

INTRODUCTION TO ART THEORY

艺术理论导论

Instructor:

Dr. Matteo Ravasio

Course topic and expected learning outcomes:

The first part of this course introduces central topics in philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art. It examines contemporary English-speaking authors, as well as historical figures. The second part of the course examines more in detail philosophical problems related to art criticism. At the end of the course, students will have a general understanding of some crucial issues in the field of the philosophy of art, and a detailed understanding of a recent work on the philosophy of art criticism.

Course requirements:

This course is especially intended for students who are *not* majoring in philosophy, but rather in art history, art theory, or other disciplines related to the arts. No prior knowledge of philosophy is required.

Assignments:

- (1) *Weekly assignments (7 in total)*. During the first part of the course, students will be asked to answer to one or two given questions each week, relative to the content of the previous week's class (all questions will be provided in Session 1) (word limit: 300 words).
- (2) *Midterm assignment*. A short essay based on one out of five possible topics (word limit: 1500 words).
- (3) *Final essay*. You may choose either (1) a 3000 words essay based on a pre-established topic (topics will be proposed by the instructor, though they may also be suggested by students, or (2) an essay on Carroll's *On Criticism*, in which you analyze a piece of written art criticism according to the framework he defends. More details on both options will be provided in a separate document.

Course evaluation:

The final grade is out of 100 points. Points breakdown is as follows:

- (1) *Weekly assignments*: 35 points. These are pass/fail, that is, no grades will be assigned. In case of failure, the assignments can be attempted as many times as one wishes, until the last day of lectures. Students need to pass all of the weekly assignments in order to complete the course.
- (2) *Midterm assignment*: up to 25 points.
- (3) *Final essay*: up to 40 points.

(4) *Class participation*: extra 5 points. These additional points are assigned to students if they attend lectures regularly and participate in class discussions.

Online students can obtain the extra 5 points for class participation by writing a 500 words summary of an article or book chapter approved by the course instructor.

Reading materials:

Mandatory readings:

- Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory*/西方艺术新论, Yilin Press, 2009.
- Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, 2008.

Recommended readings:

- Stephen Davies, *The Philosophy of Art*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Academic integrity:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and will be taken very seriously.

Course schedule

1. Introduction

This class introduces the analytic approach to aesthetics and philosophy of art, providing a brief history of its development and its methodological features.

The class will also give an overview of the course structure, and explain in some detail course assignments and other organizational matters.

2. Form and content

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 1.

3. Definitions of art

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 2.

Assignment: weekly question 1 (word limit: 300 words).

4. Art across cultures

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 3.

Assignment: weekly question 2 (word limit: 300 words).

5. Art institutions

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 4.

Assignment: weekly question 3 (word limit: 300 words).

6. Feminist approaches

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 5.

Assignment: weekly question 4 (word limit: 300 words).

7. Art and knowledge

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 6.

Assignment: weekly question 5 (word limit: 300 words).

8. Art and technology

Readings: Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 7.

Assignment: weekly question 6 (word limit: 300 words).

Midterm test is due (word limit: 1500).

9. Art Criticism and Philosophy

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Introduction.

Assignment: weekly question 7 (word limit: 300 words).

10. Criticism and evaluation

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Chapter 1.

11. Criticism and its Objects

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Chapter 2.

12. How criticism works – part 1

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, pp. 84-108.

13. How criticism works – part 2

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, pp. 108-152.

14. Criticism and evaluation

Readings: Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Chapter 4.

15. Conclusion and review

16. Essay writing advice

This class is in preparation to the final essay. It provides advice on how to write an academic philosophy essay in English, covering topics such as essay structure, citation style, academic integrity, etc.