Philosophy of Art
Phil 227 a/b, Fall 2008
M,W (a) 1:10-2:30; (b) 2:40-4:00
Professor Seeley, 73/75 Campus Avenue, 202
Office Hours: MTW 11-Noon & by appointment (or at lunchtime open skate at the Underhill Arena)
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Course Description: What is Art? What makes a photograph on the wall at the Museum of Modern Art different from the one on the front page of the Daily News? What makes a landscape painting more (or less!) interesting than a snapshot? Our commonsense understanding of art tells us that artworks are in some way special. Art is often beautiful. It is sometimes provocative and controversial. But it is notoriously difficult to identify just what it is that makes artworks unique. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to understand why particular artworks are considered special at all. Philosophy of Art is a branch of philosophy concerned with answers to just these types of questions. In this course we will examine four broad issues that have defined philosophical aesthetics: What is the relationship between art and representation? What does it mean to say that an artwork expresses an emotion? What role does the formal structure of artworks play in explanations of art? What is an aesthetic experience, and what role, if any, does our knowledge of a culture play in shaping these experiences? We will also discuss a range of philosophical issues associated with particular art forms. Finally, despite disagreements about the nature of art most would agree that art must be experienced to be understood. Therefore, throughout the course we will both make art and look at particular artworks as illustrations of the views discussed.

Course Goals: The aim of this course is to 1) introduce students to philosophical aesthetics by 2) working through some its foundational works and some contemporary problems. Our approach will be both historical and topical. Philosophy is a living art. Along the way the student will be introduced to characteristic philosophical methods. These methods are designed to help one think clearly and critically about arguments in general, and are indispensable philosophical tools.

Requirements: You will be asked to write two short, 3-page papers on assigned topics, one early in the semester and another before Thanksgiving. The average of these papers will be worth 30% of your final grade. You will also be asked to write a 6-page mid-term paper on an assigned topic worth 30% of your final grade, & an 8-page final paper on a topic of your choosing worth 30% of your final grade. The topics for your final papers must be cleared by me before Thanksgiving. The goal of these assignments is to encourage the student to think through the problems of aesthetics and the philosophy of art on their own.

Attendance: CLASS PARTICIPATION IS A REQUIREMENT (10% of your final grade). Attendance is a minimum requirement for student participation. Therefore, excessive absence will affect a student’s final grade.

Required Texts:
- Noel Carroll, Philosophy of Art (New York: Routledge, 1999). (PA)
- Readings on Lyceum. (LYCEUM)
Requirements:

A. Students will be required to write 4 papers (due dates are listed on the final page with the schedule of readings):
   - two short 3-page papers on assigned topics (30%).
   - a mid-term paper (6 pages) on an assigned topic due at the midterm (30%)
   - a term paper (8 pages) on a topic (due before Thanksgiving) of their own choice due at the end of the semester (30%).
   - class participation - includes participation in the group installation project & dance class (10%)

B. We will create an installation of The Collaborative Drawing Project: Drawings after Sol LeWitt. The installation is tentatively scheduled for the week of October 27th, location TBA. The goal of the project is threefold: to introduce students to conceptual art and chance procedures; to see the productive process of making an artwork through from beginning to end; & to explore the types of productive constraints that materials and methods impose on the creative process.
   - We will produce a series of Sol LeWitt style “location drawings” & “automatic drawings” as a group installation. Each drawing will consist of a set of instructions (e.g. snap a diagonal chalk line on a tangent to a large circle that divides the drawing unevenly along the horizontal) produced in a randomly assigned order.
     - **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) in some cases the body motion to be used to make that mark. We will generate the order of instructions, colors, and participating artists using a random number generator. Marks are made with soft pencils, oil crayons, & chalk lines using straight edges, line levels, & string compasses. Sheets of paper are constructed on site from 4 foot rolls and hung from 1x2s and picture hangers & large binder clips. 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 in 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.
   - We will meet during class time that week to begin the installation and then generate a schedule so that those of you who are interested can participate outside of class time as your schedule permits.

D. We will visit the dance studios for a class on chance choreography sometime in November. The exact date for this event is still to be worked out. Everyone is required to participate, so make sure to wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes like sweats for this class.

E. Lastly, we will do some drawing exercises in class as a demonstration of the collaboration between aesthetics and psychology of art and perception. I will ask at the end of these sessions if you are willing to let your drawings be included in a current study about the nature of picture perception. Your decision in this regard is purely voluntary, it is up to you. The choice you make will have no influence on your grade or class participation score.
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 Bates 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 Philosophy of Art (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 free forums for opinions. Make sure that your discussions remain focused on the philosophical problems that surround the assigned question or topic.

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. I will occasionally upload supplementary materials to LYCEUM 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.

Finally, please come see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss athletic schedules or any accommodations you might need for the class work.

Assignments:

All assignments are to be handed in electronically through Lyceum & in hard copy in the paper drop box outside my office in the Philosophy Department by 5pm on the due date.

Project 1: First Paper - Please write a 3 page (900 word) paper on one of the following topics. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1" margins. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of definitions of art strategies for understanding the nature of art.

Paper Topic (1a): Define & evaluate Tolstoy’s formal and evaluative criteria of art. Is Collingwood’s discussion of art an improvement on this theory?

Paper Topic (1b): Define & evaluate Bell’s theory of significant form. What does it mean to say that this theory suffers from a false analogy to sensation?

Paper Topic (1c): Define and evaluate Bell's assessment of the relationship between form and representation in art. Does Carroll's functional theory of form represent an improvement?

Due Date: 09/22/08

Project 2: Midterm Paper - Write a 6 page paper (1800 word) 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 material covered in the 1st half of the semester into a coherent position.

Topics Distributed: 10/06/08

Due Date: 10/13/08
Project 3: Movement & Dance  We will meet with someone from the Dance Concentration in Theater and Rhetoric to learn about Merce Cunningham’s collaboration with John Cage. They will lead us through some exercises to teach us about movement and chance choreography. 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 this class is to learn a little bit about what goes in choreography and dancing. Make sure to wear comfortable clothes like sweats to this class! We will experiment with movement.

I ask that you browse the content of two films before we meet for our dance class. It is a big class so you should try to get to this early on in the semester. If everyone waits until the last minute there will not be time for everyone to see them. If there is sufficient interest I would be happy to meet outside of class to screen them some evening. The films are: *Merce Cunningham: A Lifetime in Dance* & *Trish Brown, Early Works: 1966-1979*

Project 4: “Collaborative Drawing Project: Drawings after Sol LeWitt”  We will meet at a location to be determined during the week of October 27th. During this time we will construct a series of drawings as described above. I hope that we will also be able to involve the larger Bates community in this project. I propose that we try to collectively decide on a set of additional times that we can invite folks from outside of the class to come make their mark. 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:* 11/05/08 – 12/05/08
*Class Dates:* 11/05/08 & 11/12/08

Project 5: Third Paper  Please write a 3 page (900 word) paper on one of the following topics. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1” margins. The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate your understanding of the material introduced after the midterm.

**Paper Topic 3a:** Evaluate Carroll & Banes’ criticism of Beardsley’s Theory of Dance. Do you think that a formalist theory like Beardsley’s is defensible?

**Paper Topic 3b:** Is the theory of art proposed by Danto in his paper “Art & Meaning” a split from, or further development of, the theory of modernism proposed by Greenberg in “Modernist Painting.”

*Due Date:* 11/12/08

Project 6: Final Paper  Write an 8 page (2200-2400 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 before Thanksgiving. I will suggest topics and related supplementary readings as we move through the syllabus.

*Topic Meeting:* Before Thanksgiving

*Due Date:* The last day of class: 12/03/08
SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

What follows is a provisional syllabus. This schedule may change, as may the readings within it, as a result of class interests and time constraints. Any changes will be announced in class prior to the date of the change of assignment. Also, importantly, I will let you know each day how to approach the readings for the next class, whether some readings are more important than others, and, occasionally, whether we will drop a reading from a session (it has happened). You can’t get this information if you are not in class.

Finally, how is philosophy like Carnegie Hall? It takes practice to get there. In order to understand philosophy, you must practice doing it. We will DO a lot of philosophy in class. But the process starts at home with you carefully working through the arguments in each reading. As a result, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to keep on top of the readings.

**Topic 1: Definitions of Art**

*What is Philosophy of Art?*

- Carroll: Introduction (*PA*)
- Warburton: Art & Philosophy (*AQ*)

*Representation*

- Carroll: Art & Representation, pp. 19-33 (*PA*)
- Goodman: Reality Remade (*LYCEUM*)
- Rollins: Pictorial Representation (*LYCEUM*)

*Expressionism:*

- Warburton: Expression of Emotion (*AQ*)
- Tolstoy: *What is Art?* (excerpts) (*LYCEUM*)
- Collingwood: The Principles of Art (excerpts) (*LYCEUM*)

*Form:*

- Bell: The Aesthetic Hypothesis (*LYCEUM*)
- Warburton: Significant Form (*AQ*)
- Carroll: Art & Form, pp. 125-143 (*PA*)

*Anti-Essentialism, Institutional and Causal-Historical Theories of Art:*

- Weitz: The Role of Theory in Aesthetics (*LO*)
- Davies: Weitz’s Anti-Essentialism (*LO*)
- Warburton: Family Resemblances (*AQ*)
- Dickie: The New Institutional Theory of Art (*LO*)
- Levinson: Defining Art Historically (*LO*)
- Warburton: Institutional Contexts (*AQ*)
**Topic 2: Aesthetics & The Philosophy of Art**

- Stolnitz: The Aesthetic Attitude *(LYCEUM)*
- Dickie: The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude *(LYCEUM)*
- Carroll: Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory *(LYCEUM)*
- Sibley: Aesthetic Concepts *(LO)*

**Topic 3: Philosophy of the Arts**

**What is painting about?**

- Gombrich: The Analysis of Vision in Art *(LYCEUM)*
- Greenberg: Modernist Painting *(LYCEUM)*
- Danto: Art and Meaning *(LYCEUM)*

**Conceptual Art:**

- LeWitt: Paragraphs on Conceptual Art *(LYCEUM)*
- Cage: Cagean Aesthetics *(LYCEUM)*
- Lamarque: On Perceiving Conceptual Art *(LYCEUM)*

**Dance:**

- Langer: Virtual Powers (excerpts from *Feeling & Form*) *(LYCEUM)*
- Beardsley: What Is Going on In Dance *(LYCEUM)*
- Carroll and Banes: Working and Dancing *(LYCEUM)*

**Music:**

- Robinson: The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music *(LO)*

**Photography:**

- Scruton: Photography & Representation *(LO)*
- Walton: Transparent Pictures *(LYCEUM)*
- Currie: Photography, Painting, and Perception *(LYCEUM)*

**Film:**

- Carroll: Simulation, Emotions, and Morality *(LYCEUM)*
- Neill: Empathy in (Film) Fiction *(LYCEUM)*

**Literature:**

- Beardsley: Intentions and Interpretation: A Fallacy Revived *(LO)*
- Carroll: Actual and Hypothetical Intentionalism *(LYCEUM)*
Topic 1: Definitions of Art

Topic 2: Aesthetics & The Philosophy of Art

Topic 3: Philosophy of the Arts

**Supplementary Readings:**

**Definitions of Art:**

**Aesthetics:**

**Philosophy of the Arts:**
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>09/03</td>
<td>Carroll, Ch1, “Introduction,” pp. 1-17 (PA)</td>
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<td>Warburton, Ch1, “Art &amp; Philosophy,” pp. 1-6 (AQ)</td>
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<td>09/08</td>
<td>Carroll, Ch2, “Art &amp; Representation,” pp. 19-23 (PA)</td>
<td>Films: Cunningham: Lifetime in Dance; Trish Brown, Early Works: 1966-1979,</td>
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<td>Goodman, “Reality Remade,” pp. 3-43 (LYCEUM)</td>
<td>watch before 10/08</td>
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<td>Rollins, “Pictorial Representation,” pp. 297-312 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>09/10</td>
<td>Tolstoy, “What is Art?” pp. 180-183 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Collingwood, “Expressing Emotion,” 194-201 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>09/15</td>
<td>Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis,” pp. 73-83 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Warburton, Ch1. “Significant Form” pp. 9-35 (AQ)</td>
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<td>Carroll, Ch3, “Art as Form,” pp. 125-148, (PA)</td>
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<td>09/17</td>
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<td>09/22</td>
<td>Weitz, The Role of Theory in Aesthetics, pp. 12-18 (LO)</td>
<td>1st Short Paper Due: 5pm</td>
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<td>Davies, “Weitz’s Anti-Essentialism” pp. 63-68 (LO)</td>
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<td>Warburton, Ch3. “Family Resemblances” pp. 65-85 (AQ)</td>
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<td>Levinson, “Defining Art Historically,” pp. 35-46 (LO)</td>
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<td>Warburton, Ch4. “Institutional Contexts” pp. 87-118 (AQ)</td>
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<td>10/08</td>
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<td>10/13</td>
<td>Dance Class</td>
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<td>10/14</td>
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<td>10/15</td>
<td>FALL RECESS</td>
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<td>Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” pp. 85-93 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Danto, “Art and Meaning,” pp. 130-140 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>10/22</td>
<td>LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Art,” pp. 432-435 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Cage, “Cagean Aesthetics,” pp.290-301 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Lamarque, On Perceiving Conceptual Art,” pp. 3-17 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>10/27</td>
<td>Discussion: What is painting about?</td>
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<td>Beardsley, “What is Going on In Dance,” 31-36 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Carroll and Banes, “Working and Dancing,” pp. 37-41 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>11/03</td>
<td>Discussion: dance &amp; motor simulation</td>
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<td>11/05</td>
<td>Collaborative Drawing Project</td>
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<td>11/12</td>
<td>Collaborative Drawing Project</td>
<td>2nd Short Paper Due: 5pm</td>
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<td>11/19</td>
<td>Walton, “Transparent Pictures,” pp. 94-103 (LYCEUM)</td>
<td>Paper Topics Due: 5pm;</td>
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<td>Currie, “Photography, Painting, and Perception,” pp. 23-29 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>11/24</td>
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<td>12/01</td>
<td>Carroll, “Simulation, Emotions, and Morality,” pp. 306-316 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>Neill, “Empathy in (Film) Fiction,” pp. 175-194 (LYCEUM)</td>
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<td>12/03</td>
<td>Carroll, “Actual and Hypothetical Intentionalism,” pp. 197-213 (LYCEUM)</td>
<td>Final paper due: 5pm</td>
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