Philosophy 152: Aesthetics and the art of living well

Instructor: Tyler Olsson
Email: tolsson@ucsc.edu
Day/Time: Tue/Thur 1-4pm

Course description:

Philosophy is an activity where we critically think about what it means to live a good life. Accordingly, as philosophers we are ultimately called to reflect on the value of living. What kind of life is worth living? And once we have an idea, how do we access the value of such a life?

In this course, in order to answer these fundamental questions we will take as our clue a study of aesthetics. What this means is that we will look at life in its capacity to be considered a work of art, the value of which is not given as if it were something there for us to discover in reflection, but is rather created through our active engagement in living reflectively. Is art something that can reveal aspects of human nature, including the value of a good life? Can music help us cultivate moral virtue? What is the relationship between beauty, truth, and goodness? What do we, as world actors, have to learn from the improv-artist? With these additional questions in mind, our fundamental question concerning value turns out to take the following form: What can an inquiry into artfulness teach us about living a good life?

Texts:

Φ 1 book provided: Head in the Clouds: An Invitation to ‘Philosophy’
Φ All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Desired learning outcomes:

Φ To gain familiarity with some of the basic concepts in the history of aesthetics, and some of the fundamental metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical concepts that pervade the field of philosophy in general.

Φ To become more fluent at reasoning and articulating philosophical thoughts about value in both written and verbal forms of communication.

Φ Engage important and difficult philosophical texts, with the hope that this exposure is both challenging and rewarding toward one’s ability to interpret dense material.

Φ To become more diplomatic in dealing with those who disagree with you.

Φ To gain a deeper appreciation of artfulness and creativity as something we are personally in charge of, despite realizing that many things are not of our choosing.
Φ To become more sensitive to questioning what it means to live a good life.

Assignments and grading:

The grade will consist of:
- Φ participation/attendance (20%),
- Φ reflection pieces (20%),
- Φ Paper 1 (20%)
- Φ Paper 2 (20%)
- Φ Paper 3 (20%)

At the beginning of each class, a short reflection piece on one of the readings will be due. This will help encourage you to stay on top of the reading. In place of the last paper, you will have the option to submit a creation of your choosing, with a corresponding written piece analyzing how it relates to the content and themes of the course.

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Important 2019 Deadlines:

Session 1:
Drop: Monday, July 1
Request for “W”: Friday, July 12

Session 2:
Drop: Monday, August 5
Request for “W”: Friday, August 16

8-Week:
Drop: Monday, July 8
Request for “W”: Friday, July 26

10-Week:
Drop: Monday, July 8
Request for “W”: Friday, July 26

Neither Summer Session nor instructors drop students for non-attendance or non-payment. Students must drop themselves. Dropping results in full tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).

For all dates and deadlines, including ‘change of grade option’ (P/NP) and grades due, here is the summer academic calendar: https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html
For questions about dropping, requesting a W grade for a course, or withdrawing from the summer quarter, email summer@ucsc.edu.

**DRC Accommodations:**

The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations or any other disability-related matter, please contact the DRC office, located in Hahn 125 or at 831-459-2089 or drc@ucsc.edu.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree.

All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC.

In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student’s transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the Academic Integrity page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

**Title IX:**

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors.

The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited conduct. Information about the Title IX Office, the online reporting link, applicable campus resources, reporting responsibilities, the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment and the UC Santa
Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment can be found at titleix.ucsc.edu.

The Title IX/Sexual Harassment Office is located at 105 Kerr Hall. In addition to the online reporting option, you can contact the Title IX Office by calling 831-459-2462.

Reading schedule (subject to change):

Week 1: Aesthetics as a Philosophical Method for Inquiring into Value

Meeting 1, July 30 Philosophy as concerned with living well
Reading –
1) Olsson, T. – *Head in the Clouds*, preface and chp. 1
2) Foucault, M. -- *The Care of the Self*, (Canvas)
3) Noe, A. -- *Strange Tools*, chp. 11, (Canvas)

Meeting 2, August 1 Art as a strange tool for philosophical inquiry
Reading –
1) Noe, A. - *Strange Tools*, chp. 7 & 8 (Canvas)
2) Gracia, - “The quest of Sam and Gollum for the Happy Life,” (Canvas)

Week 2: Imitation Theory and the Role of Music in Moral Education

Meeting 3, August 6 Plato on Truth and Imitation (Watch “The Truman Show”)
Reading –
1) Plato - *Republic*, (Canvas)
2) Olsson, T. - *Head in the Clouds*, chp. 4

Meeting 4, August 8 Aristotle and Cultivating Virtue
Reading –
1) Aristotle - *On Poetry and Music*, (Canvas)
2) Schoen-Nazzaro, “Plato and Aristotle on the Ends of Music”, (Canvas)
3) Sorbom - “Aristotle on Music as Representation”, (Canvas)
Week 3: Kant and Lessons from Beauty

Meeting 5, August 13 (Paper 1 due) The innocence of judging beauty
Reading –
1) Kukla, R. – *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, chp. 1 “Introduction”, (Canvas)
2) Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 1-9, (Canvas)
3) Ginsborg, (TBD)

Meeting 6, August 15 Artistic Genius and Moral Character
Reading--

Week 4: Schopenhauer, Desire, and Aesthetic Experience as an Escape from Suffering

Meeting 7, August 20 (Paper 2 due) The world as will and representation
Reading-
1) Schopenhauer – *The World as Will and Representation*, §1-3 & 17-23
2) Olsson, T. - *Head in the Clouds*, chp. 6

Meeting 8, August 22 Desire, suffering, and aesthetic experience
Reading -
1) Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, sec 30-35 (Canvas)

Week 5: Nietzsche and the Birth of Tragedy

Meeting 9, August 27 Two artistic drives: Apollo and Dionysus
Reading-
1) Nietzsche – *The Birth of Tragedy*, §1-3 (Canvas)
2) Olsson, T. - *Head in the Clouds*, chp. 8

Meeting 10, August 29 The lyric poet as improv artist
Reading:
1)Nietzsche - *The Birth of Tragedy*, sec. 4-6.
2) Olsson, T. - “The Lyric Poet as Improv Artist,” (Canvas)
(Paper 3 due Tuesday, September 3 @ 1pm)