

PHIL 3100: Aesthetics

Fall Semester 2026

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 12:20 – 1:10 PM

GAB 114



Instructor Information

ROLE	PROFESSOR	TA
	Matthew Lampert	Em Jackson
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OFFICE	EESAT 225D	EESAT 372
OFFICE HOURS	Monday/Wednesday 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM <i>or by appointment</i>	Monday/Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

Examination of the theories of the beauty of nature and art in the history of philosophy as represented by or found in painting, sculpture, music, literature, film and television to understand the nature of aesthetic experience, artistic expression and the relation of art to nature, truth, ethics, culture, technology and gender

What is beauty? What does it mean to find something beautiful? Is this another way of saying that I like something or desire it? Are there standards of good taste, or is it simply "in the eye of the beholder"? Either way: Is beauty important? Is there any reason why I should concern myself with what somebody else finds beautiful?

This course is centered around reading and writing, and a lot of both will be expected from you. First and foremost, however, the class is about thinking. "I don't know" is never an acceptable answer: as we will see, it's not about what you know. Even if it were possible, I don't expect you to know it all; I do, however, expect you to think. Furthermore, I don't expect you to agree with all of the texts, or even with me! In most other classes (math, science, etc.), the professor is giving you the indisputable facts; in this class, I ask that you question everything.

How to Succeed in this Course

ADA accommodation:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to

ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

Communication:

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

Classroom Culture

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Required/Recommended Materials

- All required and recommended readings are provided on Canvas in PDF format.
- Supplementary material is optional, and is clearly marked within each module.
- This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and [faculty member to include other required equipment or software such as a webcam, microphone, Adobe Photoshop, etc.]. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Course Requirements/Schedule

1. **A course journal.** The course journal will be kept all semester long, due at the end of the semester. For each class session, I will give you a response question; a few paragraphs should be sufficient in each case, but journals will be graded on relevance, completeness, and use of course material (your journal responses should show that you have read, and are applying, the assigned reading). You will keep your journal in Canvas, and you can find it in the "Course Journal" module on the course page. Journals will be due at the end of the semester, and all entries must be posted by the due date. Late entries will receive no credit. **25%**
2. **Discussion questions.** After you complete an assigned reading, you will come up with at least three questions. These can and should range from questions to clarify ideas in the reading ("What does this author mean by X?"), critical questions ("I think that the author is wrong about X, because of Z; how would they respond to this?"), or even questions about application ("Does the concept of X also apply to Z?"). Your questions should be typed up and submitted to Canvas (see the "Discussion Question" module on the course page), and each set of questions is due before we start discussing the assigned reading. You can and should draw upon these questions in our class discussions--in some cases, I will even call them out. Discussion questions are graded as "complete" or "incomplete." Off-topic questions will be treated as "incomplete," and late submissions will receive no credit. **30%**

3. **Two In-Class Exams**, consisting of short essays. See the course schedule below for specific dates. **25%**
4. **Class participation** is very important. This includes not only attendance, but also active involvement in class discussion. Draw upon your own discussion questions, and also engage with your fellow students about their questions! **20%**

Week	Date	Topics	Assignment Due
1	08/17	First Day: Syllabus; Introductions; Outline of the course	
	08/19	Lecture: Aesthetics, Beauty, and Art	
	08/21	Lecture: A Brief History of Beauty	
2	08/24	Reading: Plotinus, "On Beauty," "On the Intelligible Beauty"	Discussion Questions
	08/26	"On Beauty" continued	
	08/28	"On the Intelligible Beauty"	
3	08/31	"On the Intelligible Beauty" continued	
	09/02	Reading: Hume, "On the Standard of Taste"	Discussion Questions
	09/04	Hume continued	
4	09/07	Labor Day: No Class	
	09/09	Hume continued	
	09/11	Hume continued	
5	09/14	Reading: Kant, §1-5	Discussion Questions
	09/16	Kant, §1-5 continued	
	09/18	Reading: Kant, §6-9	Discussion Questions
6	09/21	Kant, §6-9 continued	
	09/23	Reading: Kant, §10-17	Discussion Questions
	09/25	Kant, §10-17 continued	
7	09/28	Reading: Kant, §18-22 and "General Comment on the First Division"	Discussion Questions
	09/30	Kant, §18-22 and "General Comment on the First Division" continued	
	10/02	Kant wrapup	
8	10/05	Midterm review	
	10/07	Midterm review	
	10/09	Midterm Exam	
9	10/12	Reading: Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude"	Discussion Questions
	10/14	Stolnitz continued	
	10/16	Stolnitz continued	
10	10/19	Reading: Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community"	Discussion Questions
	10/21	Rancière continued	
	10/23	Rancière continued	
11	10/26	Reading: Danto, "Beauty and Beautification"	Discussion Questions

	10/28	Danto continued	
	10/30	Danto continued	
12	11/02	Readings: Taylor, "Black Aesthetics" and DuBois, "Criteria of Negro Art"	Discussion Questions
	11/04	Taylor & DuBois continued	
	11/06	Taylor & DuBois continued	
13	11/09	Readings: Wolf, "The Beauty Myth" and Felski, "'Because it is beautiful': New feminist perspectives on beauty"	Discussion Questions
	11/11	Wolf & Felski continued	
	11/13	Wolf & Felski continued	
14	11/16	Reading: Scarry, "On Beauty and Being Fair"	Discussion Questions
	11/18	Scarry continued	
	11/20	Scarry continued	
	11/23-11/27	Thanksgiving Break: No Class	
15	11/30	Reading: Osborne, "Odours and Appreciation"	Discussion Questions
	12/02	Final Exam review	Course Journal (11:59 PM)
	12/04	Reading Day: No Class	
	12/07	Final Exam 10:30 AM GAB 114	

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class, and the calendar is therefore subject to change according to the [Campus Closures Policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006>).

Assessing Your Work

Numerical grading scale breakdown: At the end of this semester, I will assign you a letter grade based upon the percentage of the total points available for the semester that you have earned. My grading scale is as follows. **A:** 100%-90; **B:** 89.9-80; **C:** 79.9-70; **D:** 69.9-60; **F:** 59.9 or below.

Academic Integrity

According to UNT Policy 06.003, "Student Academic Integrity," academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Academic integrity means that sources used in papers or journals should be cited somehow (MLA style, Chicago style, etc.), and quotations from any text clearly indicated. It also, more importantly, means not taking credit for the work of another. Plagiarism, handing in papers downloaded off of the internet, or any other case of a student handing in something he or she has not written will be grounds for immediate failure of the class, no exceptions. If you have any questions at all, please consult the university's policy, and/or see me directly: "I didn't know this wasn't okay" is not an excuse.

The use of AI to generate content for assignments is strictly prohibited. In this course, I want you to develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI

(GenAI) tools like ChatGPT is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>).

Attendance and Participation

You should attend every class unless you have a university excused absence such as active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the [Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy \(PDF\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>). That said, I have great respect for students who are balancing the demands of their coursework with the responsibilities of caring for family members. If you run into challenges that require you to miss a class, please contact me or my TA, as there may be some flexibility we can offer to support your academic success. If you cannot attend a class due to an emergency or scheduling conflict, please let me know. Your safety and well-being are important to me.