

# Philosophy of Art

Philosophy 324, Fall 2022  
MoWe 1:10–2:30

ES 35

**Professor:** P.D. Magnus

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Office: HU-218

Office phone: (518) 442-4223

Office hours via Zoom: Tu 1:00–2:00, Fr 1:00–2:00, and by appointment

**Texts:** This is a provisional list of course readings. We might not get to all of them. Conversely, if time allows, we might add more.

- Arthur Danto (1981). The beginning of ch 1 of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.
- Morris Weitz (1956). The Role of Theory in Aesthetics.
- Berys Gaut (2000). “Art” as a Cluster Concept.
- Dominic McIver Lopes (2008). Nobody Needs a Theory of Art.
- Christy Mag Uidhir & P.D. Magnus (draft). Does art pluralism lead to eliminativism?
- Stephen Davies (2015). Varieties of Art.
- Kendall Walton (1970). Categories of Art.
- Alexander Nehamas (1981). The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal.
- Elisabeth Camp (2006). Metaphor and That Certain ‘Je Ne Sais Quoi’.
- Thi Nguyen (2020). chs 6+7 of *Games: Agency as Art*.
- Mary Beth Willard (2016). Vandals or Visionaries? The Ethical Criticism of Street Art.
- Ley Cray (2014). Conceptual Art, Ideas, and Ontology.

**Requirements:** Most weeks, you will participate in a forum discussion. You will take a mid-term and a final exam. For grading:

40% forums

30% mid-term exam

30% final exam

**Forum discussion:** The assigned topic for a forum discussion will be given out by sometime Wednesday evening, at the latest. You are expected to make your initial post addressing the topic by class-time the following Monday. You should also respond to your classmates’ posts. The expectation is that you will write at least two responses. Although you can get credit for writing your post and two responses one right after the other, it makes for a better discussion if you come back at a later time to see if anyone has responded to what you wrote. You’ll get more credit if some of your responses are made later. Any responses made by the end of day Friday will count toward your grade. There will not be new forum assignments in Weeks 8, 15, or 16.

**Class participation:** Participation in class discussion is required. Exemplary participation will add to your grade, up to two-thirds of a letter grade.

**Academic honesty:** Forum posts should be your own writing, although you are encouraged to discuss ideas with anyone who will listen. Exam answers are your own work. Cheating will not be tolerated.

**Absences:** If you will need to miss exam or due dates for foreseeable reasons, you should discuss them with the professor at the beginning of the term. If you are sick— or might be— then you should not come to class. You are welcome to follow up in office hours about material you missed.

**Schedule of topics** The assignment of topics to weeks is an approximation. If a topic takes more or less time than is scheduled for it, we will make adjustments as we go.

Barring emergencies, the dates for the exam is fixed. The topics and questions will cover whatever we have gotten to by that time.

**Week 1** Aug 22, 24

Introduction

Puzzle cases [read Danto]

**Week 2** Aug 29, 31

Can 'art' be defined? [read Weitz]

Cluster account of art [read Gaut]

**Week 3** Sep 7

NO CLASS Monday Sep 5

Definition, continued

**Week 4** Sep 12, 14

The buck-passing account [read Lopes]

**Week 5** Sep 19, 21

Art eliminativism [read Mag Uidhir+Magnus]

**Week 6** Sep 26, 28

Art ontology [read Davies]

**Week 7** Oct 3, 5

Categories and experience [read Walton]

**Week 8** Oct 12

NO CLASS Monday Oct 10

Exam review

The EXAM will be available on-line from Oct 12–16

**Week 9** Oct 17, 19

EXAM DUE before class Oct 17

Literature: interpretation [read Nehamas]

**Week 10** Oct 24, 26

Literature: metaphor [read Camp]

**Week 11** Oct 31, Nov 2

Games as art [read Nguyen]

**Week 12** Nov 7, 9

Games, continued

**Week 13** Nov 14, 16

Street art [read Willard]

**Week 14** Nov 21

Conceptual art [read Cray]

NO CLASS Wednesday

**Week 15** Nov 28, 30

Conceptual art, continued

**Week 16** Dec 5

Conclusion

FINAL EXAM Monday Dec 12 1:00