

**University of Guelph**  
**PHIL 3050 Philosophy of Art (Winter 2013)**  
Instructor: Don Dedrick Rm. 329 MacKinnon Bldg.  
Office hours: Tuesday 4-5 & Wednesday 10-11  
[ddedrick@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ddedrick@uoguelph.ca)

## **Course Objectives & Description**

We will address the question "What is art?" We will consider many, often contemporary, examples drawn from painting, music, film, literature, drama, etc., that seem to push the boundaries of our (intuitive) ideas about what art is and is not. Andy Warhol, famously, produced facsimiles of commercial packing cases, and they are considered to be canonical works in the history of western art. Marcel Duchamp exhibited a paint-stained urinal named "Fountain." This "readymade" is owned by many major art institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada. John Cage's musical piece 4'33" is exactly of that length, with no orchestral playing at all (there are, as we shall see, more radical examples). We shall discuss these artworks in relation to some core ideas about art's nature: as imitation/representation, as expression, as of interest because of its form (as opposed to its content), as valuable for the experience it provides, as a sociological institution. No special knowledge of art is required.

### **Texts**

*But is it Art?*, Cynthia Freeland

*Philosophy of Art: A contemporary introduction*, Noel Carroll

Other material available from the webpage for the course (Courslink)

### **Course Evaluation**

\*Quiz/assignments done in class, or with a class component. There will be 10 of these and the best 5 will count (each for 4% = 20% total). Quizzes will take various forms, depending on the material, but they are intended to be done in groups. No quiz is mandatory, please **do not** ask for a replacement quiz if you are away or ill.

\*Midterm test & Take home short essay-style assignment (25% each = 50%)

\*Final Exam (30%)

### **Academic Misconduct, Late Assignments, Student Obligations**

*Late work is not accepted without acceptable documentation.*

*Please see the 8 statements that pertain to your obligations as a student, on the homepage for the course.*

### **Readings/Topics**

(PA) *Philosophy of Art* Noel Carroll.

(BIA) *But is it Art?* Cynthia Freeland

**Week 1** : Introduction to the course. Reading: PA introduction, p.p. 1-17.

### **Section I. Art and imitation/representation.**

Week 2 & 3. Is the purpose of art to imitate/represent reality? Plato and Aristotle--and many others believed this to be the case. We shall look at a variety of different arguments for and against this proposal, some surprisingly contemporary Required Readings: (PA) Chapter 1, (BIA) pp 31-35. Classic Readings from Plato & Aristotle can be obtained from the Courslink website for this course.

## **Section II. Art and Expression**

Week 4 & 5: Art as expression. Is the purpose of art to express ... something, perhaps emotion, perhaps ideas? Required Readings: (PA) Chapter 2, (BIA) Chapter 6. Classic Readings: Tolstoy, R. G. Collingwood, available from CourseLink.

## **Section III. Art and Form**

Week 6 & 7: We will look at a view of art that derives in many respects from Kant. This view is often called “formalism” and it has different versions in different art forms (most notably in the visual arts and the literary arts). Required Readings: (PA) Chapter 3 (BIA) Chapters 1 & 2. Classic Readings: Articles by C. Bell & Excerpt from R. Fry, available from CourseLink. **Midterm in class on Thursday Feb. 28**

## **Section IV. Art and Aesthetic Experience**

Week 8 & 9: Maybe art is about *your* experience, or somebody’s ... Required Readings: (PA) Chapter 4.

## **Section V. Contextual theories of art, and the definition of art.**

Week 10 & 11: Theories as to the nature of art might be essentialist, as with formalism, or contextualist (art understood in relation to some sort of context). This section is devoted to views that are broadly speaking contextualist, e.g. the institutional theory of art (expressed crudely in the series of quotations that begins Korsmeyer’s article: “if it’s in an art gallery, it’s art.”). Required readings: (PA) Chapter 5. (BIA) Chapters 4 & 5. Classic readings: George Dickie was the first to articulate the Institutional Theory, claiming Danto as his inspiration. Another important article is from Korsmeyer. These three important contemporary sources are available from CourseLink.

**Week 12: Summary, exam prep, Take home assignment is due April 2, in class.**