Syllabus: Fall 2014

Department: English and Modern Languages
Course Number/Section: PHIL 1330/01
Course Title: Arts and Ideas
Professor: Dr. Michael J. Matthis
Office: Maes-14
Office Hours: MW: 2:30-3:30; TR: 11:00-12:00
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Course Description:

This course involves a survey of the various arts—visual, literary, musical—in relation to movements that define and shape the arts in a distinctive form or style at various times and various epochs. In relation to this, the course will examine the possible ways in which these movements are generated by ideas—aesthetic, metaphysical, but also scientific, political, and ethical—that come to dominate a specific period. Movements and styles, to be explained, include the Classical Greece, Roman Byzantine, Gothic, Florentine Renaissance, Roman Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Early Modernism, Abstract Expressionism, and Postmodernism. In this way students will begin to understand the creative arts as involving ideas that underlie these various movements and epochal styles, as well as the ways in which the arts themselves help to form and transmit ideas. By exposing students to the ways in which ideas are central to the arts, students should be able to understand how the arts involve processes both of exploration and communication, so that the arts take their place rightfully at the center of the pursuit of rationality, and therefore at the center of what we call civilization.

Prerequisite: None

Required Texts:

*Arts and Ideas*, William Fleming
*Perspectives in Aesthetics: Plato to Camus*, Peyton Richter

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will understand the ways in which various arts involve ideas that are of timeless importance, and yet reflect those ideas in ways and styles that are unique to an historical epoch or period to time.

2. Students will understand the ways in which artistic ideas can be known or experienced, according to various philosophers.

3. Students will be engaged in written and oral forms of communication that exhibit their understanding and appreciation of art and its involvement in ideas that are universal and yet
emblematic of a specific period of history.

4. Students will become acquainted with the concept of creativity as an activity distinct from making, and be able to understand the distinction between art and craft.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

Critical Thinking

Through short writing assignments, students will demonstrate competency in critically analyzing arguments, pinpointing the author's goal (conclusion), and examining the premises that the author uses in support of the conclusion. Beyond this, students will demonstrate an ability to question an author's premises, examining any assumptions that the premises entail, highlighting the historical, political, cultural, or circumstantial conditions upon which the premises rest. In addition, students will be expected to arrive at a position of their own in relation to a philosophy, a style of art, and the ideas that connect the philosophy to the style of art. Here students will be expected to take into account other positions against which their own is developed, or in relation to which theirs is supported.

Communication:

Communication will consist of two parts:

(A) Writing: using their reading assignments, students will compose clear critical/analytical essays with a clear thesis and introduction, along with clear and organized supporting paragraphs. Students will also use the standard conventions of English grammar and punctuation, and will write clear and efficient sentences.

(B) Speaking: Through the use of discussion groups, students will address the group, presenting their own essays to the group, responding to questions from their fellow students, and raising questions of their own concerning the essays of others in the group. Students will be assessed on posture, gesture, eye contact, and clear use of their voice, and the quality and nature of interaction with their group members.

Social Responsibility:

In essays students will demonstrate a commitment to understanding that ideas—artistic, philosophical, scientific, political—lie at the basis of Western culture and civilization. As such students will demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of civility and civilization through their essays and also through their interaction with one another.

Teamwork:

Students will divide into groups and determine jointly how to assess short papers. New leaders will be selected in each group session, and the leader will direct the group toward a consensus as to what to look for in a paper. Rubrics will be selected, and each students will decide on their
own how each paper fulfills the rubrics. Students will have to justify their scores individually, and they will be graded by how well they apply rubrics to papers. The students grade on the paper will be assessed by the teacher at a later time. Individuals in the group will be given a grade as to how well they interact with one another and how they handle responsibilities as leaders as well as group-members.

Disability Accommodation:

It is the policy of Lamar University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law, and the University's commitment to equal educational opportunities. It is the student's responsibility to register with Lamar's Disability Support Services (880-8347) as quickly as possible. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the professor directly during the first week of the course.

Academic Honesty:

Lamar University students will not cheat, lie, plagiarize, or tolerate those who do. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated on any course assignments. Should you be found responsible for a dishonest incident, the course instructor will assign a reasonable penalty, which may include failure of the course. If you do not consent to the findings and/or penalty, you must file an appeal with the department chairperson within five days, as specified in the student handbook (available at www.my.lamar.edu).

Drop:

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are officially enrolled in this course. If, at any point, you decide not to participate in this course, it is your responsibility officially to drop or withdraw from enrollment. Failure to do so may result in a failing grade. Drops after the course begins may carry financial penalty in that full reimbursement may not be possible.

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken daily. No points will be deducted from your final grade due to absence, but no extra credit or extra participation points will be given to any student who has over three unexcused absences. Participation points for group discussions will be given a zero for any absence without a satisfactory excuse.

Grading and Evaluation:

There will be four examinations, including the final examination; each examination will cover material beginning from the preceding examination. Examinations will be both written (short essay, definitions) and multiple choice in character. Please bring a scantron #82-E and a soft-leaded pencil for each examination. Examinations will come from lectures and assigned reading material. Absences from any examination must be made up by appointment in my office prior to the exam's being handed back. Failure to do so will result in a grade of zero for the exam.
Should the student miss an examination because of illness or some other unavoidable reason, documentation for the excuse must be provided, and a comprehensive make-up exam will be given to the student at the end of the semester, the grade for which will substitute for the missing exam.

Homework questions on various readings will be assigned on a regular basis. These questions will be graded in class. Failure to do the assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. If the student missed the class, and turns in the assignment prior to the assignment’s being handed back, the homework will be accepted as late, with a small penalty. Any homework that was not handed in, or that was given a penalty, can be made up by the student’s doing extra credit work, provided that the student does not have excessive absences.

Extra credit papers will be accepted during the semester. The nature of these papers and other requirements, such as attendance, will be described in a separate handout.

The final examination must be taken on the scheduled date, unless excused. Travel plans and travel problems will not be accepted as excuses, nor will work-related problems. Please plan your work schedule around this and all other examinations.

The student’s points on all examinations, homework, and papers will be added together and divided by all possible points that a students could make on all these areas. The decimal will then be moved two places to the right, giving the student an average for the semester. In general grade totals will be assigned based on a weighting that should be roughly as follows:

Examinations and homework: 65% of grade.
Papers: 25% of grade.
Group discussion and team-work: 10% of grade.

**Grading Scale:**

A final average of 90 to 100 will earn an A, 80 to 89.99 a B, 70 to 79.99 a C, 60 to 69.99 a D, and 0 to 59.99 an F. Students whose average ends in something like 70.6 will ordinarily have their grade bumped up, assuming that there are no circumstances relating to matters such as absences that will deny the student this advantage.

**Course Outline:**

Week 1: Introductory concepts.
Lecture: What is philosophy? What are ideas? How do ideas manifest themselves in the arts in various forms and styles? What is the nature of objectivity and subjectivity? How do ideas differ from opinions? Which concept applies to ideas—objectivity or subjectivity? Which applies to opinions?

No required readings.
Week 2: Classical Greece: Its arts and ideas.

Lecture: Concepts of humanism, idealism, and rationalism; their role in ancient philosophy and culture. Hegel’s interpretation of progress in the arts as applied to ancient Egyptian and Greek architecture. How do classical Greek architecture and sculpture manifest the concepts of humanism, idealism, and rationalism: is there evidence of a progression in sculpture toward rationality and humanism?


Homework will be assigned on the reading in *Perspectives*.

Week 3: Classical Greek philosophy.

Lecture: Plato’s World of Forms or Ideas. Plato’s criticisms of the arts: how the arts fail to relate adequately to Ideas, and how they have a negative influence on social and individual character.

Homework assignment will be given from *Perspectives*.

Paper assignment: Is Plato right about the arts? What contemporary forms of the arts in popular culture might exemplify Plato’s concern about the arts?

Week 4: Aristotle’s response to Plato.
Test 1: In-class essay, definitions, multiple choice questions.
Go over homework assignment from previous week.
Lecture: How does Aristotle’s explanation of catharsis, in relation to tragedy, respond to Plato’s charges against the arts? How does Aristotle’s philosophy benefit from Plato’s, and yet modify it in a way that contributes to both the arts and the sciences?

Discussion groups: Presentation of previous paper topic.

Week 5: continuation of week 4.
Return of examination.
Lecture: Byzantine art as expression of mysticism and the neo-Platonic ideas of Plotinus; Sant’ Apollinaire Nuovo; San Vitale: mosaics and architecture.
Reading: pages 112-140, *Arts and Ideas*; 71-81, *Perspectives*.
Homework assigned in *Perspectives*.

Week 6: The Gothic Style
Lecture: The architecture of Chartes. Schopenhauer’s interpretation of architecture and its application to the Gothic style.
Homework: 112-140, *Arts and Ideas*; 191-205, *Perspectives*. Homework to be assigned from both readings.
Week 7: Florentine Renaissance Style
Lecture: The late medieval synthesis of classical Greek Philosophy and Christianity; its influence on the Renaissance. The influence of the arts on the sciences, and the sciences on the arts: Brunelleschi, Donatello, Mosaccio, Fra Angelico, Boticelli, de Vinci,
Reading: pages 214-261, *Arts and Ideas*.

Week 8: Roman Renaissance Style
Lecture: Michelangelo’s relation to Plato; the merging of pagan and Christian ideas; Raphael’s “School of Athens,” Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel and sculptures.

Test 2

Week 9: Go over exam.
Lecture: Shakespeare’s tragedies; how does Shakespeare’s tragedies exemplify Aristotle’s definition of tradition? Literature as a form of art: How does it differ from the visual and auditory arts? Hegel and Schopenhauer on literature as a form of art.
Homework questions assigned on these readings.

Week 10: Baroque and Neo-classical styles in painting and music.
Lecture: Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven; Schopenhauer and Hegel and Dufrenne on music’s relation to ideas. Audio presentation of Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven.
Rembrandt and Vermeer: Schopenhauer’s interpretation. The concept of an aesthetic attitude. The beautiful in contrast to the sublime. Schopenhauer’s idea of music as direct expression of will.
Paper topic: What examples in recent music can you find that exemplify Schopenhauer’s distinction between the beautiful and the sublime?
Homework questions on these pages.

Week 11: The Romantic Style
Discussion groups: examination and presentation of paper assignment.

Test 3

Week 12: Impressionism and Post-impressionism
Homework questions on these readings.
Week 13: Early Modern Styles: Non-representational art
Lecture: Rousseau and neo-primitivism; Picasso and cubism; dada and surrealism; Stravinsky and Schoenberg in music; Eliot and Stevens in poetry, Kafka in the novel.
Reading assignment: 562-596, *Arts and Ideas*.
Homework questions on this reading.

Week 14: Abstract Expressionism
Clive Bell’s theory of art as significant form. Jackson Pollock, Mondrian, de Kooning, Still, and others.
Paper topic: Is the art of Pollock and others really art? If so, why? If not, why?

Week 15: Post-modernism.
Lecture: Hegel and Danto on the death of art. Post-modernism’s reaction against modern art.
The new academism, the new realism, the new historicism.
Discussion groups: presentation and evaluation of papers.

Test 4.