

Course Development and Enhancement Project

By: Dr. Dana Flint

This project involved modifying a course, PHL 217 Critical Reasoning, and developing a new course, PHL XXX Philosophy of Art.

PHL 217 Critical Reasoning

The PHL 217 course was modified with a new textbook, and is being offered in the Spring 2022 term. The course was originally designed as an “informal logic” course as a companion course to PHL 218 Formal Logic. However, because most of the students were taking the course to meet requirements in other majors, the course needed to be redesigned. It would have to be for students who were not taking Formal Logic as a sequel to the course, and who were not intending to major in philosophy. Hence, it has been offered as a stand-alone course for nonmajors, mapping out skill areas where students learn concepts, distinction, principles, and techniques to be applied in a wealth of examples.

Currently, this course is being offered.

PHL XXX Philosophy of art

In a conference in December I was asked to explain what I was working on in my Faculty Development project. I listed some topics intended to be covered. I suggested that the approach was interdisciplinary and I was hoping to enlist my colleagues to participate in the course.

In past philosophy courses the focus has been on the history of aesthetic thought examining the history of philosophical thought in aesthetics. This course has been redesigned to deal with issues that are of concern or at least related to concerns in practical cultural life. It will start with the history of Barnes’ involvement with Lincoln and especially his concern to implement his “scientific aesthetic method.” Then there will be a critical assessment of his scientific aesthetic method and the idea of interpretation and art. After examining Barnes’ approach, the remainder of the course in one way or another will involve examining practical issues likely to engage student discussion so that we might see more art in everyday life.

The remaining topics include such these issues. I have a text

- Art and food. Is cooking an art form? Are dishes works of art? What about the McDonald’s hamburger?
- Authenticity. Is there such a thing as an authentic performance of a piece of music? Does it have to be played on the original musical instruments of the work? Match up with composer’s intention?
- Fakes and Forgeries. If you found out that a work of art is fake, would you revise your aesthetic judgment about it?
- Rock Music and Culture. What role does rock music play in culture?
- Rap and culture? What roles does rap music play in culture?
- Appreciation and nature. What models are there for the appreciation of the natural environment. Are there correct and incorrect forms of such appreciation?

- Photography. What is the art in photography? Is photography a representational art form? How does it compare with the aesthetic appreciation of paintings?
- Feelings and fictions. Why should we care about what happens to fictional characters?
- Enjoying horror. Why do we enjoy horror movies and novels?
- Art and erotica.
- Sentimentality. Is there something objectionable about sentimental approaches to appreciation of artworks?
- Public art. What is the function of public art? (Paper and glue)
- Societies without art. Is it possible for there to be societies without art?

I am currently working conducting a seminar in which I am using the text *Arguing about Art* as a base text on these issues. Part of the challenge is to select some great examples for several of the questions. In the end the goal is to get students to appreciate the art in everyday, practical, and cultural life.