

# PHILO 258 Aesthetics:

Professor Rachel C. Falkenstern – Spring 2016

This course covers some key ideas within this very diverse branch of Western philosophy. We read Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Bell, Horkheimer & Adorno, Pippin, Danto, Dewey, Higgins, and others. With an eye to connections between these philosophers and their historical-philosophical contexts, including other philosophers, it focuses on a few (often related) general themes: (1) art or beauty as a presentation of or connection to some sort of truth, freedom, or ultimate reality; (2) art as communicating or expressing emotion; (3) relationships between art, morality, politics, science, and religion.

Specifically, we examine how various, intertwined modern and contemporary Western philosophies of beauty, truth, and freedom apply to artworks of: Dada; abstract painting vs. earlier movements; avant-garde music; modern and postmodern dance; popular film and television; and contemporary conceptual, performance, body, and installation art of various mediums—as well as your suggestions and examples. We question these philosophers' distinctions between and uses of popular and high art, medium and expression, form and content, art as political or autonomous. Artworks will be utilized in class and assignments, but students are not expected to have any background in the arts (though are welcome to share their knowledge if they do).

## Readings

**All readings are on Hunter Library's Course Reserves** (ERes) via the Library's website, so no book is required. However, the readings **must be brought to class with you every day, either printed, on an e-reader or tablet, or as books.** A bibliography is handed out the first week of class, if you have or would like to obtain the readings.

## Prerequisites

English 120 or equivalent **and** *at least one philosophy course*

## Evaluation and Workload

Your semester grade is based on a combination of: 1) attendance, participation, and preparation; 2) frequent homework assignments, either asking for short answers or responses to that week's reading(s) or topics, or in the form of short essays; 3) a paper at the end of the semester.