

# **HUMANITIES II: But is it art? Questions & Criticisms**

De Anza College (Online Version)  
Summer 2024

Instructor: Andrew J. Wood, Ph.D.  
Office Hours: ZOOM Wednesday 2:30-3:30

## **Course Description**

A cross-cultural, interdisciplinary introduction to aesthetics - theories about what art is, its functions and value, and the ways we experience it. Examines historical and contemporary views on visual and performing arts. Explores distinctions between "fine" and popular art, and varieties of deviant or shocking art. Primary focus will be on the visual arts and how they enrich our lives.

## **Student Learning Outcome Statement**

Students synthesize their critical thinking, imaginative, cooperative, and empathetic abilities as whole persons in order to contextualize knowledge and practice active agency.

Students will explore, analyze, and even produce artistic works from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds.

## **Guiding Questions**

1. How do we define art? Do our definitions ignore anything or privilege certain forms of expression over others?
2. Why does art matter?
3. What goals do we imagine for art? What do we ask or demand of art? Is it possible to have competing or even contradictory goals for art?
4. What intersections does art have with politics, race, class, gender, and sexuality?
5. What are the ways in which art has become commodified (or turned into a business)?
6. How have marginalized folks utilized art to amplify their voices?
7. How have the ways we produce and consume art shifted in the digital era?

**Required Texts:** As we are reading excerpts from many authors, all readings for this course will be in PDF electronic format and freely accessible to all enrolled students (per legal fair use). *These are all available in the 'Files' tab on Canvas.*

## **Grades & Best Practices**

Grades for this course will be determined through following factors:

- Paper 1 500-800 words (Due July 07/11): 20%
- Paper 2 1000-1500 words (Due 07/26): 30%
- Final Paper 2000-3000 words (Due 08/08): 30%
- Class Participation (Weekly Discussion Posts, 4 points each): 20%

Grading guidelines for the papers and for class participation/discussion posts will be posted online and discussed in class. Included in the class participation grade will be active engagement in our class interactions online. This includes respectful and thoughtful, and civil debate, raising questions related to the material, and/or attending office hours. You will get the most out of the class if you stay caught up on your reading, listen to lectures in a timely manner, and actively participate by respectfully listening to others and contributing ideas of your own to our community discussion board. Each week, I will pose a topic for the discussion board, and **you must post on the discussion for at least once per week**. In other words, with the exception of the first week, each week of the quarter you should plan to post a response of 200-300 words to the discussion on our class Canvas site. Proper preparation is a necessity for high quality discussions, as well as for high quality grades. All the paper assignments are listed on the Canvas module, as well as below the reading schedule here.

Each week follows this schedule:

1. Assigned readings for you to complete independently.
2. Recorded reading guides to listen to at your leisure.
3. Virtual office hours (optional).
4. Discussion Post of 200-300 words.
5. One response paper every two weeks.

### **Students in need of support services**

**If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your support letter from DSPS to me as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of class. You may contact this campus office by phone at (408-864-8753) or online at <http://www.deanza.edu/dsps/> If you are more comfortable with me assisting with this process, I am happy to help.**

### **Citation in Papers**

You may utilize either MLA or Chicago style citation formats. Please make sure that whichever format you decide to use, you use consistently and correctly. Failure to cite correctly constitutes plagiarism. We will review proper citation briefly in class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Familiarize yourself with the College's principles, policies, and procedures regarding breaches of academic integrity (<https://www.deanza.edu/about/missionandvalues.html>). All students will be held to these standards. For additional information on academic integrity, please see: <http://www.deanza.edu/studenthandbook/academic-integrity.html>. If you are unsure about anything that you read on this website, or what is acceptable or not acceptable in completing assignments for this course, please ask me. If you cheat, I will have no choice but to report you and impose the academic penalty of failure in the class.

## Weekly Schedule

**Week One:** How do we define art? What gets included vs. excluded? Why study art? What social roles do we imagine for art? How do we judge art since the Enlightenment? What is the importance of subjectivity in understanding art? Can we imagine other bases for the judgment of art? Why do we often say and hear “there is no accounting for taste” and what does this mean? Is art always subjective?

Dewey, *Art as Experience*, pp. 60-83

Scholette, “Heart of Darkness,” pp. 1-18

Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 47-51, 89-127, & 184-217

Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letters I & IX

Recommended: Morris, Lectures

**Week Two:** What is the culture *industry*? How has art changed in the last century? How has society changed art and how has art changed society? How does power influence culture and cultural exchange? How do identity markers like nation of origin, race, ethnicity, and gender influence culture and art?

Horkheimer & Adorno, “The Culture Industry,” pp. 1-24

Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 3-30 & 209-219

Schippers, *Rockin’ Out of the Box*, pp. 74-101

Recommended: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” pp. 1-26,  
McRobbie, Angela. “Bridging the Gap: Feminism, Fashion and Consumption,” pp. 73-89.

**Week Three:** How can we evaluate music? What role does the music industry have in this creative expression? How has musical production and consumption changed in recent times?

Barking & Taylor, *Authenticity*, pp. ix-27

Lena, *Banding Together*, pp. 27-64

Huq, *Beyond Subculture*, pp. 63-89

McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty*, pp. 1-9 & 73-101.

Rose, *Black Noise*, pp. 21-61.

Recommended: Fox, *Real Country*, Turino, *Music as Social Life*. DJ Spooky, *Sound Unbound*.

**Week Four:** Art and spectacle: Situationism and Beyond

DeBord, *Society of the Spectacle* Paragraphs 1-18 & 189-196.

Raunig, *Art and Revolution*, pp. 170-186

Ajasa, ‘It’s for the People: How George Floyd Square became a symbol of resistance and healing,’ *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/27/its-for-the-people-how-george-floyd-square-became-a-symbol-of-resistance-and-healing>

Recommended: Helguera, Pablo. *Education for a Socially Engaged Art*, pp. ix-25, McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*, Vargas-Santiago, “Zapatista Muralism and the Making of a Community” pp. 1-25

**Week Four:** Versions of the visual

Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 25-59  
Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation*, pp. 1-42  
Mirzoeff, “The Right to Look,” pp. 473-496

**Week Six:** Sensation & Contestation

Ravenwood, “The Innocence of Children: Effects of Vulgarity in South Park,” pp. 1-9  
Sharp, “Game Art,” pp. 19-48  
Scholette, “Authenticity Squared,” pp. 1-11  
Thompson, *Culture as Weapon*, pp. vii-24

Recommended: Freud, “The Uncanny”

**FINAL PAPER DUE VIA CANVAS SUBMISSION BY AUGUST 8<sup>th</sup>**