

## **Aesthetics, Fall 2009; Jeffrey Wattles, instructor**

Philosophy 31060, section 001 (CRN 10024) T/R 12:30 -1:45, Bowman 220

The main goal of the course is to introduce the student to the history and logic of philosophy's ways of thinking about the aesthetics of the fine arts from classical Greece down to the present. We approach these goals through readings, lectures, class discussions, quizzes, and papers that integrate experience with study. One theme this semester will be art as creative response to the actuals and potentials of beauty on all levels, material, intellectual, and spiritual.

Text: (1) Stephen David Ross, ed., *Art and Its Significance*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, State University of New York Press, 1994. ISBN: 0-7914-1852-9.

Evaluation. Evaluation is based on, first, participation (attendance on time, with the reading done, and alert for interaction, 10%). We are a community of inquiry, and our interaction has a life of its own; so you are expected to attend regularly, be on time, have the reading done, and be ready to participate with a qualification: you can miss four classes and still get full credit, but if you fail if you miss eight. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from someone else, to ask the instructor if you still have questions, and to ask the instructor for whatever may have been handed back during your absence. In addition, there are four quizzes (10% each) and two papers (25% and 25%).

Papers must be well written to receive a C or above. For a quick introduction to some of the standards, see <http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/papers.htm>. Writing—a skill that schools sometimes fail to teach—is important for your career, especially when so much communication is mediated by machines. English is a first or second language in many nations, and to use the language well is a service to our world. If I don't fuss about writing, you should *see* what some folks hand in! So I fuss, and I generally get quite decent writing. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the Writing Center (<http://dept.kent.edu/english/WritingCent/writngcenter.htm>). Speaking of communication, the University obliges you to check your kent.edu e-mail (or whatever address may be used on Flashline). If I have messages to send to the whole class, e.g., to change an assignment, or keep in touch in an emergency, I will use those addresses.

My office hours are MWF, 10:55-11:55 and TR 10:40-11:40 (Bowman 320H) and by appointment (330-672-0276; e-mail: [jwattles@kent.edu](mailto:jwattles@kent.edu)).

Syllabus and notes: <http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/esthetic.htm>.

Other notes on Plato, e.g.,: <http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/classes.htm>

### **Schedule of Activities**

I. Tuesday September 1. Introductions: to one another, to the course, to philosophy, to aesthetics, and to the concept of truth.

#### **Classical Greek aesthetics: The reality of beauty**

Thursday. The main focus for today is the short dialogue of Plato (347-427 BCE) titled the *Ion* (pp. 45-55). Is Ion successful because of inspiration, craft, or manipulating his audience—and what are Plato's concepts of these alternatives? Read also on the concept of craft two pages from the Collingwood selection, 192-193. When have you felt most inspired?

II. Tues. 8. This week's reading load is heavy, so consider starting early on the assignment for Thursday. Study *closely* the selection from Plato's *Symposium*. How is our passion for beauty to be understood? What relations are suggested between beauty, truth, and goodness? Why does Plato present stages on the way to the realization of beauty? What peak experiences of beauty can you recall? How do they relate to this list? Read also the web notes on this dialogue:

<http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/sympos.htm> .

Thurs. 10. For today, read from the selection from Plato's *Republic*, pp. 9-32. Socrates challenges art which merely manipulates the emotions. Read a modern version of a similar critique in the text selection by Theodor Adorno. Read the first half (through the diagram of the analogy between the sun and the good) and also the two "arguments"—philosophic reasoning with one or more premises and a conclusion—regarding censorship and the arts: <http://www.personal.kent.edu/~jwattles/republic.htm> .

III. Tues. 15 Finish the selection from the *Republic*. Socrates cherishes art arising from the quest for truth. Read the reference to Plato's example by Arthur Danto, pp. 470-74.

Thurs. 17 Aristotle pp. 66-76. The beauty of tragedy as a matter of proportion, size, and order. **Quiz 1** (30 multiple choice questions that require you to understand and reason).

#### **Modern aesthetics: The role of mind**

IV. Tues. 22 Immanuel Kant (German [actually Prussian: Germany was not a unified nation until 1870] 1724-1804) pp. 95-103. How do our judgments regarding beauty relate to our *cognitive* involvement with truth and our *practical* commitment to goodness? Print out and read the web notes on Kant, reading day by day (from the instructor's notes, not those of Burnham that precede them) what relates to each assignment.

Thurs. 24 Kant, 103-113. How can judgments regarding beauty that are largely grounded in the structure of the human subject a kind of universality and necessity?

V. Tues. 29 Kant, 113-120. In what way is the sublime said to going beyond the beautiful?

Thurs. Oct 1, 120-33: How can artistic beauty symbolize moral regard for all humankind? Read also art critic Clive Bell, pp. 186-90, for an example of formalist aesthetics.

#### **A spiritually integrated aesthetics of nature**

VI. Tues. 6 John Muir (1838-1914) and the beauty of physical harmony (reading to be supplied).

Thurs. 8 **Quiz 2**

#### **Fine art as portraying supreme truth—for its historical age**

VII. Tues. 13 Hegel: a (reading to be supplied).

Thurs. 15 . . . (**Paper 1 due on the experience and concept of beauty.**)

#### **Art as disclosing the world of the work**

VIII. Tues. 20 Martin Heidegger, 254-264. How does the work of art set forth a world? How does the tension (cf. contrast) of earth and world manifest in the work? Do we live in a world dominated by technology? If so, is there any visible path beyond such domination?

Thurs. 22 264-80. What do truth and beauty have to do with the work of art?

### **Art as a paradigm of experience**

IX. Tues. 27 Dewey: the dynamism of an aesthetic experience

Thurs. 29 . . .

### **Virtues of artistic living**

X. Tues. November 3 Aesthetic virtues (reading to be supplied)

Thurs. 5 . . .

### **Psychology and art**

XI. Tues. 10 Carl Jung

Thurs. 12 . . . **Quiz 3**

### **Postmodernism and aesthetics**

XII. 17 Jacques Derrida, 411-420 (with lecture on the other parts of *The Truth in Painting*). Limits to language and to some traditional categories.

19-429 ff. (and following pages) Letter to Peter Eisenman. Ethical challenges to formally attractive architecture.

### **XIII. Paper 2 due on artistic living.**

26 Thanksgiving

### **Analytic aesthetics**

XIV. December 1 Danto

Thurs. Dec 3 . . .

XV. Tues. 8 Goodman

Thurs. 10 . . .

Final Examination, Wednesday, December 16, 12:45-3:00.

Note: KentLink offers online the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and the *British Journal of Aesthetics*.

The official registration deadline for this course is 9/13. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashFast) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline. The last day to withdraw is 11/08.

University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit [www.kent.edu/sas](http://www.kent.edu/sas) for more information on registration procedures).

The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 3342-4-16 in the University Policy Register. For details of the grievance procedure, please see the Departmental Chairperson.