California State University, Sacramento  
Humanities and Religious Studies  
HRS 105: Approaches to Humanities  
Fall 2014

Professor Judy Thoma                          Best contact+  thomaj@csus.edu
Section 1    T/R  1:30-2:45 pm
Mendocino Hall 1024  
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Office Hours: T and R 3:30-4:30 pm
M and W 1:30-2:30 pm and by appt.
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^ see +

Course Description: HRS 105 is an advanced study of interdisciplinary methods applied to contemporary arts including literature, visual art, architecture, music and other modes of humanistic expression.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to guide and develop students’ understanding and vocabulary of basic stylistic principles and ideas across the many disciplines of cultural expression (literature, art, architecture, music, history and philosophy.) Our studies will focus on cultural context, the concept of transformation and more specifically how ideas and attitudes about the functions of art and artist change throughout the history of Western culture.

Successful students will:

- be able to conduct cross-disciplinary research and analysis.
- develop keen analytical skills through careful readings of the texts, thoughtful essays and lively class discussion.
- advance their knowledge of related vocabulary and demonstrate appropriate usage of terms and principles as they relate to the arts.
- advance their skills of critical analysis in reading and writing.
- identify and develop understanding of key terms such as “Romanticism” and “Expressionism” and demonstrate knowledge of these terms in historical, cultural and comparative contexts.
- craft well-written papers assisted by scholarly research using the library’s vast resources and other credible media.

Required Texts and Additional Reading:

- **Aesthetics** by Charles Taliaferro (Oneworld 2011)  
  (available in CSUS Hornet Bookstore)

N.B. The following additional required texts were not ordered from our bookstore. They are available in hardcopy (some also available in audio or digital format) new or used, very inexpensively from various booksellers online:

- **The Philosophies of Art and Beauty** edited by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns  
  (-digital from $7.00 or paperback from $13.50-from a number of sources including Google Books and directly from University of Chicago Press.)
- **The Lais of Marie de France** trans. By Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby
- **The Art Spirit** by Robert Henri (available on e-reader as well as paperback for under $20.00)
- **The Plague** by Albert Camus
There will be additional readings posted on BlackBoard or assigned in class. Be sure to check regularly for new readings and updates. The following internet resources provide access to many relevant primary source readings useful for our course and the humanities in general. (I bookmark these sources and cross-reference to find different translations of the same material or additional reading on topics.)

- The Perseus Project  www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper
- Project Gutenberg  www.gutenberg.org
- The Internet Sacred Texts Archive  www.sacred-texts.com
- The Medieval Sourcebook  http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/

Requirements and Grading:
Thoughtful reading and writing are fundamental aspects of this course, therefore, it is essential to complete all reading assignments and be attentive to lecture materials and presentations. (Take notes!) Attendance is required as per departmental attendance policy—grade reductions (and more importantly, loss of educational experience!) will result from excessive absences.

Respectful participation in class discussions is expected and will affect your overall grade favorably.* Disrespectful conduct, including, but not limited to, cell phone activity, playing on computers, chatting, coming in late, leaving early, disruptive behavior, obvious disengagement, etc..., will affect your grade unfavorably. If you have special needs or extreme circumstances requiring you to miss class, come late, etc..., please discuss with me.

*IMPORTANT! If you are a student who experiences anxiety simply at the thought of speaking up in class, please see me or email me for helpful strategies and tips for reducing stress and improving your learning experience. I consider all students equally important to the classroom dynamic.

Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in grade penalties or other serious consequences as per university policies. This can be very detrimental to your goals—don’t do it!!

Course grades are determined by the following:
20% - Attendance and Participation‡---------------------------------------------------------------60 points
15% - Reading responses (9 x 5pts) -----------------------------------------------------------------45 points
20% - Mid-term exam ** essay and multiple choice -------------------------------------------60 points
20% - Paper (5-7 pages) -------------------------------------------------------------------------------60 points
25% - Final**. essay and multiple choice----------------------------------------------------------75 points
100%--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------300 points

A  --------300-277 points
A-        ------276-268 points
B+        ------267-261 points
B          ------260-246 points
B-        ------245-237 points
C+        ------236-230 points
C          ------229-216 points
C-        ------215-206 points
D+        ------205-199 points
D          ------198-186 points  " " Contact me to see how you can improve your study habits.
D-        ------185-175 points. You should have come to see me long before it got to this point.
!        ------Yikes.

‡ The attendance and participation grade is determined by the following point distribution: accumulated by good attendance (20 pts), class discussion (20 pts), reading responses and and some miscellaneous “TBA” opportunities (20 pts).

It is your responsibility as a committed student to keep track of your point total and manage your study habits accordingly. This will eliminate grade "surprises" at the end of the semester.
**All exams and writing assignments must be taken at the scheduled times. Students may not leave and return to the classroom during reading responses, midterm or the final. Take care of any necessary tasks before or after the class session. If you absolutely need to leave during a writing assignment, midterm or final exam, you must turn your paper in before you leave the room and it will be graded based on work completed to that point.**

**For the Midterm and the Final you will need Scantron 886-E.**

**Please note! Changes may be made to this syllabus to adjust the pace of the course. Students will be given reasonable notice prior to any such changes. Come to class and you won't be surprised! 😊**

**Course Calendar**

All reading assignments are to be completed **before** the class week for which they

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**Week 1 – Sept 2, 4**
Welcome and introduction to the course, goals and expectations.

**Week 2 – Sept 9, 11**
What is beauty? How do we (or can we?) define “the beautiful”?  
The consideration of art in the ancient Western world.
READ: Taliaferro pp. 1-23 “What is Beauty?”  
*Philosophies of Art and Beauty* (hereafter referred to as “PoAB”) pp. 68-77 (from Plato’s *Symposium*).  
PoAB pp. 139-150 (introduction to Plotinus and Plotinus’s *Ennead I: Sixth Tractate “Beauty”*)

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**Week 3 – Sept 16, 18**
What is the meaning and purpose of art? Where does art come from?  
Who are artists and what is their function and responsibility?
READ: Taliaferro pp. 24-48 “What is a Work of Art?”  
PoAB pp. 8-23 (from Plato’s *The Republic*)  
PoAB pp. 53-57 (from Plato’s *Ion*)  
Reading selections from Hesiod and Ovid TBA.

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**Week 4 – Sept 23, 25**
Does art have to mean something?  
How does the purpose and meaning of art become transformed through social context, institutions or even social artifices?  
The transformation of art in late antiquity and the European Middle Ages.  
What about the women who created art in the historic West?
READ: Taliaferro pp. 49-73 “Art and Meaning”  
PoAB pp. 171-173; 173-185 (Augustine *De Ordine*); optional pp. 185-202 (Augustine *De Musica*).  
[www.hildegardofbingen.org](http://www.hildegardofbingen.org) Sabina Flanagan: “Hildegard von Bingen” (biography of Hildegard of Bingen including a discussion of her books); Nancy Fierro: “Hildegard’s Music…” (article on St. Hildegard’s music.)

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**Week 5 – Sept 30, Oct 2**
Architecture in the European Middle Ages: Abbot Suger and the Gothic Cathedrals  
The intersection of the secular and religious in art of the European Middle Ages.
READ: *The Lais of Marie de France*  

(This is a short (5’) YouTube video presented by the Khan Academy. A quick look at St. Denis.)
Week 6 – Oct 7, 9  
How do we know when art is good? Who gets to decide what is “good art” and what is not?  
Into the Renaissance! What gives European Renaissance art such persistent and popular appeal?  
PoAB pp. 201-228 (Marsilio Ficino: excerpts from “Commentary on Plato’s Symposium”)  

Week 7 – Oct 14, 16  
Renaissance and Reformation: How do the changes in European religious culture impact artistic expression?  
READ:  
http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic453479.files/Erasmus Pilgrimage.pdf  
(Erasmus: “A Pilgrimage For Religion’s Sake”)  
PoAB pp. 239-276 (Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury “Freedom of Wit and Humor”)  

Week 8 – Oct 21, 23  
Baroque and Enlightenment: How do expressions of emotion and spirit in the arts give way to the  
philosophies of reason, discovery and eventually revolution?  
READ:  
K. Carl and V. Charles pp. 7-18 (from Baroque Art – this is an ebook-free for students!- from the CSUS library.  
This text has many great examples of Baroque art as nice color plates. Spend some time perusing.)  

☐ Thursday October 23rd – MIDTERM TODAY!  

Week 9 – Oct 28, 30  
Transition into modernity: more enlightened thinkers- c’mon! let’s be rational about this! Haha.  
A consideration of art from an artist’s perspective: Robert Henri.  
READ:  
PoAB pp. 313-317 and 322-331 (from Kant’s Critique of Judgment)  
Henri pp. 15-51 (The Art Spirit is not divided into chapters as such, but is a collection of letters, thoughts and  
notes from the artist and influential teacher Robert Henri. You may choose to read ahead, but discussions  
will primarily address the readings as listed on this syllabus.)  

Week 10 – Nov 4, 6  
Nature makes a dramatic comeback in the visual arts and more!  
Romanticism: “I know what you thinkers think, but how do you feel?”  
READ:  
Henri pp. 52-90  

Week 11 – Nov 11, 13  
(...and ditching industrialism and reason to chase nothing less than the sublime. See definition  
below from the Poetry Foundation:  
Sublime: A lofty, ennobling seriousness as the main characteristic of certain poetry, as identified in the treatise On the Sublime,  
attributed to the 3rd-century Greek rhetorician Cassius Longinus. The concept took hold in the 18th century among English philosophers,  
critics, and poets who associated it with overwhelming sensation. In A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and  
the Beautiful (1757), Edmund Burke identified the sublime as the experience of the infinite, which is terrifying and thrilling because it  
threatens to overpower the perceived importance of human enterprise in the universe. Aesthetes and writers of the era saw the natural  
world and its wild, mysterious expanses as a gateway to the experience of the sublime. Romantic poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and  
William Wordsworth were influenced by this notion.)  
The Arts and Crafts movement in architecture: important and still kicking! (see Disney’s Grand Californian!)  
READ:  
https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/longinus/on_the_sublime/ (Longinus: On the Sublime)  
www.poetryfoundation.org Your choice of selections by poets of the Romantic period. Search under  
“poets” drop-down menu.  
O. L. Triggs The Arts and Crafts Movement (e-book through CSUS library -misc. images and text to peruse.)
Week 12 – Nov 18, 20
Discussion of paper topic.
Introduction to Camus
READ: Camus pp. 1-63
Henri pp. 90-131
PoAB pp. 647-700 (Heidegger’s The Origin of the Work of Art)

Week 13 – Nov 25, No class meeting on Nov 27 (📅)
How do the activities and philosophies associated with warfare change the role of art and artists?
Architectural expressions of Modernism and post-Modernity.
READ: Henri pp. 131-159
Camus pp. 65-185
optional reading/research: The following titles are available online or as e-books through the CSUS library.
They represent only a few of many available resources on modern art, and were selected fairly randomly
because they look interesting and potentially relevant to this class. You may find many other books online with a
little effort. Use these for images or peruse for discussions of specific ideas or artists you find interesting.
Cottingon, D. Modern Art: a very short introduction
Crowther, P. and Wunsche, I. Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory
Harries, R. The Image of Christ in Modern Art
Galenson, D. Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art

Week 14 – Dec 2, 4
Art as identity and agency. Can art be harmful? Is it art because no one has ever done it before?
(Let’s talk about Damien Hirst’s The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living.)
Who can claim ownership to artistic genuses?... and should that matter? What form of a specific expression
is the art if many examples exist?
READ: Taliaferro pp. 102-118 “The Location, Ownership and Dangers of Artwork”
Camus pp. 187-265
Henri pp. 159-200

Week 15– Dec 9, 11
What contextual considerations should we be aware of when exploring art from unfamiliar cultures?
How important is it to find unique expressions of specific culture in art?
Is it more important to seek indicators of the common human experience cross-culturally?
READ: Taliaferro pp. 119-135 “Cross-cultural aesthetics”
Camus pp. 267-308
Henri pp. 200-271

Week 16– Dec 18th  12:45 – 2:45
Final exam and Paper due today at the beginning of class period!

Happy Holidays!