



PHI 345:
Aesthetics & the Philosophy of Art
with Dr. Sarah Vincent



Course Description

The advertised course description is as follows: “What makes something ‘art’? Who decides what counts? Is everyone’s interpretation of an artwork’s meaning equally valid, or is expertise important? Why do some of us appreciate a particular work of art, but others don’t connect to it? How have commodification and reproduction changed the art world? Throughout this course, we’ll consider questions like these, bringing philosophical theories into conversation with artworks of your choice (including, but not limited to, paintings, novels, songs, plays and films).”

To elaborate on the general description above, we will begin this course with a quick overview of contemporary responses to the ‘what is art?’ question by considering four different theories of art. With responses to this overarching question sketched, we will then discuss theories on offer from some foundational figures in aesthetics – namely, Bullough, Danto, Hirsch, Adorno, and Benjamin. Themes in this first half of the course include appreciation, interpretation, commodification, and reproduction. As the semester progresses, we will discuss more contemporary readings from more diverse voices. Themes in this second half of the course include feminist theory of art, multicultural theory of art, beauty, creativity, morality, and the everyday.

Structure-wise, for every reading, there will be a class session dedicated to lecture/exposition, another to discussion/evaluation, and a third to application.