

# PH9F7-30 Topics in Philosophy and the Arts

**20/21**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Eileen John

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

PH9F7 Topics in Philosophy and the Arts

### Module aims

This module introduces students to some of the methodological issues raised by approaching art philosophically. What does it mean to approach art philosophically or to undertake the philosophy of a particular art form? How might this differ from doing the theory or criticism of art or of a particular art? Does the philosophy of painting, or film or literature share a set of common questions and concerns, grounded in philosophy, or does philosophy of painting have more in common with theory and criticism of painting than it does with the philosophy of film? Such foundational questions will set the stage for addressing more specific problems in philosophy of art and aesthetics and the theory and philosophy of particular art forms. As such, the module is intended to have the flexibility to combine study of broad theoretical questions with attention to specific theorists, artists, works and events. The goal is to keep both methodological and substantive concerns in view: what kinds of activities, skills, conventions, institutions, historical circumstances, conceptual frameworks, motivations and values are relevant to the making, experience and social functions of art? What resources, perspectives and questions are helpful to

theorists aiming to understand artistic practices, achievements, failures, challenges and future possibilities? Here 'the arts' are taken to encompass a wide spectrum of artistic activity, the constitution of which changes historically and is itself contested, but includes literature, cinema, music, dance and other performance arts, in addition to the visual arts, among others. The module will engage students with philosophically reflective work that is informed or triggered by attention to an artistic context or practice. Philosophy will reflect out of its artistic and theoretical objects, but the capacity of those objects to put the assumptions of philosophical methodology into question will also be foregrounded.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

### **A. General substantive and methodological topics, questions and concerns**

1. Art and philosophy
2. Art and knowledge
3. Art and narrative
4. Beauty
5. Aesthetic value and artistic value
6. Aesthetics and empirical science
7. Aesthetics of the everyday

**B. More specific questions of relevance to particular arts, thinkers or debates** Here topics might focus on a question addressed by various theorists, the work of a single theorist, writings on a single work of art or the oeuvre of a particular artist, an artistic movement or genre, or a philosophical movement relevant to the arts.

1. Philosophical study of particular work/oeuvre/artist/genre
2. Photography as an art
3. Stanley Cavell on popular film
4. Arthur Danto's Philosophies of art and art history
5. Literature and ethical and political criticism
6. Responding to art and responding to others

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- By the end of the module, students will understand and reflect on general methodological and substantive issues raised by approaching art philosophically.
- By the end of the module the student should be able to show an advanced conceptual grasp of issues that link different art practices, that explore theoretical problems in relation to specific art forms, and that bring philosophical concerns into dialogue with the arts
- By the end of the module the student should be able to demonstrate advanced expertise in interpreting and analysing complex texts and critiquing their ideas and arguments
- By the end of the module the student should be able to develop and defend their own views

on relevant issues, drawing on autonomously initiated and conducted research.

## **Indicative reading list**

### **A. General substantive and methodological topics, questions and concerns**

#### **Art and philosophy**

- A. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Harvard UP, 1981)  
P. Florence and N. Foster, *Differential Aesthetics: Art Practices, Philosophy and Feminist Understandings* (Ashgate, 2000)  
J. Passmore, 'The Dreariness of Aesthetics', *Mind* 60 (1951)  
J. Margolis, 'Exorcising the Dreariness of Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51:2 (1993)  
R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000)  
M. Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (Columbia UP, 1996)

#### **Beauty**

- P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia UP, 1993)  
A. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (Open Court, 2003)  
A. Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness* (Princeton UP, 2010)  
E. Scarry, *On Beauty and being Just* (Duckworth, 2006)  
J. Rancière, *Aesthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (Verso, 2013)  
R. Scruton, *Beauty: A very short Introduction* (Oxford, 2011)

#### **Aesthetics and empirical science**

- S. Davies, *The Artful Species: Aesthetics, Art, and Evolution* (Oxford UP, 2012)  
F. Moretti, *Distant Reading* (Verso, 2013)  
A. Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain* (Oxford UP, 2007)  
E. Schellekens and P. Goldie, *The Aesthetic Mind* (Oxford UP, 2011)  
A. Shimamura and S. Palmer, eds., *Aesthetic Science: Connecting Minds, Brains, and Experience* (Oxford UP, 2012)

#### **Everyday aesthetics**

- S. Irvin, 'The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008)  
T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Broadview, 2012)  
A. Light and J. Smith, eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Columbia UP, 2005)  
Y. Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford UP, 2008)

### **B. More specific questions of relevance to particular arts, thinkers or debates e.g. 'Bartleby'**

- G. Agamben, 'Bartleby; or, On Contingency', in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford UP, 1999)  
B. Arsić, *Passive Constitutions or 7 ½ Bartleby* (Stanford UP, 2007)  
M. Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (U Nebraska Press, 1995)  
G. Deleuze, 'Bartleby; or, the Formula', in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (U Minnesota Press, 1997)  
J. Hillis Miller, 'Who Is He? Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener"', in *Versions of Pygmalion* (Harvard UP, 1990)  
J. Rancière, 'Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula', in *The Flesh of Words* (Stanford UP,

2004)

#### Photography as an art

- D. Costello, M. Iversen and J. Snyder, eds., *Agency and Autonomism: Photography as Art Since the 1960's*, special issue of *Critical Inquiry* 38:4 (2012)
- D. Costello and D. Lopes, eds., *The Media of Photography*, special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70:1 (2012)
- D. Lopes, *The Four Arts of Photography*, forthcoming, Wiley-Blackwell, 2015
- D. Costello, *On Photography*, forthcoming, Routledge Thinkers in Action series
- S. Walden (ed). *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, Wiley Blackwell, 2008.

#### Cavell on film

- S. Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Harvard UP, 1979)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Harvard UP, 1981)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Contesting Tears: The Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (U Chicago Press, 1996)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Cavell on Film*, ed. W. Rothman (SUNY Press, 2005)
- S. Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary* (Oxford UP, 1994)
- R. Read and J. Goodenough, *Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell* (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2005)
- W. Rothman and M. Keene, *Reading Cavell's The World Viewed* (Wayne State Press, 2000)

#### Literature and ethical and political criticism

- P. Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Fiction* (Cambridge UP, 2013)
- A. Gibson, *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel* (Routledge, 1999)
- J. Landy, *How to Do Things with Fictions* (Oxford UP, 2012)
- M. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice* (Beacon Press, 1997)
- R. Pippin, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (Cambridge UP, 2000)
- R. Posner, 'Against Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature* 21 (1997)
- J. Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* (Polity Press, 2010)

#### Responding to art and responding to others

- W. Booth, *The Company We Keep* (University of California Press, 1988)
- N. Carroll, 'Art, Intention, and Conversation', in *Intention and Interpretation* (Temple UP, 1992)
- P. Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton UP, 1980)
- J. Robinson, 'Style and Personality in the Literary Work', *Philosophical Review* 94:2 (1985)
- N. Ruggle, 'Personal Style and Artistic Style,' forthcoming *Philosophical Quarterly*
- S. Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- R. Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge UP, 1980)
- PF Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (Routledge, 1964)

### **Subject specific skills**

#### Students will:

- develop their ability to understand recent work in philosophy and various art forms
- develop their capacity for criticism, theorising and philosophical analysis.
- develop an advanced capacity for interpretative reading of difficult material
- develop a understanding of the challenges of philosophising about art and what it means to do substantive aesthetics

develop their capacities for writing, independent research and formulating an original project

## Transferable skills

students will:

hone their ability to express themselves clearly and concisely both verbally and in writing

develop of their skills of criticism, interpretation, analysis and argument

begin to cultivate an understanding of the arts as a form of intellectual enquiry

learn to bring the results of one discipline to bear on those of another where these can be quite different

develop their capacities for research and synthesis of difficult material

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (6%)
Private study	282 hours (94%)
Total	300 hours

### Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
7500 word essay	100%	

### Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas

of evaluation and individual content.

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## **Availability**

## **Courses**

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts

This module is Option list A for:

- TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 1 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 2 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts