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**George Mason University • College of Visual and Performing Arts****MAM 603: THE ARTS IN SOCIETY**

FALL 2007

Rick Davis

Office: Mason Hall D-9. 703-993-2192. [rdavi4@gmu.edu](mailto:rdavi4@gmu.edu)Web: <http://web.mac.com/maudie/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>Office Hours: Tues 1-3, Weds. 10-12; appointment recommended via Jane Singleton, [jsinglet@gmu.edu](mailto:jsinglet@gmu.edu) or 703-993-8653.**Course Description**

This seminar examines the role of the visual and performing arts as they interact with, shape, are shaped by, and sometimes become social/cultural institutions. We will consider the essential functions of art in society in an effort to address such **framing questions** as: Why do we require art at all? What constitutes "good" or "bad" art? What is the "value" of art? What encouragements or impediments has society offered throughout history to the creative artist or arts institution? How do the various art forms differ in their traditions, philosophical underpinnings, and current manifestations? How can arts managers participate in the cultural conversation to the benefit of the art forms, artists, and institutions they serve?

**Course Requirements and Grading (% of total grade)**

Students will select an art form or arts field on which to focus their research leading toward a twenty minute seminar presentation organized around one or more of the "framing questions" above. Seminar presentations (**October 23-November 27**) will include Q&A and will be accompanied by a bibliography, outline, and other supplementary written materials as necessary. **50%**

Students will write a five-page statement in support of the cultural value of a selected artist, art form, or arts institution. This document could serve as part of a larger mission statement, founding manifesto, fundraising case, etc. **Due on October 2. 20%**

Students will create a critical bibliography of readings from the history and philosophy of the arts, arts criticism, and contemporary social issues in the arts. The bibliography must contain a minimum of three books and fifteen journal articles. **Due on December 4. 20%**

Students will engage in prepared, civil, willing, and constructive participation in class discussion. **10%**

**Readings**

Required text: Hofstadter and Kuhns, ed.: Philosophies of Art and Beauty. (Henceforth PAB)

Readings will be supplemented by occasional handouts and/or reserve items.

Required website: [www.artsjournal.com](http://www.artsjournal.com). Subscribe to weekly digest; we will discuss selected articles regularly.

**Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments.**

August 28: Introduction to course issues, policies, and procedures.

September 4: The framing questions: how to discuss art in society.

Read: PAB, Preface and selections from Plato.

September 11: Criticism of the arts: beyond thumbs-up or down.

Read: PAB, selections from Aristotle

September 18: Art and society: Greek origins and Christian revisions.

Read: PAB, selections from Plotinus and Augustine.

September 25: Art and society: Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Read: Rousseau. "Letter to D'Alembert" (handout) and PAB, selections from Ficino, Shaftesbury, and Kant.

October 2: Art and society: seeds of modernity. Five page paper due.

Read: PAB, selections from Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche

October 9: NO CLASS.

October 16: Art and society: modern and contemporary.

Read: PAB, selections from Dewey and Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," (handout).

October 23: Student seminar presentations.

October 30: Student seminar presentations.

November 6: Student seminar presentations.

November 13: Student seminar presentations.

November 20: Student seminar presentations

November 27: Student seminar presentations.

December 4: Conclusion, review, synthesis. Critical Bibliography due.

**Academic Integrity**

It is vital that you follow accepted standards of academic integrity when preparing your assignments. Academic integrity means respecting the ideas, scholarship, and intellectual property of others, and always providing proper credit and citation when an idea or piece of information from an outside source is used. Plagiarism is an honor code offense at GMI; see the University Catalog for complete information about the

