

**Philosophy of art:
Aesthetic taste and aesthetic properties**

Professor: Dr. Dustin Stokes
Section: PHIL 5191/6191 002
Thurs 6:00-9:00PM Tanner Library-CTIHB 4th floor
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Course description

This is a course on the philosophical aesthetics of taste and aesthetic properties. The classic philosophical question on this topic comes from Hume: how can we reconcile the apparent tension between the subjectivity of taste judgments and the objectivity required of common evaluative practices? So, on the one hand, taste judgments (saying of some object or event “That is beautiful”) seem to be, as we say, *just* matters of taste. Everyone has her own opinion, we say in pop-speak. On the other hand, we defer to critics and indeed we sometimes criticize others for taste judgments (you’d criticize me if I claimed that the Bob Ross paint-by-numbers is aesthetically better than the Monet). And that kind of “correction” requires some objectivity, some non-subjective fact of the matter. The problem is to relieve, in some principled way, the tension that emerges when we pair these two independently plausible theses. Both Hume and Kant attempt solutions to this problem, and that’s where we begin.

Hume’s problem, and any analysis thereof, raises a number of additional issues concerning the nature of aesthetic properties, evaluation, and disagreement. Here are some of the additional questions we will address: What are aesthetic concepts and how do we distinguish them from other concepts? Can aesthetic judgments be correct, and if so, what kind of ontology does this imply (e.g. Should we be realists about aesthetic properties? How could we be?) What is the relation, if any, between the aesthetic features of an artwork and its causal-historical origins (e.g. the context where it was created or the intentions of its artist)? To what degree is aesthetic judgment a sensory-perceptual phenomenon, versus a cognitive or post-perceptual one? Are there non-perceptible aesthetic properties (e.g. in literary works or conceptual artworks)?

Finally, we’ll close out with some discussion of good taste, bad taste, and snobs. We will look at the supposed distinction between “high” art and “low” art (or fine vs. popular art, etc.), and whether so-called “mass” art (say, the entire back catalog of *Friends*) should be considered art proper. And we will consider some virtue-theoretic approaches to taste.

Text

All readings will be online, on the CANVAS course webpage.

Assignments/Requirements:

For 5191 Students

20%	Short paper 1	Due: See below*
20%	Short paper 2	Due: See below*
10%	Participation	
50%	Final term paper	Due Wed 6 May

The short papers might also be thought of as take-home exams. You will be given a short list of questions, from which you will choose and respond to one. The questions will be distributed one week, and the papers are to be submitted the following week (dates below). Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be 1000-1500 words (or 4-6 pages). You are required to write **two** short essays over the term, and can choose from the following three papers/due dates, as your interests and schedule dictate:

- *PAPER OPTION 1: **DUE FRIDAY 11 Feb** (topics assigned 2/04)
- *PAPER OPTION 2: **DUE FRIDAY 11 Mar** (topics assigned 3/04)
- *PAPER OPTION 3: **DUE FRIDAY 15 Apr** (topics assigned 4/08)

The participation component is composed of regular participation in class discussion, and in discussion group sessions, held in class. Unless I announce otherwise, the discussion sessions will take place on the dates specified below in the reading schedule.

Undergraduate students will write a short term paper (8-10 pages). This will be on a topic of the student's choosing, but to be first cleared with me in the form of an outline. **Term paper outlines are due to me no later than: Monday 20 April. Outlines will also be posted on the CANVAS course page, and open to peer commentary.** Term papers will be due on the final exam day (as designated by the University).

For 6191 Students

5%	Weekly reports	Due before that week's class
5%	Short paper 1	Due: See above*
5%	Short paper 2	Due: See above*
5%	Participation	
10%	Presentation	
70%	Final term paper	Due Wed 6 May

Graduate students will be required to write 6 weekly reports. In no more than 2 single spaced pages, each report should concern one of the readings for that week and address the following two items: (1) briefly clarify what you think are 3 key terms from one reading; (2) briefly clarify a central argument from that same reading. These weekly reports are to be submitted prior to the relevant week's class meeting (so before 6:00PM that day). Students choose the weeks they would like to report on (beginning as soon as week 3), so long as they complete 6 reports before semester's end.

Short papers for graduate students will be on the same topics/due dates as for undergraduates, (see above) *except* that for graduate students the expectations for quality of exegesis and analysis will be appropriately higher.

Graduate students will be expected to participate regularly, and indeed play a leading role, in class discussion and discussion group sessions (see above).

All graduate students will give an approximately 15 minute critical presentation (only one per lecture). Presentations will offer some critical analysis of one of the readings for that week. The week/topic is up to students, on a first come/first present basis. Let me know asap which week you'd like to present on (starting week 3).

Term papers (15-20 pages) will be on a topic of the student's choosing. The student will submit a 1-2 page outline and then be required to meet with me to discuss the term paper plan. **Term paper outlines are due to me no later than: Monday 20 April. Outlines will also be posted on the CANVAS course page, and open to peer commentary.** Term papers will be due on the final exam day (as designated by the University).

General:

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style, etc.

All paper/exam dates are listed on this syllabus. Therefore, late work/exams are allowed only if arranged at least one week prior to the scheduled due date/exam date, and with appropriate documentation. Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated with zero tolerance. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity, see the Student Code, section V ("Student Academic Conduct"), Part B ("Academic Misconduct"), online here:

<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>

If you require special test-taking or note-taking accommodations, please see me.

(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:

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| 14 Jan | <i>Introduction</i>
<i>Hume's problem of taste</i>
Hume, 'On the standard of taste' |
| 21 Jan | <i>Recent analyses of Hume's standard of taste</i>
Carroll, 'Hume's standard of taste'
Shelley, 'Hume and the joint verdict of true judges' |
| 28 Jan | <i>Kant's subjective universalist solution to Hume's problem</i>
Kant, excerpts from <i>The Critique of Judgment</i>
Chignell, 'Kant on the normativity of taste: The role of aesthetic ideas' |
| 4 Feb | <i>Recent analyses of Hume, Kant, and the objectivity of aesthetic judgment</i>
Prinz, 'Really bad taste'
Hopkins, 'Kant, quasi-realism, and the autonomy of aesthetic judgment'
Discussion Group 1 |
| 11 Feb* | <i>Aesthetic concepts</i>
Sibley, 'Aesthetic concepts'
Kivy, 'What makes "aesthetic" terms aesthetic?' (a reply to Sibley) |
| 18 Feb | <i>Realism and aesthetic properties-Ontology I</i>
De Clerq, 'The structure of aesthetic properties'
Levinson, 'Aesthetic supervenience' |

- 25 Feb *Realism and aesthetic properties-Ontology II*
 Zemach, 'Real Beauty'
 Goldman, 'Realism about aesthetic properties' (a reply to Zemach)
 Levinson, 'Being realistic about aesthetic properties' (a reply to Goldman)
- 4 Mar *Realism and aesthetic properties-Disagreement*
 Bender, 'Sensitivity, sensibility, and aesthetic realism'
 Schafer, 'Faultless disagreement and aesthetic realism'
Discussion group 2
- 11 Mar* *Perception, expertise, and aesthetic judgment*
 Walton, 'Categories of art'
 Hopkins, 'Aesthetics, Experience, and Discrimination'
- 18 Mar NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)
- 25 Mar NO CLASS
- 1 Apr *Cognition, perception, and aesthetic properties*
 Stokes, 'Cognitive penetration and the perception of art'
 Stokes, 'Rich perceptual content and aesthetic properties'
Discussion group 3
- 8 Apr *Non-perceptual art and aesthetic properties*
 Shelley, 'The problem of non-perceptual art'
 Carroll, 'Non-perceptual aesthetic properties: Comments for James Shelley'
- 15 Apr *Snobbery: High vs. low art*
 Cohen, 'High and low thinking about high and low art'
 Carroll, excerpts from *A Philosophy of Mass Art*
 Fisher, 'On Carroll's enfranchisement of mass art as art'
 Carroll, 'Mass art as art: A reply to Fisher'
- 22 Apr *Snobbery: Vices and virtues*
 Kieran, 'The vice of snobbery...'
 Lopes, 'Virtues of art: Good taste'
Discussion group 4

*Weeks that a short paper is due (see paper submission schedule on Pg. 2)