

# PH9F7-20 Topics in Philosophy and the Arts

**23/24**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Eileen John

**Credit value**

20

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

PH9F7 Topics in Philosophy and the Arts

### Module aims

This module introduces students to substantive and methodological issues in philosophical engagement with art. Can art be defined, and does philosophy of art need such a definition? How basic is art to human life? How do theories of art and concrete artistic practices relate? How should they relate? Does artistic value encompass cognitive or ethical value? Such foundational questions will set the stage for considering questions about specific artworks, artists and art forms. The module combines study of broad theoretical questions with attention to specific artists, works, genres, art-forms and contexts of artistic activity. The goal is to keep methodological and foundational concerns in view as we consider the significance of, and the questions raised by, specific figures, works and practices. 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 the visual arts, literature, cinema, music, dance and other performance arts.

## 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. Sample theoretical issues

1. Art and philosophy
2. Defining art
3. Art and cognitive value
4. Non-Western art and cultural appropriation
5. Aesthetic value and artistic value
6. Art and ethics
7. Aesthetics and empirical research
8. Aesthetics of the everyday

### B. Sample questions of relevance to particular art forms, artworks, thinkers, themes or debates

1. Philosophical study of a particular work/oeuvre/artist/genre
2. Photography as an art
3. Conceptual art and aesthetics
4. Arthur Danto's Philosophies of art and art history
5. Fiction and the representation of race
6. Politics and participatory art
7. Poetry and philosophical thinking
8. Food as art

## Learning outcomes

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

- Understand and reflect on general methodological and substantive issues raised by approaching art philosophically.
- 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
- Demonstrate advanced expertise in interpreting and analysing complex texts and critiquing their ideas and arguments
- 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)

#### Non-Western Art and Cultural Appropriation

D. Dutton, "But they Don't have our Concept of Art" in Alex Neil & Aaron Ridley (eds), *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, Third Ed, Routledge, 2008  
L. Shiner, *Western and Non-Western Concepts of Art* also in Neil & Ridley, *Arguing About Art*  
D. Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution* OUP, 2010  
"Global Theories of the Arts and the Aesthetic," special issue of *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65:1 (Winter 2007)  
D. Lopes, "Art in Culture" in *Beyond Art*, OUP, 2014  
K. Higgins, "Refined Emotions in Aesthetic Experience: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," in Richard Shusterman & Adele Tomlin (eds) *Aesthetic Experience* Routledge, 2008.  
T. McEvelley, *Art and Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* McPherson & Co, 1998  
K.A. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Penguin 2006

#### Aesthetics and empirical research

*Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind*, eds. Currie, Kieran, Meskin, and Robson (Oxford UP, 2014)  
E. Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (University of Washington Press, 1995)  
S. Davies, *The Artful Species: Aesthetics, Art, and Evolution* (Oxford UP, 2012)  
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)  
L. Zunshine, *Getting Inside Your Head: What Cognitive Science Can Tell Us about Popular Culture* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2012)

#### Everyday aesthetics

R. Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (Columbia UP, 2002)  
S. Irvin, 'The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008)  
C. Korsmeyer, ed., *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (Berg, 2005)  
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)  
K. Soper, *Post-Growth Living: For an Alternative Hedonism* (Verso, 2020)

B. More specific questions of relevance to particular arts, works, thinkers or debates

#### Melville's 'Bartleby the Scrivener'

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)
- E. John, 'Literature and Disagreement', *Proc of the Aristotelian Society* 114 (2014)
- 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)
- S. Walden (ed). *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, Wiley Blackwell, 2008.
- D. Costello, 'What is Abstraction in Photography?' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 58:4 (Oct 2018) 385-400
- D. Lopes, *The Four Arts of Photography: An Essay in Philosophy*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016
- D. Costello, *On Photography: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Routledge, 2018
- D. Costello and D. Lopes, "Spontaneity and Materiality: What Photography Is in the Photography of James Welling,' *Art History* 42:1 (Feb 2019), 154-176.
- D. Costello 'Photography as a Category of Art,' in Sonia Sedivy (ed.) *Art Representation and Make-Believe: Essays on the Philosophy of Kendall L. Walton*, Routledge, 2021.

#### Fiction and the representation of race

- M. Bloodsworth-Lugo and D. Flory, eds., *Race, Philosophy, and Film* (Routledge, 2015)
- M. Conard, ed., *The Philosophy of Spike Lee* (University of Kentucky, 2011)
- R. Dyer, *White*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2017)
- M. Elam, *The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium* (Stanford, 2011)
- T. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Picador, 1993)
- P. Taylor, *Black Is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016)
- E. Thomas, *The Dark Fantastic : Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* (NYU, 2019)

#### Politics and participatory art - Jeremy Deller, *The Battle of Orgreave*

- J. Deller, *The English Civil War Part II: Personal accounts of the 1984-5 Miner's Strike* (London: Artangel 2001)
- S. Hall 'Jeremy Deller's Political Imaginary' in J. Deller, *Joy in People* (Exhibition Catalogue, London: Hayward Gallery 2012)
- J. Deller, *It is What it is: Conversations about Iraq* (New York: New Museum & Creative Time, 2009-2010)
- M. Figgis, *The Battle of Orgreave* (a documentary about Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*, (London: Art Angel, 2001)
- K. Kitamura, "'Recreating Chaos;'" *Jeremy Deller's The Battle of Orgreave* in Iain McCalman and Paul A. Pickering (eds) *Historical Reenactment: from Realism to the Affective Turn* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

D Beech, "'The Reign of the Workers and Peasants Will Never End:' Politics and Politicisation, Art and the Politics of Political Art, Third Text 16: 4 (2002), 387-398.

C. Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents, Artforum International, 44:6 (Feb 2006), 178-183

C. Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, London: Verso, 2012.

D. Costello, On the Very Idea of a "Political" Work of Art, Journal of Political Philosophy 29:1 (Mar 2021), 25-45

## **Research element**

Summative research essay is a requirement.

## **Interdisciplinary**

The module incorporates multiple disciplines in studying art theories, criticism and historical practices.

## **International**

Artworks and aesthetic theories from non-UK and non-European traditions are studied.

## **Subject specific skills**

Students will:

develop understanding of recent work in philosophy of art and theorising about specific art practices

develop their capacity for critical response, analysis and argument in philosophy of art.

develop an advanced capacity for interpretation of difficult materials, including work reflecting theoretically on artworks and creative practices

develop understanding of the challenges of philosophising about art and what it means to do substantive aesthetics

## **Transferable skills**

Students will:

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

develop their skills of criticism, interpretation, synthesis of complex materials, analysis of ideas and issues, and argument

learn to bring the results of one discipline or practice to bear on those of another, assessing similarities and relevance

develop their capacities for writing, formulating a research project and carrying out independent research

---

## **Study**

## Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (9%)
Private study	182 hours (91%)
Total	200 hours

## Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

---

## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

## Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
<b>Assessment component</b>			
5000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)
<b>Reassessment component is the same</b>			

## Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas of evaluation and individual content.

---

## Availability

## Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7P2 Postgraduate Taught Continental Philosophy

This module is Option list B for:

- TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy
  - Year 1 of V7PM Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V7PM Philosophy

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy