

PH9F7-30 Topics in Philosophy and the Arts

26/27

Department

Philosophy

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Diarmuid Costello

Credit value

30

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. In this module, 'the arts' are taken to encompass a wide spectrum of artistic activity, including the visual arts, literature, cinema, and so on.

The module is broadly split into two parts: before reading week more general issues such as the following will be addressed: Can art be defined, and does philosophy of art need such a definition? How basic is art to human life? Can it be exhaustively explained on evolutionary grounds? Do works of art have cognitive or ethical value, and if so how does this relate to their value as art? What is the relation between individual style, personality and/or character in art, and how, if at all, does this bear on our judgements of art? Does art admit of cross-cultural definition or is its meaning and significance entirely culturally specific? The precise questions will vary from year to year, so this list should be taken as indicative.

After reading week, the module turns to a series of more focused case studies, raising questions arising from specific works, genres or oeuvres,. Concrete attention to the arts and their first order criticism will be central. Questions to be addressed with respect to specific cases may include: what is the nature of creativity in art? Is there such a thing as a universal standard or ideal of beauty? Is art distinct from or part of everyday life? Can meals be an art? How do specific artworks engage with normative notions, such as shame, disgrace, exploitation, stupidity or trust? Can we appeal to genres or kinds like "funk music" without entrenching racial stereotypes? What does it mean to call art "political"? Is art an adequate means to address the ecological crisis? Are photographs best understood as constructions or documents? What implicit designs might a film have on its viewers? and so on.

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.

Part I: foundational questions. Topics, which will vary from year to year, may include:

Defining art
Art in human evolution
Art & knowledge
Art, morality & ethics
Art, style and personality
Cultural appropriation
Expression in art
agency and artistic creation

Part II: case studies. Topics, which will vary from year to year, may include:

Shame and photography
Short stories and rationality
Art and stupidity
Immoralism in art
Artforms and racial stereotypes
Aesthetic/ethical issues in film /video
Food as art
Aesthetics and non-western art
Art and artificial intelligence

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 surrounding the nature of art, as well as theoretical problems relevant to specific art forms.
- 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

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Research element

A summative research essay is a requirement.

Interdisciplinary

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

International

Non-UK and non-European artworks and aesthetic theories are studied on the module.

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 (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.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A6

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
5000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

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 Core for:

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

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7P2 Postgraduate Taught Continental Philosophy
- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy