastic Surgery:** What are the aesthetics of plastic surgery? Is getting cosmetic surgery morally wrong (reinforcing pernicious beauty norms)? What about gender confirmation surgery?
- **Black Aesthetics:** So much of Western aesthetics focuses on the Eurocentric tradition. There is an emerging field of study in Black aesthetics – focusing on African-American art and African-American experience.
- **Environmental Aesthetics:** Jumping off from our unit in nature aesthetics, can we use aesthetic arguments to buttress claims in environmental ethics? What is the relationship between the two?
- **Aesthetics of Everyday Life:** A new field in aesthetics has emerged: the aesthetics of everyday life. Object of everyday attention are foregrounded like: the weather, junkyards, decorating your room, etc.
- **Can porn be art?** What is it about pornography that excludes it from art hood status? Why can’t pornographic pictures and movies be art?

- **Can something immoral be beautiful?** Some of you might think this is a version of the above topic (porn) – but the literature is separate. Here we ask if a work of art that glorifies something evil (like genocide) can still be beautiful. Debates in immoralism, moralism, and autonomism will be explored.
- **Cultural Appropriation:** Is cultural appropriation ever permissible? Can cultural appropriation yield good art? Contemporary musicians explored.
- **Food:** Is food art? What counts as culinary authenticity? When is food just food and when is it a work of art?
- **Personal Style:** What makes someone have style – and others lack it? Should we aim for aesthetic consistency in one's life?
- Why do we enjoy **horror movies** when they are disgusting and scare us! (Paradox of Horror)

3 Learning Objectives:

Your skills will be developed and tested in three ways:

(1) **Reading Comprehension:** involves close reading all the assigned texts;

(2) **Philosophical Writing:** involves completing a variety of written assignments designed to teach you how good philosophical writing differs from other familiar types of writing;

(3) **Class Discussion:** involves actively, respectfully engaging with your peers and instructor about philosophically complex, abstract theories that have implications for how we should make choices and live our lives.

Success in this course requires you to prepare yourself for class discussion by reading critically, to defend your own views with reasons and arguments, and to give a good faith effort to develop your philosophical skills, both verbally and in writing.

Aesthetics Specific Learning Objective: It is the aim of this class to equip the student with the tools necessary to make informed and intelligent judgments about art and culture.

Required Texts: All text will be available to via PDF on CANVAS or web-link.

Evaluation Criteria: Late work will be penalized at -1 point a day (or part of a day) unless you have made prior arrangements with me. You may not make up exams, in-class presentation or participation grades without prior consent of instructor or documented illness/emergency. In cases of *documented* illness or emergency, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

100 points possible in the course

Attendance and Participation 10 points: Participation is key in this course and you need to be in class to participate. I will take attendance during our Zoom sessions, however **you are not being graded on just showing up**. You are being graded on your contributions to our virtual classroom. Participation includes (but is not limited to): asking questions (via Video, Audio, or Chat), providing your opinion (via Video, Audio, or Chat), coming to Office Hours to chat about an article, being an active participant in group work (don't be a Mr. Bare-minimum and let others do the work for you – it's really obvious to me when that happens). Participation isn't just individualistic. I expect you to be active participants in your group work (which will comprise a significant portion of our class). Expect to be present for our entire class period and try your best to be in a room free of distractions – tell your parents/flat mates that you are in class and cannot be disturbed.¹

Presentation on a Reading 7 points: You will be required to be a discussion leader for one of the topics assigned in this course. You should come prepared with questions to ask your fellow students, and prepared with some examples of artworks / aesthetic experiences to relate to your assigned article. This will require you to document your artworks/ aesthetic experiences in a powerpoint / prezi /video etc. that you can share with the class. Detailed instructions to be given in class. You will sign up for presentations starting WEEK 2.

Team/Group Projects 15 points total (5 points each): There will be three “team” projects during the course of the class. You will be graded individually for your contribution to the project for the first two projects. The third project will be graded on a team effort. Groups will be assigned and you will have a different group for each of the three assignments. Each project is worth 5 points.

Weekly Journal Questions and Reflections 35 points:
You will be required to write in your on-line journal (on CANVAS). Each journal entry must contain two elements:
(1) A brief summary of the argument in one of the assigned articles. Minimum word count: 400 words. (4 pts)

¹ It is impermissible to be both in class and driving. If I suspect you are driving while in class, I will kick you out of our zoom classroom and mark you absent for the day. Distracted driving is dangerous and I refuse to be complicit in a potentially fatal accident.

(2) Two questions for discussion about the text. (1 pt)

Journal entries are turned in on CANVAS by the night before class (11:59 pm) and **cannot be handed in late without penalty (-1 per day)**. These are designed to encourage class participation and are designed to help you write your papers. You only have to complete 7 **journal entries** to receive full credit. There are a total of 13 opportunities to hand in journals (so you must complete 7/13). You may complete **one extra journal for up to 5 extra credit points**.

Final Paper / Final Project 33 points

-Final Paper Project Proposal 5 points: You will be required to write a 1 page, double spaced, final paper project proposal. This proposal should include what text(s) you plan to discuss (and a brief literature review), why you think this topic is important, and your thesis statement. You will have to present this project proposal in class.

-Final Paper Outlines and Peer Review 5 points: You will have to hand in an outline of your final paper on Nov 25th (Wednesday before Thanksgiving). If you want feedback from me on your outline, you must make an appointment with me in office hours in weeks 13 & 14. You will receive 3 points for a full outline, and 2 points for providing a peer review for a fellow student.

- Final Paper 20 points: There will be one assigned final paper. This paper should be 8-15 pages in length, typed and double-spaced and turned in 11:59 pm on our “final” day. It will take the form of a critical examination of a topic you have proposed in your project proposal. You must demonstrate not only an understanding of the literature, but also include a critical appraisal as well. More information about the format of these papers and outlines will be given in class

-Final Paper Presentation 3 points: On the day of our final exam you will be expected to give a 1-2 minute “elevator pitch” of your final paper. More details will be given in class.

Grading Scale: A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 63-66%, D- = 60-62%, E = 59% and below

Remote Class Etiquette:

This class will be held on Zoom and as such there are some etiquette rules I hope you will follow. I expect you not to disrupt me, or other students, during class. This is true for in person classes as well as Zoom classes. Muting your mic during lecture should be your default - especially if there are loud noises in your environment. Do not hold side-conversations while in class (this might be hard for some of you living with family but try to find a quiet place for class, one away from familial obligations). Do not attend class while driving. If I suspect you are in your car while in class, I will remove you from the class session. It is not safe to take class and drive. Please do not bring your phone / tablet / computer into the bathroom with you. If you need to excuse yourself to use the restroom, mute your mic and camera and return to class after you are done.5 Additionally, I expect you to treat other students (and their opinions) with respect. *This includes not taking photos (screen shots) or videos of me or your fellow students without permission. I will always let you know before recording our class sessions.*

Please treat our Zoom session as if you were in class. Try to minimize outside distractions (video games, texting, talking with friends). Remote learning requires more concentration (not less) and it is (partially) up to you to set up the conditions for your success. Set up a workstation away from family / roommates. Ask them not to interrupt you while you are in class. They want you to succeed in college – let them know the way they can help you is by letting you have some space to work.

Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, and unauthorized collaboration with other students on assignments. *Academic dishonesty disadvantages honest students and is clearly unfair to hardworking students. Instructors have a duty, therefore, to protect honest students, and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by dishonest students.* For more information, see FIU's Academic Misconduct policy (Section 2.44). There are serious consequences for academic misconduct, including suspension and expulsion from the university. **All students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Academic Misconduct and receive a "0" on their assignment.**

**Commitment to
Disability Access:**

It is my moral and legal obligation to provide students with disabilities accommodations to help them succeed in my classroom. I take this responsibility seriously. You need not disclose to me your disability, but I can work with you to provide accommodations to help you succeed. You may also choose to work with the Disability Resource Center. The Disability Resource Center collaborates with faculty to provide inclusive learning environments. More information may be found at the DRC's website: drc.fiu.edu.



READING SCHEDULE

YOUR READING SCHEDULE MAY BE FOUND IN OUR CANVAS COURSE. I HAVE MADE EACH WEEK OF THE COURSE A "MODULE." SO WEEK 1 OF THE COURSE CORRESPONDS TO "MODULE 1" IN CANVAS. THESE MODULES WILL CONTAIN INFORMATION ON THE READINGS AND WHAT ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE THAT WEEK.

WEEK	TOPIC	READINGS (& Important Events)
Week 1: Aug 26th	Introduction to aesthetics	-No Assigned Pre-Reading (Video introduction due Friday)
Week 2: Sept 2nd	Beauty -Plato	-Nehamas "A Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art" (PDF) (Assign first group projects) (Sign up for class presentations)
Week 3: Sept 9th	Beauty - Kant	-Kant selections from <i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (found here)
Week 4: Sept 16	What makes good art – Tolstoy and Hume	-Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (here) -Tolstoy, "What is Art" selections (PDF)
Week 5: Sept 23	Ontology of Art – Danto and Weitz	-Danto, Artworld (PDF) -Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics" (PDF)
Week 6: Sept 30	The Sublime	-Burke, "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" selections (here) - Kant selections from <i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (found here) (First group projects due Friday)
Week 7: Oct 7	Natural Beauty	-Allen Carlson, "Aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment" (PDF) -Noel Carroll, "On being moved by nature" (PDF) (Second groups assigned)
Week 8: Oct 14	Bodily Beauty	I. A.W. Eaton, "Bodily Taste and Fat Oppression" (PDF)

		2 Sheila Lintott and Sherri Irvin, <i>“Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects: A Feminist Reclamation of Sexiness”</i> (PDF)
Week 9: Oct 21	Free Topic #1 Music	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scruton “The Decline of Musical Culture” 2. Gracyk “How I stopped worrying and learned to Love Led Zeppelin” 3. Taylor “Make it Funky”
Week 10: Oct 28	Free Topic #2 Jokes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ted Cohen, “On Jokes” 2. Anderson “Racist Jokes” 3. UNMUTE podcast on slurs here
Week 11: Nov 4	Free Topic #3 Black Aesthetics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul Taylor “Black Aesthetics” 2. Michael Kelly “Black Aesthetics and Relative Autonomy” here <p>(Second group projects due Friday) (Third groups assigned)</p>
Week 12: Nov 11	No school- Veteran’s Day	(Paper Proposals due Friday)
Week 13: Nov 18	Free Topic #4 Video Games	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jon Robson & Aaron Meskin “Video Games as Self-Involving Interactive Fictions” (JAAC) 2. Thi Nguyen “Agency as Art” here 3. (extra) Stephanie Patridge “Pornography, Ethics, and Video Games” (2013) 4. (extra) Christopher Bartel, “Why Video Game Violence Isn’t Innocent” here
Week 14: Nov 25	Paper Workshops / Food	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shen-yi Liao “Bittersweet Food” here 2. Matt Strohl “On Culinary Authenticity” (PDF) 3. (extra) “Who Owns Southern Food?” here 4. My brief video on whether food can be art here <p>(Final paper outline due in class)</p>
Week 15: Dec 2nd	Free Topic #5 Style	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ted Cohen “Consistency in one’s personal style” 2. Nick Riggle “Personal style and artistic style” <p>(Final group projects due Friday)</p>
FINALS WEEK	Papers Due / Class Presentations	<p>Class presentation during our assigned final time. Final paper due 11:59 pm day of our final.</p>



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Counseling and Psychological Services,

<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/wellness/counseling-and-psychological-services/>

Open Monday-Tues 8-6:30 and Weds-Fri 8-5pm; Same-day consultations Mon-Thurs 10-3 and Friday 11-3. If you are experiencing stress, depression, grief, or trauma, please take advantage of the counseling assistance at FIU.



Student Food Pantry, DM 166 (second location at BBC; see website)

<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-food-pantry>
Open Monday 12-3pm; Tues. 2-5:30pm; Weds. & Thurs. 2-5pm