Art, Meaning, and Perception
FND182, Spring 2008
T,Th 12:00 – 1:20
Professor Seeley, LSP 169
Franklin & Marshall College

Office Hours: T/W/Th 10:30-11:45 & by appointment

Course Description:
Art, Meaning, and Perception is an Interdisciplinary Foundations Seminar in philosophy and cognitive science of art. The course focuses on a fundamental question in 20th C philosophy of art: “What is the nature of the relationship between spectator’s aesthetic and interpretive responses to artworks?” In order to evaluate this issue we will look at the influence of contemporary research in philosophy, psychology, and cognitive neuroscience on theories of painting, music, and dance. The goals of the course are to introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science and to investigate the variety of ways researchers in the humanities and the natural sciences can collaborate in the study of human nature.

Course Goals:

• Introduce students to basic philosophical methods & central issues in the philosophy of art.

• Introduce students to contemporary interdisciplinary research in cognitive science on the nature of art and aesthetic experience.

• Investigate the variety of ways researchers in the humanities and natural sciences can collaborate in studies of human nature.

Texts:

• Stephen Davies, Philosophy of Art (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 2006. PA
• eDisk or electronic library resources

* This course does not presuppose any specialized knowledge of philosophy or cognitive science. Unless otherwise specified all readings but those in Davies PA are in the eDisk Districution Folder for the class.
Art, Meaning, and Perception

Requirements:

A. Students will be required to write 4 papers:
   - two 2-3 page response papers (20%)
   - a short paper (6 pages) on an assigned topic due at the midterm (30%)
   - a term paper (6-8 pages) on a topic of their own choice due at the end of the semester (30%).
   - class participation - includes participation in the group installation project (10%)

B. You will be required to attend one musical performance at Barshinger & two dance performances at the Roschel performing Arts Center (see below, “Required External Events”).

C. We will put on short exhibition in the Curriculum Gallery at the Phillips Museum the week of November 12. There will be two components of the exhibition: art & cognitive science.
   - We will produce a series of Sol LeWitt style “location drawings” & “automatic drawings” as a group installation for the artistic component. Each drawing will consist of a set of instructions in a randomly assigned order (class participation grade).
     - Location Drawings (8 x 20 feet): Each location drawing is constructed from a set of 3-10 instructions that define a) the mark to be made & b) the body motion to be used to make that mark. We will draw instructions from a hat and complete the drawings in the gallery during the exhibition. Although the formal structure of each of these works is strictly defined by the instructions their realization is determined by uncoordinated (neither pre-determined nor jointly planned) sets of choices made by the individual participants the productive process. The result is a set of formally identical, but perceptually distinct 8 x 20 foot abstract drawings.
     - Automatic Drawings: Automatic drawings are constructed from a small set of formally identical marks whose orientation and placement on the paper is determined in advance by a sequence generator. Each drawing is constructed from a set of rules for that define a pattern of overlapping marks. The form emerges from the pattern of rules that is pre-determined by the sequence generator.
     - Computer Drawing: If time & technology permits we will program a computer to continuously generate automatic drawings for the duration of the installation.

D. I will divide the class up into 4 groups. Your responsibility as a group will be to produce a conference poster describing the research in one of the scientific papers we have covered in class and explain how this research ties into our discussion of art, perception and meaning. You should be able to find examples of conference posters in the hallways of the Psychology and Biology Departments in the LSP building (10%)

E. Lastly, I invite students to volunteer to participate in a short psychology of art experiment in the Perception Lab, “Effects of Interpretation of Energetic & Emotional Costs in Picture Perception.” Participation as a subject is purely voluntary. We will evaluate the results of the study as a class in order to gain hands-on experience with the way empirical research and philosophical analysis are integrated in the new field of Aesthetics & Cognitive Science.
Some Miscellaneous Notes and Guidelines:

Moral behavior is the grounds for, and the framework of, a healthy society. In this regard it is each of our responsibility as individuals within the community of our classroom to act responsibly. This includes following the rules and guidelines set out by the College for academic behavior. Plagiarism is a serious matter. It goes without saying that each of you is expected to do his or her own work and to cite EVERY text that is used to prepare a paper for this class. In general philosophy papers are NOT research papers. Your preparations for papers and presentations should focus on material from the syllabus, assigned supplemental readings, and class discussion.

I ask that you not use the internet for your research except as assigned in class.

The written assignments are designed to give you a chance to stretch your legs a bit while you learn about cognitive science & aesthetics (and to give me a chance to assess your understanding of the material). Your job for each of the writing assignments is to offer a philosophical defense of your take on the issue at hand. However, this does not mean that they are a free forum for opinions. Make sure that your discussions remain focused on the philosophical problems that surround the assigned question or topic.

Finally, the reading list for this class is arranged to guarantee that we keep up with the schedule for our group and individual projects. However there is some flexibility built-in to the reading schedule so that we can spend more time on issues that are of particular interest to you. In this regard, I will occasionally upload supplementary materials to eDisk for students who want to pursue particular issues beyond class discussion. I also reserve the right to modify the syllabus as needed to accommodate our interests as a group.
Topic 1: Art, Aesthetics, and Interpretation

The goal of this section of the course is to introduce students to a fundamental divide in contemporary Philosophy of Art. Aesthetic theories of art argue that what individuates artworks from ordinary objects is the unique phenomenal character of aesthetic experience. Cognitivist & contextualist theories of art argue to the contrary that our engagement with art is primarily interpretive, involves categorizing artworks relative to art historical knowledge, and cannot be adequately explained by aesthetic theories of art.

01/22 Seeley:  “Naturalizing Aesthetics: Art & the Cognitive Neuroscience of Vision”
01/24 Bell:    “The Aesthetic Hypothesis”
Davies:  “Definitions of Art” (PA)
01/29 Danto:  “Art & Meaning”
Davies:  “The Work of Art and the Historical Future”
01/31 Davies:  “Aesthetics & the Theory of Art” (PA)
Carroll:  “Neoformalism”
          “Form & Function”
02/05 Lamarque:  “On Perceiving Conceptual Art”
02/07 Sol LeWitt  Wall Drawings (Group Project)
          “LeWitt Drawings”
          “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art”
  <http://www.sfmoma.org/msoma/artworks/408.html>

Paper due: What is Danto’s argument against formalism?

02/12 Discussion days

01/29-02/07 Voluntary participation in psychology of art experiment in the Psychophysics Lab (139 LSP)

Topic 2: Art & Neuroscience

The goal of this section of the course is to a) introduce students to a general model for cognitive science and aesthetics, b) introduce students to recent research on the role of memory & attention in visual perception; and c) discuss the potential impact of this research on the debate between aesthetic and cognitivist theories of art.

Neuroaesthetics:

02/14 Seeley:  Can Neuroaesthetics Earn It’s Keep?
Zeki:  Inner Vision (excerpts): Chapters 1-3, 7-8; 11
02/19 Ruskin:  The Elements of Drawing (excerpt)
Zeki:  Inner Vision (excerpts): Chapter 16
02/21 Latto:  “The Brain of the Beholder” (excerpts)
Gombrich:  “The Story of Art” (excerpt)
Livingstone:  “Acuity & Spatial Resolution: Central & Peripheral Vision”

Imagination, Interpretation, & Attention:

02/26 Danto:  “Seeing & Showing”
Carroll:  “Modernity & the Plasticity of Perception”
Koivisto & Revonuso:  “How Meaning Shapes Seeing”
02/28 Kosslyn:  “Visual Imagery”
Thompson & Kosslyn:  “Neural Systems Activated During Mental Imagery”

MID-TERM ASSIGNED

03/03-09 Group Project,  “Movements & Marks: Drawings after Cage, Cunningham, & Lewitt” Phillips Museum, Curriculum Gallery.
Movie in ATS  “Merce Cunningham: A Lifetime of Dance” (ATS reserve)
Davies:  “The Varieties of Art” (PA)
**Topic 3: Dance, Movement, & Imagination**

It has been argued recently that motor simulation contributes to the perception of events & actions. This process is often thought to involve mirror neurons & motor imagery. The goal of this section is to a) introduce students to a range of issues in the philosophy of dance, b) introduce students to recent research on the role of mirror neurons and motor simulation in the categorization and perception of actions; and c) evaluate whether this research can contribute to discussions in the philosophy of dance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Authors/Works</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/01</td>
<td>Professor Vail</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Movement &amp; Dance Class (Roschel, Large Dance Studio)</strong></td>
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<td>Cunningham: “The Impermanent Art”</td>
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<td>Cage: “Cagean Esthetics”</td>
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<td>Reich: “Music as Gradual process”</td>
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<td>04/03</td>
<td>Langer: “Virtual Powers”</td>
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<td>Beardsley: “What is Going on in Dance?”</td>
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<td>04/08</td>
<td>Decety &amp; Greves:</td>
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<td>“The Power of Simulation: Imagining One’s Own and Other’s Behavior”</td>
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<td>Ruby &amp; Decety:</td>
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<td>“Effect of Subjective Perspective Taking on the Simulation of Action”</td>
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<td>04/10</td>
<td>Calvo-Merino:</td>
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<td>“Action Observation &amp; Acquired Motor Skills”</td>
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<td>Cole &amp; Montero:</td>
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<td>“Affective Proprioception”</td>
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<td><strong>Paper Due:</strong></td>
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<td>Evaluate the relationship between motor imagery &amp; the perception of dance.</td>
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**Topic 4: Music, Imagination, & Emotion**

The meaningfulness of music is arguably tied to its capacity to express emotions. The goal of this section of the course is to a) evaluate whether the general model introduced in the last section art can be generalized to music perception, b) introduce students to philosophical debates about the expression of emotion in music; and c) discuss how cognitive neuroscience can contribute to these debates.

**Musical Imagery & Auditory Attention:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>04/15</td>
<td>Zatorre &amp; Halpern:</td>
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<td>“Mental Concerts: Musical Imagery and Auditory Cortex”</td>
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<td>Janata: “Neurophysiological Mechanisms Susberving Auditory Imagery for Music”</td>
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<td><strong>Posters:</strong></td>
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<td>Rough Draft Due</td>
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<td>04/17</td>
<td>Zatorre et al:</td>
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<td>“Neural Mechanisms Underlying Melody Perception &amp; Memory for Pitch”</td>
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**Music & Emotion:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Authors/Works</th>
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<tr>
<td>04/22</td>
<td>Davies: “Philosophical Perspectives on Music’s Expressiveness”</td>
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<td>04/24</td>
<td>Robinson: “The Expression &amp; Arousal of Emotion in Music”</td>
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<td>04/29</td>
<td>Trainor &amp; Schmidt:</td>
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<td>“Processing Emotions Induced by Music”</td>
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<td>05/01</td>
<td><strong>Discussion day</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Poster Pitch</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Paper Due:</strong></td>
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<td>Term Paper, Final Draft</td>
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Assignments:

**Project 1: First Collaborative Artwork - Location Drawings** We will use the blackboards in class to begin experimenting with Sol LeWitt’s location drawings. Lewitt would write out a series of instructions for an abstract geometric drawing on a piece of scrap paper and then fax them to the museum or gallery. Here are some examples:

- **Wall Drawing #248:** The location of a straight, not straight, and a broken line, a square, a triangle, and a circle (The specific locations are determined by the draughtsmen).
- **Wall Drawing #118:** Fifty randomly placed points all connected by straight lines.
- **Wall Drawing #123:** Copied Lines (The first drafter draws a not straight vertical line as long as possible. The second drafter draws a line next to the first one, trying to copy it. The third drafter does the same, as do as many drafters as possible. Then the first drafter, followed by the others, copies the last line drawn until both ends of the wall are reached.

The drawing would be realized by gallery/installation staff without his supervision. Each installation, therefore, reflected the formal choices and interpretations of the gallery staff. Interestingly the result is a set of drawings that are formally identical but perceptually distinct - the opposite of the works in Danto's proposed Brillo Boxes exhibition.

**Assignment:** Produce a 5 drawing instructions. We will divide into two groups the following class, draw instructions from a hat, and spend the class using the chalkboards to experiment with this style of drawing.

**NOTE:** These drawings work best if the instructions involve simplified geometric forms, e.g. triangles, squares, circles, tangent lines, cross-hatchings, & etc., and proportions measured in body-sized units, e.g. draw a triangle whose base is as wide as your arm is long, draw a circle as tall as your torso, or start from your nose and draw a line to the end of your arm.

**Due Date:** February 05, 2008

**Project 2: First Paper - Formalism & Aesthetics** Please write a 3 page (900 word) paper on the following topic. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1" margins. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of the debate about the nature of our aesthetic responses to artworks.

**Paper Topic:** Danto famously claims that one cannot “eyeball” art. Evaluate his argument against formalism? Make sure to fully describe the argument and explain its key premises.

**Due Date:** February 07, 2008 in the eDisk dropbox & my mailbox in the Philosophy Department.
Project 3: Second Collaborative Artwork - “Movements & Marks: Drawings after Cage, Cunningham, & Lewitt” We will meet in the Curriculum Gallery in the Phillips Museum the week of 03/03. During this time we will construct a series of drawings as described above. Each student will produce 5 drawing instructions. We will use a random number generator to generate a several sets of drawings instructions from this list. We will also work with Professors Brooks & Vail to generate a set of stylized motions for making marks on the page in order to investigate the relationship between movements, marks and intentions in art.

I hope that we will be able to involve the larger F&M community in this project. I propose that we invite folks from outside of the class to come and participate in the construction of a series of location drawings on Friday 03/07. We will talk about the logistics of realizing this type of open ended group collaboration in class as we prepare for the exhibition.

Exhibition Dates: 03/03-09, Phillips Museum, Curriculum Gallery

Instructions Due: February 28, 2008

Project 4: Midterm Paper - Art, Aesthetics, & Cognitive Neuroscience Write a 6 page paper on one of two topics to be announced on the distribution date for the midterm. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1” margins. The purpose of this paper is twofold: a) evaluate a standard argument in the literature; and b) demonstrate that you can synthesize the diverse range of material covered in the first half of the semester into a coherent position.

Topics Distributed: February 28, 2008

Due Date: March 14, 2008 in the eDisk dropbox & my mailbox in the Philosophy Department

Project 5: Movement & Dance - Dance Class with Professor Vail, Theater, Drama, & Dance We will meet with Professor Vail of the Theater, Dance, & Film Department. She will talk to us about Merce Cunningham’s collaboration with John Cage and lead us through some exercises to teach us about movement. A central theme in this course is the idea that the meaning of an artwork is inextricably tied to the process of artistic production in its medium. The goal of our meeting with Professor Vail is to learn a little bit about what goes in choreography and dancing.

Date: April 01, 2008, 12:30-1:20 pm
Location: Roschel 112, Main Dance Studio

Project 6: Third Paper - Motor Simulation & Dance Please write a 3 page (900 word) paper on the following topic. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1” margins. The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate whether the diagnostic recognition framework developed for visual art generalizes to dance.

Paper Topic: Evaluate the relationship between motor imagery & the perception of dance. Langer & Beardsley argue that dance abstractly expresses, represents, or embodies the intentionality or agency of human actions. What is the relationship between this claim and the literature we read on motor imagery and the interpretation/understanding of others? Does this support the claim discussed in class that the diagnostic model for our engagement with visual artworks generalizes to dance?

Due Date: April 10, 2008
Project 7: Cognitive Science & Aesthetics Posters I will divide the class up into 4 research groups. Your responsibility as a group is to produce a poster describing the research in one of the scientific papers we have covered in class and explain how this research ties into our discussion of art, perception and meaning.

Conference posters are a common means to present and gain feedback on research in the sciences. You should be able to find examples in the hallways of the Psychology and Biology Departments in the LSP building. We will discuss poster design in class and I will work closely with each group.

Your posters will be exhibited in the Curriculum Gallery alongside our collaborative installation. We will have a “poster pitch” session during which time each group will have 2 minutes to pitch the arguments illustrated in their poster.

Topic Meetings: Week of April 1, 2008

Rough Draft Due: April 15, 2008

Final Draft Due: April 29, 2008

Project 8: Final Paper Write a 6 page (2000 word) paper on a topic of your choosing. Your paper should focus on the solution of a problem (or the evaluation of a debate) that we encountered over the course of the semester. All students need to see me to discuss paper topics the week of April 14th.

Topic Meeting: Week of April 14

Due Date: The scheduled day of our final exam (although there is no final in this class)

REQUIRED EXTERNAL EVENTS:
(you must attend both dance performances and one musical performance)

Hip Hop Theater Festival
Olive Dance Theater,
Roschel Performing Arts Center
February 29th, 8pm

Spring Dance Concert
Student Dance Production
Roschel Performing Arts Center
April 24th, 25th, & 26th, 8pm

Armenia’s Shoghaken Ensemble
Barshinger Musical Arts Center
February 8th, 8pm

Philadelphia Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra
Barshinger Musical Arts Center
March 1st, 8pm

YCA Violinist, Timothy Fain
Barshinger Musical Arts Center
April 4th, 8pm
Bibliography:

**Topic 1: Art, Aesthetics, and Interpretation**


**Topic 2: Art & Neuroscience**

*Neuroaesthetics:*


*Imagination, Interpretation, & Attention:*

Topic 3: Dance


Topic 4: Music & Emotion

Musical Imagery & Auditory Attention


Music & Emotion


Supplemental Texts:

Art, Aesthetics, and Interpretation

Sol Lewitt’s Obituary:

Neuroaesthetics

**Imagination, Interpretation, & Attention:**


**Dance**


**Musical Imagery & Auditory Attention:**


**Music & Emotion:**


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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>01/22</td>
<td>Seeley, “Naturalizing Aesthetics”</td>
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<td>01/24</td>
<td>Bell “The Aesthetic Hypothesis”; Carroll, “Introduction”</td>
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<td>01/29</td>
<td>Danto, “Art &amp; Meaning”; “The Work of Art &amp; the Historical Future”</td>
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<td>01/31</td>
<td>Carroll, “Neoformalism”; Carroll, “Form &amp; Function”</td>
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<td>02/05</td>
<td>Lamarque, “On Perceiving Conceptual Art”</td>
<td>Drawing instructions due</td>
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<td>02/07</td>
<td>LeWitt Drawings; Lewitt, “ Paragraphs”</td>
<td>First collaborative artwork</td>
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<td>01/29-02/07</td>
<td>Effects of Energetic Costs</td>
<td>Voluntary participation in psychology of art experiment, Psychophysics Lab,</td>
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<td>139 LSP.</td>
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<td>02/12</td>
<td>Discussion days</td>
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<td>02/14</td>
<td>Seeley, “Can Neuroaesthetics?”; Zeki, Chapters 1-3, 7-8, 11</td>
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<td>02/19</td>
<td>Ruskin, <em>Elements of Drawing</em>; Zeki, Chapter 16</td>
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<td>02/28</td>
<td>Kosslyn, Visual Imagery”; Thompson &amp; Kosslyn, “Neural Systems Activated During Mental Imagery”</td>
<td>Midterm topics assigned;</td>
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<td>03/03-09</td>
<td>“Movements &amp; Marks: Drawings after…”; Merce Cunningham: A Lifetime in Dance (Film, Reserve in ATS)</td>
<td>Curriculum Gallery, Phillips Museum</td>
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<td>03/15-23</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
<td>Midterm due 03/14 @ 5pm</td>
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<td>03/25</td>
<td>Proffitt, “Embodied Perception”;</td>
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<td>03/27</td>
<td>Seeley &amp; Waughtel, “Effects of Energetic Costs in Picture Perception”</td>
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<td>04/01</td>
<td>Cunningham, “The Impermanent Art”; Cage, “Cagean Esthetics”; Reich, “Music as a Gradual Process”</td>
<td>Prof. Vail, Movement &amp; Dance Class, Roschell 113, Hooper Dance Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/03</td>
<td>Langer, “Virtual Powers”; Beardsley, “What is Going on In Dance”</td>
<td>Poster Topic Meetings 03/31-04/04</td>
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<td>04/10</td>
<td>Discussion days</td>
<td>Second short paper due</td>
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<td>04/17</td>
<td>Zatorre et al, “Neural Mechanisms”</td>
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<td>POSTER PITCH</td>
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**Exam Week**

| Scheduled Date of Final Exam | Final Paper Assignment Due |

| Midterm due 03/14 @ 5pm | Curriculum Gallery, Phillips Museum | Midterm topics assigned; | Prof. Vail, Movement & Dance Class, Roschell 113, Hooper Dance Studio | Poster Topic Meetings 03/31-04/04 | Second short paper due | Topic Meetings: Final Paper 04/14-18 Posters: Rough Draft Due | Final Posters Due | Final Paper Assignment Due |