

# AESTHETICS: PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM

## *PHILOSOPHY 113B*

Philosophy, Fine Arts and CA Credit  
Professor Andreas Teuber  
SPRING 2010

### **I. Introduction**

Many of the strategies by which we have been taught to look at images have their origin in a definition of the picture first articulated in the Italian Renaissance: a framed surface or pane situated at a certain distance from the viewer who looks through it to a second world. How well does this model hold up? Is Dutch painting of the seventeenth century no more than a portrait of Holland? Is the relationship of art to the world like that of the eye itself?

We shall discuss the nature of representation in painting, photography, and film, looking closely at examples from the seventeenth century, at the work of Rembrandt, Velasquez, and Vermeer, as well as later works by Manet, Courbet, Degas, Cezanne, Picasso, and the abstract expressionists. We shall also look at the photographs of Atget, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, Edward Weston, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Richard Avedon and at the films of Antonioni, Renoir, and Hitchcock.

### **II. Class Times**

The course will meet on Tuesdays & Fridays from 1:40 to 3:00 PM.

### **III. Reading**

Primary texts will be available at the University Book Store:

#### **A. *Painting***

- Svetlana Alpers, *THE ART OF DESCRIBING*, University of Chicago Press
- E. H. Gombrich, *ART AND ILLUSION*, Princeton University Press
- Nelson Goodman, *WAYS OF WORLDMAKING*, Hackett
- Cynthia Freeland, *BUT IS IT ART?*, Oxford University Press
- Arthur Danto, *THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE COMMONPLACE*, Harvard Univ. Press
- Elaine Scarry, *ON BEAUTY AND BEING JUST*, Princeton University Press
- Michel Foucault, *THIS IS NOT A PIPE*, University of California Press

#### **B. *Photography***

- Roland Barthes, *CAMERA LUCIDA*, Hill and Wang
- Susan Sontag, *ON PHOTOGRAPHY*, Anchor Books
- Alan Trachtenberg, *CLASSIC ESSAYS ON PHOTOGRAPHY*, Leete's Island Books
- Liz Wells (ed.) *THE PHOTOGRAPHY READER*, Routledge.

#### **C. *Film***

- Stanley Cavell, *THE WORLD VIEWED*, Harvard University Press

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### IV. Writing

Three papers are required on topics growing out of the readings and class discussions. The papers should be about 5-7 pages in length, preferably typewritten.

### V. Rewriting

You will be given the opportunity to [rewrite](#) one of the three papers. [Rewrites](#) must be accompanied by a copy of the original paper with the comments, plus a cover sheet, attached to the original and the rewrite, stating how you have improved the paper and spelling out in detail, but simply and clearly, what you have done to make your paper, now a [rewrite](#), that much more wonderful. The grade you receive on your [rewrite](#) will be the grade you receive for the [rewrite](#). The grade will not be an average of the grade on the original and the [rewrite](#). More will be said about [rewriting](#) in class at the time the first papers are handed back.

### VI. Examinations

There will be no mid-term or final examination. There will, however be several short answer writing assignments in class and in class reading quizzes throughout the semester. These assignments, however, will be counted as part of the participation grade and not graded independently. There will be no other written examination of any kind.

### VII. Class Participation

There will be several short writing exercises in class and several reading quizzes which will count towards the participation grade. But there will be other opportunities for you to participate. You are also be invited to keep a journal. The journal is not intended to be for note-taking or making commentaries on the readings (although you may also wish to keep a separate note-book for that). The journal is an opportunity for you to puzzle through some of the troubling issues raised by human rights concerns and to do this on your own terms and in your own words. You may also meet the participation requirement by speaking up in class and by attending discussion sessions which will be optional.

### VIII. Attendance

Attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Otherwise, if you miss a class, you will need a documented excuse. Any undocumented absences over and above the one unexcused absence will have an impact on your final grade. Since Brandeis allows a shopping period, the attendance requirement will not "kick in," until the start of the second week of classes.

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### IX. Grading

For the papers grading will be broken down as follows: 35% for your strongest essay, 30% for your next best effort and 25% for your least successful of the three. Participation will be given a weight of 10%.

### X. Teaching Fellows

Several teaching fellows have been assigned to the *Aesthetics* class. The Teaching Fellows are primarily responsible for reading the papers and making comments on them as well as participating in and leading discussions on the readings and questions that come up in class. They will also be available to discuss your ideas for a paper with you. I shall also read all the papers before grades are handed out. If you are convinced an error has been made, first talk with the teaching fellow with whom you have been working. If you are still not satisfied, you may bring your paper to me.

### XI. Films

Several films will be shown during the semester, among them, Antonioni's **BLOW-UP**, Hitchcock's **REAR WINDOW** and **NORTH BY NORTHWEST** and Jean Renoir's **RULES OF THE GAME**.

### XII. Small Group Discussions

In larger classes discussion groups can be very helpful. Occasional discussion sections will be scheduled especially after paper topics are handed out and before a paper is due. Discussion groups will give you an opportunity to explore some of the complex issues of the course in greater depth.

### XIII. Office Hours

I shall hold office hours from 3:00 to 4:00 PM on Tuesdays and by appointment. My office is located in RABB, Room 306.

### XIV. Messages

If you wish to leave a messages for me, the best way to reach me is via email . My email address is "Andreas Teuber" [teuber@brandeis.edu](mailto:teuber@brandeis.edu).

*Note:* If you a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and you would like to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in PHIL 113B, please see me as soon as possible.