

INTRODUCTION TO AESTHETICS

WINTER 2021 | PHIL 71H | John Holliday

ZOOM MEETINGS: WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10:00–11:20 PST

TA: Grant Dowling

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Aesthetics encompasses a seemingly special and particularly rewarding way of perceiving the world. Appreciating the beauty of a sunset, feeling moved by a piece of music, becoming absorbed in the composition of an artwork: these are all aesthetic matters, and they are all matters that lie at the heart of this course. We will begin by exploring core debates on aesthetic experience, aesthetic properties, and aesthetic value. But we will also venture into considerations of aesthetics in our everyday lives, aesthetic taste and our personalities, aesthetics and grief, aesthetics and gender, and aesthetics and race. By the end of the quarter, you will have a strong foundation in understanding this rich aspect of life we call aesthetics.

LEARNING GOALS

(1) Broaden or deepen understanding of key issues in aesthetics. (2) Think critically about aesthetics. (3) Be able to engage productively with debates on aesthetic issues. (4) Rigorously consider the value of aesthetics in your own life.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Nanay, Bence. 2020. *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction*. ISBN: 978-0198826613.

Additional required texts will be posted on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

| Course Requirement | % |
|------------------------------|----|
| Synchronous Participation | 10 |
| Asynchronous Participation | 15 |
| Meeting Moderation & Minutes | 15 |
| Position Papers | 45 |
| Reflection Paper | 15 |

SYNCHRONOUS PARTICIPATION

You are generally expected to attend every Zoom class discussion meeting. But one absence will be overlooked, no questions asked. Further absences will be excused *only* on account of medical reasons, religious observances, personal emergencies, or conflicts due to COVID-19. For any medical reason, you must submit a note in which you testify that you were too ill to attend class. For any religious observance, you are required to notify me of this *in advance*. Personal emergencies and COVID-19 conflicts will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. All students begin the course with a 100% participation grade (100 points). For every unexcused absence, your participation grade will be reduced 20 points. For every 15 minutes of unexcused lateness, your participation grade will be reduced 5 points.

ASYNCHRONOUS PARTICIPATION

Every week, you are required to post once in the #discussion channel of our Slack workspace before Friday. A post may consist of a question about or comment on an issue you find interesting. A post may also consist of a response to a classmate's post. Posts should be roughly 50–100 words. *Late posts will not be accepted for credit, except if due to medical reasons or personal emergencies* (see policy above). Posts will be assessed on a 2-point scale. Attendance at a TA discussion section may also fulfill this requirement.

MEETING MODERATION

One week, you are required to be a particularly active discussant in our Zoom meeting. Your key responsibilities are to lead breakout groups, voice relevant questions posted on Slack, and raise questions or concerns of your own. On the week you are a meeting moderator, you are expected to have a thorough understanding of the texts to be discussed. Meeting moderation will be assessed on a 2-point scale.

MEETING MINUTES

One week, you are required to post key questions and takeaways from our Zoom meetings in the #notes channel of our Slack workspace. Your meeting minutes post should be in bulleted format and should consist of around 7–10 bullets. Meeting minutes will be assessed on a 2-point scale.

POSITION PAPERS

You are required to write three position papers (500–750 words each). In each position paper, you are expected to clearly and concisely summarize an argument given in a text or in lecture, articulate what you envision to be the strongest objection to that argument, assess the merits of the objection, and consider your position on the issue. Position papers will be assessed against a 100-point rubric.

REFLECTION PAPER

You are required to submit a final reflection paper (500–750 words). In your reflection paper, you are expected to consider the value of aesthetics in your own life. Your thoughts must be in conversation with at least one text from the course. Your reflection paper will be assessed against a 100-point rubric.

GRADING SYSTEM

Grades for all assignments will be calculated in terms of raw %. Unless accommodations are made in advance, late assignments will be penalized at least 2.5% per day they are late. S/NC grades for the course will be calculated as follows: >70 = S; <70 = NC. Letter grades will be calculated as follows:

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|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| % | 97 | 93 | 90 | 87 | 83 | 80 | 77 | 73 | 70 | 67 | 63 | 60 | 0 |
| letter | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | NP |

GRADE DISPUTES

It is our job to grade as accurately and fairly as possible. We take that job seriously. But should you believe we've made an error in recording or assessing any of your assignments, please let us know as soon as possible. If you believe there is an error in recording, submit an email. If you believe there is an error in assessment, speak with us in person (during office hours or by appointment) *and* submit an email detailing why you believe reassessment should be considered. All disputes submitted in a timely manner will receive a response within one week. ***No disputes will be considered after Monday, March 22nd.***

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to comply with Stanford's Honor Code. Any violations of this Code will be confronted and reported. For more information, visit <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu>.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any course requirements due to religious observances, you are required to notify me of this *in advance*. If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any course requirements due to medical reasons, you must submit evidence documenting the date of a medical appointment or time during which illness prevented the completion of course requirements. If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any of the course requirements due to personal reasons, speak to me as soon as possible (some form of documentation will be required). *No requests for accommodation of any kind will be considered after the last day of class.*

SPECIAL NEEDS AND SITUATIONS

Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty. Unless the student has a temporary disability, Accommodation Letters are issued for the entire academic year. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <https://oae.stanford.edu/>).

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: THE DAY READINGS ARE LISTED IS THE DAY THEY WILL BE DISCUSSED.

WEEK 1: WHAT IS AESTHETICS?

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| W 1/13 | Course Info and Intro To Do: Select Meeting Moderation and Minutes dates |
| F 1/15 | LECTURE |

WEEK 2: AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE & PROPERTIES

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| W 1/20 | DISCUSSION Nanay (2020) Chapters 1–3 |
| F 1/22 | LECTURE |

WEEK 3: AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

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| W 1/27 | DISCUSSION Nanay (2020) Chapters 4–5 Carolyn Korsmeyer (2004) <i>Gender and Aesthetics</i> , “Aesthetic Pleasures” (pages 44–57) |
| F 1/29 | LECTURE |

WEEK 4: AESTHETIC VALUE

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| W 2/3 | DISCUSSION Antonia Peacocke (2020) “Let’s be Liberal: An Alternative to Aesthetic Hedonism” C. Thi Nguyen (2020) “Autonomy and Aesthetic Engagement” Nick Riggle (2015) “On the Aesthetic Ideal” |
| F 2/5 | LECTURE |

———— **POSITION PAPER 1 DUE Monday 2/8 @ Noon PST on Canvas** ————

WEEK 5: AESTHETICS & ART

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| W 2/10 | DISCUSSION Nanay (2020) Chapter 7 Nkiru Nzegwu (2019) “African Art in Deep Time: De-race-ing Aesthetics and De-racializing Visual Art” Jerrold Levinson (1992) “Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art” |
| F 2/12 | LECTURE |

WEEK 6: AESTHETICS & HUMAN BEAUTY

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| W 2/17 | DISCUSSION Chloé Cooper Jones (2019) “Such Perfection” Sheila Lintott and Sherri Irvin (2016) “Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects” |
| F 2/19 | LECTURE |

———— **POSITION PAPER 2 DUE Monday 2/22 @ Noon PST on Canvas** ————

WEEK 7: AESTHETICS & NATURE

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| W 2/24 | DISCUSSION Patricia Matthews (2002) “Scientific Knowledge and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature” Sandra Shapshay (2013) “Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics and the Neglect of the Sublime” |
| F 2/26 | LECTURE |

WEEK 8: AESTHETICS OF THE EVERYDAY

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| W 3/3 | DISCUSSION Yuriko Saito (2001) “Everyday Aesthetics” Sherri Irvin (2008) “Scratching an Itch” |
| F 3/5 | LECTURE |

———— **POSITION PAPER 3 DUE Monday 3/8 @ Noon PST on Canvas** ————

WEEK 9: AESTHETICS & EMOTION

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| W 3/10 | DISCUSSION Laura Sizer (2019) “Sad Songs Say So Much: The Paradoxical Pleasures of Sad Music” Kathleen Marie Higgins (2020) “Aesthetics and the Containment of Grief” |
| F 3/12 | LECTURE |

WEEK 10: AESTHETICS & LIFE

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| W 3/17 | DISCUSSION Nanay (2020) Chapter 6 Mariagrazia Portera (2020) “Babies Rule! Niches, Scaffoldings, and the Development of an Aesthetic Capacity in Humans” |
| F 3/19 | Course Conclusion |

———— **REFLECTION PAPER DUE Friday 3/19 @ 11:59 pm PST on Canvas** ————