

Philosophy 543: *Topics in Philosophy of Art*

Ned Markosian
Department of Philosophy
University of Massachusetts – Amherst
markosian@umass.edu
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Office: Bartlett Hall 362

Office Hours: Tu 1-2, Th 2-3

Note: It is possible for graduate students to get seminar credit for this course.

Topics

- The Demarcation Problem (What is art?)
- The Existential Problem (What is art for?)
- The metaphysics of art objects
- Aesthetic and artistic value
- *Everyday Aesthetics*, by Yuriko Saito
- *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*, by Jenefer Robinson

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Characterize some of the main issues in The Philosophy of Art.
- Articulate and defend your own views on the main issues in The Philosophy of Art.

Course Requirements for Undergraduate Students

- ❖ **Six Presentations** (each worth 5% of final grade)
- ❖ **Six Short Papers** (each worth 5% of final grade)
- ❖ **8-Page Term Paper** (worth 40% of final grade)

Course Requirements for Graduate Students

- ❖ **Six Presentations** (each worth 5% of final grade)
- ❖ **Six Short Papers** (each worth 5% of final grade)
- ❖ **15-Page Term Paper** (18 pages for seminar credit) (worth 40% of final grade)

Required Readings

- Adajian, Thomas, "[The Definition of Art](#)," in [The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#).
- Brock, Stuart, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Characters," *Philosophical Review* **119** (2010), pp. 337-364.
- Dodd, Julian, "Musical Works as Eternal Types," *British Journal of Aesthetics* **40** (2000), pp. 424-440.
- Friend, Stacie, "Fictional Characters," *Philosophy Compass* **2** (2007), pp. 141-156.
- Robinson, Jenefer, *Deeper than Reason* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Saito, Yuriko, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Sundell, Timothy, "Disagreements About Taste," *Philosophical Studies* **155** (2011), pp. 267-288.
- Trivedi, Saam, "Against Musical Works as Eternal Types," *British Journal of Aesthetics* **42** (2002), pp. 73-82.

About Presentations

Each student will be required to do a presentation on each one of our four general topics (The Demarcation Problem, The Existential Problem, aesthetic and artistic value, and disagreement about aesthetic value), as well as two presentations on our more specialized topics (musical compositions, fictions and fictional characters, *Everyday Aesthetics*, and *Deeper than Reason*).

Presentations should be about 10 minutes long, and each one should feature a 1-2 page handout.

Our schedule for presentations will be worked out on the first day of class.

About Short Papers

For each day when you are not doing a presentation, you will be required to turn in a short paper. **Hard copies only.** Each short paper should be 2 pages (maximum) and should answer two main questions: *What is the problem?* and *What is the solution?* Late Short Papers will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per day.

About Term Papers

Your term paper must be on an approved topic. **PDFs only.** Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per day.

A Word About Discussions

Philosophical discussions (whether in discussion sections, after a talk, or in informal settings) can vary along a number of different dimensions. One of these is a spectrum that ranges from (a) a competitive, zero-sum game that involves scoring points and trying to appear smart, on one end, to (b) a co-operative and fun activity aimed at discovering and solving philosophical problems, on the other end. In general, the closer a discussion is to the co-operative end of this spectrum, the better it will be – better because it produces better philosophy, and better also because it is more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Here are some rules designed to keep us on the right end of this spectrum.

- Don't be mean.
- Never interrupt.
- Don't bogart the discussion. In fact, do the opposite: actively work to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to talk.
- Think in terms of abstract ideas that, once expressed, are on their own, rather than ideas that belong to a particular person.
- Don't worry about impressing anyone.
- Try to build on the points that have been made by others, rather than tearing them down.
- Try to make connections between the point currently under consideration and previous points.
- Every once in a while during the discussion, someone should offer a big- picture comment. "So it seems to me that we were discussing X and Y. Did we ever come to any conclusion about whether Y is consistent with X?"
- If you notice someone else breaking one of the first two rules, speak up right away, even if – *especially if* – you are not the victim.

Classroom Rules and Policies

Laptops and similar devices are permitted in class, but only for (a) taking notes or (b) viewing the readings. *If you plan to use a laptop or similar device in class, please talk to me beforehand so that you can take The Pledge* (which involves solemnly swearing to use your device only for good and never for evil).

The use of cell phones, music players, headphones, ear buds, etc. is not permitted during class.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
Sep	8 Course intro	
	15 The Demarcation Problem	Adajian, "The Definition of Art"
	22 The Existential Problem	TBD
	29 The metaphysics of art objects: musical compositions	Dodd, "Musical Works as Eternal Types" Trivedi, "Against Musical Works as Eternal Types"
Oct	6 The metaphysics of art objects: fictions and fictional characters	Friend, "Fictional Characters" Brock, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Characters"
	13 Aesthetic and artistic value; guest speaker: Laura Sizer	TBD
	20 Disagreements about aesthetic value	Sundell, "Disagreements About Taste"
	27 <i>Everyday Aesthetics</i>	Saito, Introduction, Chapters I-II
	Nov 3 <i>Everyday Aesthetics</i>	Saito, Chapters III-IV
10 <i>Everyday Aesthetics</i>	Saito, Chapter V, Conclusion	
17 <i>Deeper than Reason</i>	Robinson, Chapter 3	
24 No class (Thanksgiving break)		
Dec	1 <i>Deeper than Reason</i>	Robinson, Chapter 4
	8 <i>Deeper than Reason</i>	Robinson, Chapter 13
	15	Term papers due at 5PM