

Philosophy 585: Emotions in the Arts
Professors Paul Guyer and Elisabeth Camp

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Contact Information

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Course Description

This course will investigate historical and contemporary philosophical views on the role of the emotions in the arts. Do we have genuine emotional responses to works of art – to fiction? paintings? music? If so, what are the conditions under which we do and don't have such emotional responses? When are such responses appropriate? In particular, does an appropriate aesthetic attitude require emotional distance from the object of the artwork? Is it inappropriate to respond emotionally to morally depraved artworks? How do formal devices induce, constrain, and otherwise alter our emotional responses to art? Readings will be drawn from philosophers including Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Moses Mendelssohn, Henry Home Lord Kames, Arthur Schopenhauer, Edward Bullough, R.G. Collingwood, Tamar Szabo Gendler, Richard Moran, Kendall Walton, and others.

Course Requirements

Everyone registered for the course will be expected to lead discussion for one meeting; auditors are strongly encouraged to do so as well. We hope you can do this in pairs. Your main task is to bring out the philosophical issues in play, and specifically to locate the readings in relation to each other; raising questions for discussion is much more important than summarizing. You should also prepare a handout, no more than 2 pages long, which can easily be reviewed in class, to help coordinate the discussion.

All of the readings for the course are either available in books for purchase at the Penn Book Center, or else posted on Blackboard. The titles at the Penn Book Center are:

Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*

Moses Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*

Sue Laver and Mette Hjort, *Emotion and the Arts*

Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*

Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (recommended only)

Your grade in the course will be a holistic function of your general participation, your presentation/discussion, and your paper. Papers should be 20-25 pp. long, and have an abstract. You must submit a written proposal (including a tentative abstract) by April 14, and then meet with one of us to discuss your topic. Papers are due by May 12.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

January 20: The original debate over emotions in the arts
Plato, *Republic*, selections from Bks 2, 3, 10
Aristotle, *Poetics*, §§1-14, §17

January 27: What are emotions?
Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Bk II, §§1-17
Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, Part II
James, *Principles of Psychology*, Ch. XXV
Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, chs. 1-3

February 3: Expression or cognition? (I)
J.S. Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry"
Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, chs. IV-XV
Bullough, "The Modern Conception of Aesthetics"
Collingwood, *Principles of Art*, Bk. I, chs. VI-VII; Bk. II, ch. XI; Bk. III

February 10: Expression or cognition? (II)
Sircello, *Mind and Art*, chs. 1-3
Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, chs. 8-9
Carroll, "Art, Narrative, and Emotion"

February 17: The need for distance
Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, Bk III, §§30-38
Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis"
Bullough, "Psychical Distance"

February 24: The reality or unreality of emotions in art
Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Painting and Poetry*, selections
Burke, *Beautiful and Sublime*, Parts I-III
Walton, "Fearing Fictions"
Moran, "Expression of Feeling in Imagination"

March 3: Rationality of emotions in art and the problem of tragedy (I)
Hume, "Of Tragedy"
Kames, *Essays on Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, Essay I;
Elements of Criticism, vol. I, Parts I & II
Gerard, *Essay on Taste*, Part I, §§ii, vii; Part III, §vi
Beattie, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, "On Poetry"

March 17: Rationality of emotions in art (II)

Radford, "How Can We Be Moved By the Fate of Anna Karenina?"

Feagin, "The Pleasures of Tragedy"

Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, chs. 4-5

March 24: Moral and immoral responses to art (I)

Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (end)

Gendler, "The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance"

Currie, "The Moral Psychology of Fiction"

Carroll, "Simulation, Emotion, and Morality"

March 31: Moral and immoral responses to art (II)

Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics*, chs. 7-10

Carroll, "Moderate Moralism"

Carroll, "Art, Narrative, and Moral Understanding"

Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Immoralism"

April 7: Formal devices as constraining and enabling emotional response

Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, "On Sentiments," letters 1-4, 10-12,
Conclusion; "Rhapsody"

Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, ch. 7

Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image*, chs. 2&3

April 14: Emotions and music (I)

Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, Bk. III, §52

Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, chs. I-IV

April 21: Emotions and music (II)

Kivy, *Music Alone*, chs. 8&9

Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, chs. 10-13

April 28: Review