

Oran Magal

Lectures: Monday & Wednesday, 10:05-11:25, Edu 624

Office hours: Leacock 935, M & W 11:30-12:30

What's all this about?

This course is an introduction to philosophical aesthetics, with an emphasis on philosophical questions about art. The principal questions, positions, and approaches in the field will be introduced through a series of philosophical debates; a list of the topics is given below. The aim is to combine specific, topical debates with general theoretical issues. The emphasis will be on 20th century and contemporary texts, including both 'analytic' and 'continental' readings (the majority of the readings are more 'analytic' in style). Historical background will be filled in where relevant.

Topics to be covered:

1. Is art universal – does it occur in all cultures? This will connect with questions about definitions of art, and whether it is definable at all.
2. Authenticity, part I: 'authentic performance' (e.g., of music); we will consider how and whether historical and biographical content as well as the author/creator's intentions matter.
3. Authenticity, part II: fakes, forgeries, and the experience of art – why does the authenticity of a work of art matter? This leads to a more general discussion of what enters into our experience of art.
4. Photography and representation: what makes a photograph into a work of art? This connects with more general questions about the nature and role of representation in art.
5. Feelings and fiction: why do we care about fictional characters and worlds? We will also discuss related, broader questions about art and feelings. Time permitting, we may discuss metaphysical questions about the status of fictional characters.
6. If there remains time, we will add additional topics to the list, based on student interests.

Readings:

Most required readings will be from our textbook: *Arguing about Art*, 3rd ed., edited by A. Neill & A. Ridley (Routledge, 2008). In support of local, non-chain bookstores, copies of the textbook will be available for purchase at *The Word* bookstore near campus (369 Milton Street). Please note that this store does not accept cards; please bring cash (approx. 65\$). There will also be a copy on reserve at the library. Any other required and optional readings will be posted on *MyCourses*. Detailed instructions on what to read for each week will be posted on *MyCourses*, as well.

Means of evaluation:

The final mark comprises:

- Final essay: a full 1st version to be submitted 2 weeks before the end of classes (20%) and a revised version submitted after the end of term (10%)
- Short in-class final exam, held during the last class (20%)
- Five reading assignment 'micro-essays', due throughout the term, worth 10% each

Required background:

No specific previous philosophy course is required. However, students are expected to know how to write an essay in philosophy or in the humanities more generally. If unsure, please contact the instructor.

Policy for Late Work: Extensions to deadlines set will be granted only in **exceptional** circumstances, usually only for medical reasons and with a medical note or other, similar emergencies, appropriately documented. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 3 percentage points per day overdue, including weekends.

McGill Statements of Policy:

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. *Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).*

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).