

PHIL I20: PHILOSOPHY OF ART AND PERFORMANCE
INSTRUCTOR: SCOTT MCGEHEE, PHD
CREDIT HOURS: 3
PREREQUISITE: NONE
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The many paradoxes of the modern world, perhaps first clearly articulated by Rousseau, continue to provide a backdrop of all of our social activity: greater personal freedoms incised in a world of greater social regimentation, increased diversity of choice amidst an inexorable drive towards homogenization, increasing production of wealth along with the dramatic growth of poverty, vastly expanded communications providing the tools to increased isolation and so on. These paradoxes often go unnoticed as they appear a natural part of life, but these phenomena had an historical development that in turn profoundly affected individual perception.

Through an exploration of: the development of mass production, the fragmentation and specialization of life and work, the development of the information age, the commodification of culture, the compression of time and space, the disassociation of the body and the aesthetic shifts that have accompanied these developments, this class will philosophically analyze the significance of each. We will think about art - about its nature and its important place in human life. To facilitate this, the course brings together the writings of philosophers and the work of artists from a variety of domains. The goal here is not to intellectualize art but to understand the intelligence that goes into it, to enrich our experiences of art, and to foster our own creative sensibilities. We will consider famous writings on art by thinkers such as: Plato, Aristotle, Schiller, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Breton, Artaud, Eisenstein, Debord, Baudrillard, Foucault and others in relation to important works of literature, theatre, painting, music, architecture, and film.

A philosophical analysis will help the artist situate both the work of art and the actual work of the artist in a broader framework where the role of social mediation between the artist, the work of art and the reception of the work is revealed. Likewise, the potential role of the artist and work of art as social mediation can emerge as a stimulus to the creative impulse itself.

The class format will be based on lectures and seminar style discussions where each student will present a critical summary of at least one of the readings. A portion of the class, when possible, will include a critical examination of the student's own experience in a particular workshop experience and may include: Butoh Dance, Clown Training for Actors or other special workshops or master classes in which students participate.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the class is to provide students with tools, taken from modern philosophical currents, useful in analyzing contemporary cultural shifts and shifts in social perception as influenced by the development of a "modern world system."

OUTCOMES

Each student will acquire a thorough understanding of the works studied in this course, including an ability to evaluate and interpret them utilizing a specialized vocabulary. This course examines works critically, reading literature with an effort to critically apply the analysis to contemporary conditions and personal experiences. Through this approach, students will practice analytical and research skills necessary for acquiring a contextual understanding of the works covered. Beyond gaining a better understanding of the historical and theoretical approach to the topics explored, this course seeks to help each student become more proficient in using his or her analytical and critical skills of thinking and writing and oral presentation.

REQUIRED TEXT

All Students: *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Reading in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. A. Hofstadter, Chicago Univ. Press ISBN-13:978-0226348124

Theatre Students Only: *Comedy*. Andrew Stott, Routledge 2005 ISBN-13: 978-0-415-29933-6

Dance Students Only: Text to be decided or class handouts will be provided.

CORE READINGS

Plato *Excerpts*

Aristotle *Excerpts from Poetics*

G.W.F. Hegel *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*

K. Marx *TBA*

F. Nietzsche *The Birth of Tragedy*

J. Dewey *Art as Experience*

V.N. Volosinov *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*,

M. Bakhtin *Rabelais and His World*,

Guy Debord *The Society of the Spectacle*

J. Baudrillard *The Transparency of Evil and Simulations*

P. Halmos *The Decline of Choral Dance*

A. Hauser *Art and Ideology*

OTHER READING, ESSAYS AND EXCERPTS ***

Walter Benjamin *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction***

The Theatre of Cruelty, Antonin Artaud **

Other readings to be announced

**** Optional/Possible readings**

***** The actual readings will vary based upon semester focus (acting, dance, music)**

MEANS OF EVALUATION

Class will be divided between lectures, seminar discussions and workshops.

Attendance, preparation for in-class discussion, oral presentation, written summaries		50%
One essay of 3 – 5 double-spaced typed pages	(due September 22)	25%
Final paper of 6 – 10 double-spaced typed pages	(due November 30)	25%

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

All dates subject to change.

Date	Topic	Reading/Viewing
9/08	Introduction: object & interpretations Sense Perception; Can we define Art?	Kafka: The Hunger Artist (handout) Halmos: Decline of Coral Dance (handout) Viewing; Google Video: <i>The Century of the Self Part IV</i>
9/10	Art as Ideology	Hauser: Art & Ideology (handout)
9/17	Provocations on Life	Baudrillard: <i>Transparency of Evil</i> (handout)
9/22	Greek Foundations ESSAY DUE	Plato I Selection, Hofstadter 3-77 Aristotle I, Hofstadter 78-138
10/05	Foundations Continued Continuation	
10/08	The Long View	Hegel: <i>Lectures on Aesthetics</i> , Hofstadter 378-445
10/15	Alienation & Art	Marx: Art and Value-Form (handout)
10/26	Continuation	Debord: <i>The Society of the Spectacle</i> (handout) Nietzsche, Hofstadter 496-554
10/29	In the flow	Dewey: <i>Art as Experience</i> , Hofstadter 577-646
11/05	Semiotics & Imagination	Volosinov: <i>Marxism & the Philosophy of Language</i> (handout)
11/10	Laughter & Subversion	Bakhtin: <i>Rabalais</i> (handout)
11/12	Fools, Clowns and Laughter	Stott
11/16	Laughing	Stott
11/30	FINAL ESSAY DUE	