

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Aesthetic Properties
Course Code	: PHI4399G
Recommended Study Year	: 2-4 Years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 + 1 hours/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Special Topics
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

Paradigmatic aesthetic properties include beauty, elegance, gracefulness, harmony, balance, loveliness, prettiness, handsomeness, and unity, as well as their negative counterparts, for example, ugliness, clumsiness and disunity. The course investigates the nature, reality, and structure(s) of these properties. It also focuses on special cases such as rightness of architectural proportion, musical beauty, functional beauty, and the aesthetic properties that are responsible for our interest in 'painful art' (horror and tragedy).

Aims

The aim of the course is to gain a deeper insight into the nature, reality, structure, and diversity of aesthetic properties through careful scrutiny of claims made in the literature by prominent authors.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- distinguish and compare different kinds of aesthetic properties
- compare aesthetic properties to other kinds of properties such as perceptual properties and moral properties
- apply confidently such technical notions as 'definition', 'normative', 'logical construction', 'metaphor', 'mind-dependence', 'response-dependence', and 'sortal concept'
- demonstrate how the course topic bears on other issues in aesthetics and metaphysics.

Indicative Content

Hypotheses and conjectures to be explained and critically examined include:

1. All aesthetic properties are values, at least to some extent.
2. Aesthetic properties of mixed, evaluative-descriptive character have separable evaluative and descriptive components.
3. It is possible to analyze the concept of an aesthetic property in non-aesthetic terms.
4. Some terms designating aesthetic properties are not metaphorically applicable.
5. Aesthetic properties are response-dependent.
6. Aesthetic properties are sortal-dependent (in a special way).
7. Aesthetic properties are sortal-relative.
8. Mirror images necessarily have the same aesthetic properties.
9. Only the apparent proportions of a building matter aesthetically.
10. Whether a musical work is beautiful or not depends entirely on how it sounds.
11. Functional beauty is a distinct kind of beauty, more or less equivalent to looking fit.
12. Aesthetic properties such as being moving explain why people engage with emotionally negative art.
13. It is the function of art to have certain aesthetic properties in virtue of certain non-aesthetic

properties.

Teaching Method

Lectures, discussions and tutorials focusing on the required reading.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes will be measured in terms of their exam performance (LO1, LO2, LO3, and LO4), their participation in class discussions (LO1, LO2, and LO3), and their engagement with the required reading (LO1 and LO2). Students may also be offered the opportunity prepare a brief (group) presentation on a particular topic, for example, a particular aesthetic property (LO1, LO2, and LO3).

Assessment

10% participation, 40% mid-term exam, 50% final exam (40% + 10%, if a presentation is included).

Required Readings

Excerpts from:

Budd, Malcolm, 'The Intersubjective Validity of Aesthetic Judgments', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, 333-371, 2007.

De Clercq, Rafael (manuscript in preparation) *Aesthetic Properties*.

Dretske, Fred, 'Perceptual Knowledge', in Jonathan Dancy & Ernest Sosa (eds.) *A Companion to Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Levinson, Jerrold, 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Differences of Sensibility', reprinted in Jerrold Levinson (2006) *Contemplating Art*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Parsons, Glenn & Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008.

Scruton, Roger, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.

Scruton, Roger, *Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Sibley, Frank, *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.

Sorensen, Roy, 'The Aesthetics of Mirror Reversal', *Philosophical Studies* 100, 175-191, 2000.

Walton, Kendall, 'Categories of Art', *Philosophical Review* 79, 334-367, 1970.

Walton, Kendall, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990.

Zangwill, Nick, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. New York: Cornell UP, 2001.

Zangwill, Nick, *Aesthetic Creation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

Supplementary Readings

Beardsley, Monroe, 'What is an Aesthetic Quality?', reprinted in Monroe Beardsley (1982) *The Aesthetic Point of View*. New York: Cornell UP, 1973.

Budd, Malcolm, 'Aesthetic Judgements, Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties', *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, 295-311, 1999.

Goldman, Alan, 'Aesthetic Properties', in Stephen Davies et al. (eds.) *A Companion to Aesthetics*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Hermerén, Göran, 'Qualities, Aesthetic', in Michael Kelly (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Levinson, Jerrold, 'Aesthetic Properties II', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 79, 211-27, 2005.

Wiggins, David, *Sameness and Substance Renewed*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

Zemach, Eddy, *Real Beauty*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>