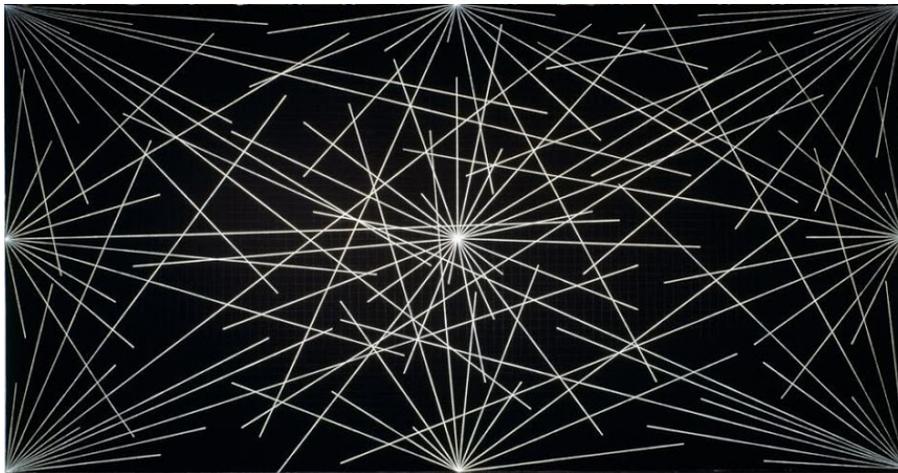


# Philosophy of Art & Beauty

Philosophy 203  
MWF 10:20-11:20pm  
Howard 253

Fall 2018



Sol Lewitt, *Wall Drawing 289*, A 6-inch (15 cm) grid covering each of the four black walls. White lines to points on the grids. Fourth wall: twenty-four lines from the center, twelve lines from the midpoint of each of the sides, twelve lines from each corner. (The length of the lines and their placement are determined by the drafter.)

## My Information

Here is my information:

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Office hours: MWF 11:30-1:30pm or by appointment

## Course Introduction

This course is an exploration of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. The first part of the course concerns core topics in the philosophy of art including DEPICTION, INTENTION, FICTION, and EXPRESSION in different artistic media such as painting, photography, film, and literature.

- How can a painting or sculpture represent or depict something? Do they do so by being similar to the pictured? For example, how is *La Femme-Fleur* a portrait of Françoise Gilot?<sup>1</sup>



Pablo Picasso, *La Femme-Fleur*, 1932

- Is the meaning of a work determined by the artist's intentions? If not, what does determine its meaning? For example, Jonathon Swift's *A Modest Proposal* advocates eating children to deal with the Irish famine.

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<sup>1</sup>Picasso said, "No...a realistic portrait would not represent you at all."

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled...

In the text there are no clues that is ironical. But, if this is ironic and surely it is, then this is because he *intends* it to be read as ironic.

- How should we respond to fictions? Are we really afraid of Regan McNeil in *The Exorcist*? How can we feel empathy for the parents in *A Tokyo Story*? We know the events are not real so how can we feel genuine emotion?
- How can instrumental music express emotions? Why is Miles Davis' *Blue in Green* melancholy?<sup>2</sup>

The second part concerns the value of art thinking about twentieth century abstract and conceptual art as case study. The twentieth century was a century of abstract art including movements such as Cubism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, etc. In *The Painted Word*, Tom Wolfe makes fun of these works as basically *meaningless*.

All these years, along with countless kindred souls, I am certain, I had made my way into the galleries of Upper Madison and Lower Soho and the Art Gildo Midway of Fifty-seventh Street, and into the museums, into the Modern, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim, the Bastard Bauhaus, the New Brutalist, and the Fountain-head Baroque, into the lowliest storefront churches and grandest Robber Baronial temples of Modernism. All these years I, like so many others, had stood in front of a thousand, two thousand, God-knows-how-many thousand Pollocks, de Koonings, Newmans, Nolands, Rothkos, Rauschenbergs, Judds, Johnses, Olitskis, Louises, Stills, Franz Klines, Frankenthalers, Kellys, and Frank Stellas, now squinting, now popping the eye sockets open, now drawing back, now moving closer—waiting, waiting, forever waiting for...it...for it to come into focus, namely, the visual reward (for so much effort) which must be there, which everyone

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<sup>2</sup>The piece is hyperlinked if you would like to hear it. Click the title.

(tout le monde) knew to be there—waiting for something to radiate directly from the paintings on these invariably pure white walls, in this room, in this moment, into my own optic chiasma. All these years, in short, I had assumed that in art, if nowhere else, seeing is believing. Well—how very shortsighted!

Do these “pictures of nothing” have meaning? What does their value, if they have value, consist in? Can a work of art exist in the mind without material manifestation? If a work of art can be conceptual, who then is the artist?

## Course Materials

There are two textbooks for this course. The rest of our readings will be distributed electronically to you.

- Varnedoe, Kirk (2006) *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art since Pollock*. Princeton University Press.
- Goldie, Peter and Schellekens, Elisabeth (2009) *Who's Afraid of Conceptual Art?* Routledge Press.

## Course Requirements

In this course, your grade will be determined by 4 exams (or 3 exams and 1 paper).

### Exams & Papers

Your final grade is determined as follows:

- Three exams (3 × 20%)
- Final exam (paper) (30%)
- Participation (10%)

If you prefer, you can *replace your final exam* with one 6-8 page paper that should have a well-defined thesis that is clearly argued. The essay should be without spelling and grammatical errors. What follows is a rough indication of what I look for in grading papers.

**A, 90+, Excellent** – Papers receiving a grade in this range clearly demonstrate advanced understanding of the basic concepts and issues in the text(s). In addition, these papers provide a sustained argument and critique of the text or provide substantial and interesting questions concerning the interpretation of the text. The paper as a whole is tightly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are nonexistent.

**B, 80-89, Good** – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate a basic, but thorough, understanding of basic concepts and issues. Where understanding is lacking, an earnest attempt at interpreting the author is evident. In addition, these responses show a somewhat successful attempt at critical examination, argument, or questioning of the text. The paper as a whole is mostly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar and spelling are minimal.

**C, 70-79, Satisfactory** – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate some (possibly incomplete) understanding of basic concepts and issues. In addition, these responses show little or no earnest attempt at interpretation, critical examination, or questioning of the text. Paper lacks focus and is poorly organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are frequent.

**D - F, Unsatisfactory** – Papers receiving a grade in this range have failed to demonstrate any degree of real understanding of basic concepts and issues, and lack evidence of an earnest attempt to do so.

## **Late work**

All assignments are due on the scheduled dates. However, if you come to me at least *one full day in advance* you may have one week's extension, no excuse required. If you do not have an extension, for every day your assignment is not turned in, your assignment is lowered one letter grade. Be aware that turning in a paper by extension will delay feedback and that you may not have the time you need to improve and develop before the next assignment. Note, this does not apply to the final assignment.

## Participation

This class is difficult for some students; however, the biggest difficulties arise because students get behind in the readings. To prevent this, you should attend class regularly. Thus, I will allow you to miss a maximum of four classes unpenalized but for each class thereafter you will lose 1% of your final grade. My rubric for participation is as follows.

A	B	C	D	F
Actively supports, engages and listens to peers (ongoing)	Makes a sincere effort to interact with peers (ongoing)	Limited interaction with peers	Virtually no interaction with peers	No interaction with peers
Arrives full prepared at every session	Arrives mostly, if not fully, prepared (ongoing)	Preparation, and therefore level of participation, are both inconsistent When prepared, participates	Rarely prepared, rarely participates	Never prepared, never participates
Plays an active role in discussions (ongoing)	Participates constructively in discussions (ongoing)	participates constructively in discussions and makes relevant comments based on the assigned material	Comments are generally vague or drawn from outside of the assigned material	Demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material (on going)
Comments advance the level and depth of the dialogue (consistently)	Makes relevant comments based on the assigned material (ongoing)	Group dynamic and level of discussion are not affected by the student?s presence	Demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest (on occasion)	Group dynamic and level of discussion are significantly harmed by the student?s presence
Group dynamic and level of discussion are consistently better because of the student?s presence	Group dynamic and level of discussion are occasionally better (never worse) because of the student?s presence		Group dynamic and level of discussion are harmed by the student?s presence	

Participation Rubric

## Grade Scale

The course grading scale is as follows:

A = 93 – 100, A- = 90 – 92, B+ = 86 – 89, B = 83 – 85, B- = 80 – 82, C+ = 76 – 79, C = 73 – 75, C- = 70 – 72, D+ = 66 – 69, D = 60 – 65, F = 0 – 59

It is impossible to do well in this course without reading and studying. I suggest that you *carefully* read the assigned material taking notes on what you read. You are strongly encouraged to discuss the course material with others outside of class. I am happy to help you outside of class. That is why I keep office hours.

## Plagiarism

All students are expected to follow Lewis & Clark College's Academic Integrity Policy. This is stated in Lewis Clark College's College Catalog. Generally, plagiarizers and cheaters will be given an F for the entire course (they will not be allowed to drop or withdraw from the course). Also, your case will be given to the Honor Board where in addition to a failing grade you will receive disciplinary action.

## Learning Differences

If you have been diagnosed with a learning difference and are seeking an accommodation, please provide me, as soon as possible, with a "Notice of Disability and Statement of Accommodation" from Student Support Services.

## Tentative Schedule

Here is our schedule which is of course revisable.

### Week 1 Depiction (9/2-9/8)

- Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation, Wollheim
- Pictorial Recognition, Lopes
- Pictorial Art and Visual Experience, Hopkins

### Week 2 Photography (9/9-9/15)

- Transparent Pictures, Kendall L. Walton

- Why Photography Doesn't Represent Artistically, Roger Scruton
- What's Special About Photography? Ted Cohen

**Week 3 Film (9/16-9/22)**

- The Power of Movies, Noël Carroll
- Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look, Laura Mulvey
- Beauty and Evil: the Case of Leni Riefenstahl, Mary Devereaux

**Week 4 Expression in Music (9/30-10/6)**

- Representation of Feeling Is Not the Content of Music, Eduard Hanslick
- The Expression of Emotion in Music, Stephen Davis
- A New Romantic Theory of Expression, Jenefer Robinson

**FIRST EXAM**

**Week 5 Literature (10/7-10/13)**

- What Is Literature? Terry Eagleton
- The Intention of the Author, Monroe Beardsley
- Criticism as Retrieval, Richard Wollheim

**Week 6 Literary Intentions (10/14-10/20)**

- An Intentional Demonstration? Gary Iseminger
- A Paradox in Intentionalism, Daniel O. Nathan
- On What a Text Is and How It Means, William E. Tolhurst

**Week 7 Fiction Make-Believe (10/21-10/27)**

- What Is Fiction? Gregory Currie
- How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions? Peter Lamarque
- Spelunking, Simulation, and Slime: On Being Moved by Fiction, Kendall L. Walton

**Week 8 What is Music? (10/28-11/3)**

- On the Concept of Music, Jerrold Levinson
- Ontology of Music, Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson
- Making Tracks, Andrew Kania

**SECOND EXAM**

**Week 9 *Who is Afraid of Conceptual Art?* (11/4-11/10)**

- Ch 1 The Challenge of Conceptual Art
- Ch 2 The Definition and the Thing
- Ch 3 Appreciating Conceptual Art

**Week 10 *Who is Afraid of Conceptual Art?* (11/11-11/17)**

- Ch 4 Aesthetics and Beyond
- Ch 5 What's Left Once Aesthetic Appreciation is Gone?

**Week 11 *Pictures of Nothing* (11/18-11/24)**

- Ch 1 Why Abstract Art?
- Ch 2 Survivals and Fresh Starts

**Week 12 *Pictures of Nothing* (11/25-12/2)**

- Ch 3 Minimalism
- Ch 4 After Minimalism

**Week 13 *Pictures of Nothing* (12/3-12/8)**

- Ch 5 Satire, Irony, and Abstract Art
- Ch 6 Abstract Art Now

**Week 14 Wrap-up (12/9-12/16)**

**FOURTH EXAM OR PAPER**