

Syllabus: Phil 156 (Spring 2024)

Instructor: Sophia Pavlos, Ph.D.

Email: spavlos@gmu.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Class Modality: ONLINE MW 1030-1145

Required Readings:

- All readings will be available on Blackboard. **You must have this material available during class. Printed materials are highly encouraged.**

Course Description:

This course will investigate what art is and what role it plays in our lives. Is there a distinctive quality or function which all works of art possess and which makes them art? Do they have a distinctive kind of meaning? What determines an artwork's meaning? Can it be expressed in other terms? Why do we care about an artwork's originality and authenticity? How should we evaluate art? Can it make us better or worse people? In asking these questions, it's important that we test our views against actual works of art.

Course Structure:

Class meetings will be via Zoom, at the times specified (above), on the dates specified in the course schedule (below). It is expected that all students enrolled in the course will attend all Zoom lectures associated with this course—i.e., attend the Zoom class (and arrive on time). You can access the zoom link via Blackboard. We will use the same link for the entirety of the semester.

Grading Breakdown:

Assignment	Percent worth each	Total percent worth
Self Assessment Survey	10%	10%
Mini Critique	20%	20%
Midterm Project	20%	20%
Final Project	20%	20%
Participation	30%	30%
<i>Total</i>		<i>100%</i>

Self Assessment Survey

You will complete this after the first day of class. It will serve as a reference point to see the evolution of your perspective and understanding about the course's themes.

Mini Critique

Each student will sign up for one class period to present an art object of their choice and lead a 10-15 minute discussion/critique. This can be a painting, piece of music, something you saw on social media, an art installation, etc.

Please provide your object to the rest of the class at least 1 day before your critique, along with a short description of the object.

Midterm Project

Information will be disclosed by the instructor.

Final Project

Information will be disclosed by the instructor.

Participation

This is a discussion-based class. You are expected to come to class ready to participate fully in class discussion. You should have prepared the material and have something to say about it. Participating involves engaging in a conversation with your classmates. You should pay attention to what others are saying and be ready to respond to others' comments. Your observations should contribute meaningfully to the dialogue in the class and help to produce a lively, useful discussion for everyone. Participation should be vocal, and you are expected to speak in class. The zoom chat is a supplement to discussion, but does not replace active engagement.

You will receive a participation grade based on these criteria:

None: You never participate, are not engaged, do not appear to be paying attention.

Half: You are engaged in the class when you attend, you answer questions in class and demonstrate that you have absorbed the material when asked.

Full: You attend all class sessions. You make valuable contributions to class that engage with the comments of your peers and encourage others to participate in a useful dialogue. You do not dominate conversation but seek to raise the level and interest of the class as a whole.

TLDR: Attend class. Be on time. Come prepared having done all assigned work/reading. Contribute vocally to class discussion. Have your camera on whenever possible.

Grade Values:

A: 94-100 **A-:** 90-93

B+: 87-89 **B:** 84-86 **B-:** 80-83

C+: 77-79 **C:** 74-76 **C-:** 70-73

D+: 67-69 D: 64-66 D-: 60-63

F: 59 and below.

Course Policies:

Grading:

All assignments receive full credit if they follow the instructions and showcase engagement and effort. I will not grade you based off of your thoughts, or whether I agree/disagree with your argument. Instead, I am looking for evidence that you have put effort into the assignment, and that you are creatively engaging with the course themes and concepts.

Submission of Work and Extensions:

All required work shall be submitted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that you can access a computer with internet in time to submit your assignments. If a student is having difficulty meeting any deadline, they should contact the instructor to get accommodation. Extensions are possible.

Two things must be made explicit:

- (1) All course work must be submitted to Blackboard
- (2) No work will be accepted after final grades have been submitted.

Academic Misconduct:

Students are expected to be familiar with the university's regulations concerning behavior and academic integrity. If a student is caught plagiarizing on any assignment, the student will receive a mark of zero on the assignment and reported to the Dept. Chair. The take-away: *research and cite, don't plagiarize.*

It should also be observed that some kinds of participation in online study sites violate the Mason Honor code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the instructor's materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. Always consult your syllabus and your professor before using these sites.

Attendance and Zoom Policies:

It is expected that students who are enrolled in the course will attend and participate in all Zoom lectures associated with this course. It must be observed that philosophy is not a soliloquy delivered to an empty room—virtual or otherwise. For this reason, students are encouraged to participate in the discussions (which will occur during every class meeting). If, in the unfortunate

event that a student cannot attend a lecture, the student is responsible to become aware of all information presented.

As a matter of best practice, it is requested that when a student is raising a discussion point, that they turn on their camera. Also, it must be observed that the impersonal nature of online learning—and the alienation associated with Zoom in particular—tends to be diminished when participants have their cameras on when they are actively participating with the class. Further, the professor enjoys when students use the various Zoom “reactions” during lectures.

Special Needs:

This instructor is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. If you self-identify as perhaps desiring accommodation, then please contact the instructor at your convenience.

Further, this instructor recognizes that principles associated with equity are of great importance during these fraught times. Historical, intergenerational, and socio-economic immiseration of marginalized groups is an aspect of our shared reality. If a student self identifies as desiring accommodation, please reach out to the instructor to discuss remedies. If any aspect of this course is unduly stressing a student (for any reason whatsoever), please reach out to the instructor for accommodation.

It is important to observe that Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Further, Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University.

If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Resources for Students:

George Mason University offers a plurality of resources to assist students. A complete list of these can be found here:

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

Blackboard Login Instructions

Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](#) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](#) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

Technical Help

If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu

If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu

MasonLive/Email

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu/>].

Responsible Use of Computing

Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible--use--of--computing/>].

Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#). See (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/email--tutoring>)

Counseling and Psychological Services

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

Diversity/Religious Holidays

If there are any issues related to religious holidays, please inform the instructor the first week of class. See also <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104>

Diversity/Inclusion Statement

GMU strives to promote and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment for individuals of all races, economic statuses, gender expressions and identities, sex, sexual orientations, ethnicities, national origins, first languages, religions, age, and ability status.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-993-3686 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Anti-Racism Statement

As a member of the George Mason University community, I will work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities. Anti-racist work strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background. I believe that the work of anti-racism starts with each individual; together students and faculty in this course will build knowledge and take actions rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that we will carry with us throughout our lives.

Academic Integrity

Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/>].

Honor Code

Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See

[<https://oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/>]. Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Accommodations

Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process.

***This syllabus and reading schedule are subject to revision.**

Reading Schedule:

1.17 — First Day of Class/ Introductions

Homework: self-assessment survey (to be completed on Blackboard)

1.22 — Pirsig: “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” Ch 18

Q: What makes a piece of art good vs bad?

1.24 — Weitz: “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics”

Q: Which definition of art provided by Weitz do you like best?

1.29 — Freeland: “Cognition, Creation and Comprehension” Mad Men, “The Gold Violin” (clip)

Q: How can people have such different experiences of the same art piece?

1.31 — Freeland: “Cultural Crossings”

Q: What does art tell us about a culture? What can you learn about someone through their art?

2.5 — Cohen: “High and Low Art and High and Low Audiences”

Q: Does it matter if people agree with your taste in art?

*2.7 — Freeland: “Money, Markets, Museums” + **The Simpsons “Mom & Pop Art” S10E19***

Q: How does money impact artists?

2.12 — Nochlin: “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”

Q: Does the artist’s identity matter when it comes to their art?

2.14 — Jerry Saltz: “How to Be an Artist”

Q: What is your favorite and least favorite piece of advice in the article?

2.19 — Manovich: “Who is an “Artist” in Software Era?” + “An A.I.-Generated Picture Won an Art Prize. Artists Aren’t Happy.” <https://cs.uwaterloo.ca/~jhoey/teaching/cogsci600/papers/Roose2022.pdf>

Q: Can technology be part of the artistic process?

2.21 — *Midterm assigned*

2.26 — **NO CLASS/ midterm work**

2.28 — *Midterm debrief*

3.4 — **NO CLASS**

3.6 — **NO CLASS**

3.11 — *Smuts: “Are Video Games Art?”*

Q: Why wouldn't video games count as art?

3.13 — *Shusterman: “The Fine Art of Rap”*

Q: What is post-modern art and why is rap part of the category?

3.18 — *Art Activism: The Guerrilla Girls + climate change protests*

Q: Why do people target art institutions for protests?

3.20 — *Eaton: “What's Wrong with the Female Nude?” + Parks and Rec S3E11 + Berger: Ways of Seeing Chapter 2*

Q: Are women's bodies celebrated or demonized by art and society?

3.25 — *Sarah Miller: “Fashion as Art; is Fashion Art?”*

Q: How do your clothes impact your lived experience?

3.27 — *Korsmeyer: “Aesthetic Value, Art, and Food”*

Q: Which senses have traditionally been privileged when it comes to art appreciation?

4.1 — *performance art examples*

4.3 — *Carroll: “The Power of Movies”*

Q: What can movies do that other art forms can't?

4.8 — *Robinson: “The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music”*

Q: Why do you listen to music? What does it offer you?

4.10 — *Propaganda*

Q: What is the relationship between art and power?

4.15 — social media and the art world

Q: How has social media impacted who can be an artist?

4.17 — advertising as art? + Ch.7 Ways Of Seeing

Q: Do you think advertisement can be an art form?

4.22 — Brad Troemel: Selfie Museums

Q: How has the selfie camera impacted people's self-image?

4.24 — Saito: "Everyday Aesthetics"

Q: What everyday objects in your life have aesthetic significance to you?

4.29 — Final Project Assigned

5.1-8 Final Project Due (see final exam schedule)