

PHIL 539A — JOINT UBC-SFU SEMINAR  
**The Normativity of Aesthetic Value**

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SFU Harbour Centre HCC 1525  
Wednesdays 6:30 to 9:00 pm, January 4 to April 5, 2017

What is aesthetic value? The question subdivides pairwise. Philosophers have focused more intensely on the question of what makes some values aesthetic (rather than moral, epistemic, or pragmatic). A second question is relatively neglected: what makes aesthetic values values? Put another way, what makes them normative?

The strategy of this seminar is see what progress can be made in answering the normative question when the aesthetic question has been set on ice. Following a critical examination of the traditional answer to the normative question, we will work through an alternative, as presented in a book manuscript by the seminar leader, supplemented by related or contrasting selections of recent work in philosophy.

The seminar is intended for philosophy students interested in normativity or aesthetics, and also for students in the fine arts. Your contributions to the seminar should build upon your specialized interests and should promote your personal academic goals. Students from disciplines outside philosophy are encouraged to use approaches or methods and to choose topics that fit their programs of study (they need not write philosophy).

### **Assessment**

The seminar requirements are: one very short (ten minute) presentation, a longer presentation, and three to five thousand words in writing (in anything from many short pieces to one long piece).

**Short Presentation (10%)** You will make a ten minute presentation and then lead a structured discussion of a reading. Your aim is to highlight the issues and their significance, articulate the main arguments, and raise pertinent objections or queries. In leading discussion, your aim is to ensure that members of the seminar gain resources that will help them with their work.

**Seminar Participation (20 %)** You make regular, critical, pertinent yet constructive contributions to the seminar.

**Writing: Short Papers Option (70 %)** Submit a total of three to four thousand words in the form of any reasonable number of smaller papers submitted throughout the term. Think of these papers as: partial literature reviews, conference-style comments, letters to journal editors, blog entries, reports from the front for non-philosophers, lecture outlines, notes to self... be creative. Lightning attacks on B4B are especially welcome! Evaluation criteria will be crafted by the instructor on the fly, to suit the aims and ambition of each submission.

**Writing: Term Paper Option (70 %)** Submit between three and five thousand words as a single term paper due on April 28, 2017. Excellent term papers make original contributions of a kind that would have an impact on the work of other scholars, they are situated in ongoing debates and appreciate the motivations for positions in those debates, they charitably represent opposing considerations, they have impeccable logic, and they are written in a clear and vigorous prose with a supple and economical structure. Specific evaluation criteria are stated in the rubric for full term papers.

**Research Presentation** If you are writing a term paper, you will make a twenty minute presentation of your seminar-related work in progress, using the presentation to stimulate a discussion that will yield material improvements to your written work for the seminar. This is mandatory for seminar members who will exercise the term paper option.

### Readings

Dominic McIver Lopes, *Being for Beauty: Aesthetic Agency and Value*, MS. This is provided in hard copy at a cost of \$20. Bring cash or cheque on January 4 or send payment to [dom.lopes@ubc.ca](mailto:dom.lopes@ubc.ca) by Interac or Paypal before then. In purchasing a copy, you agree not to scan the document and not to share it in any form, electronic or material.

Here is a one-page lexicon of named claims in the book.

Unless otherwise indicated, articles may be downloaded through the UBC or SFU library.

For additional readings, B4B contains a set of references that comprehensively cover anything written in aesthetics since 1945. For historical work, consult [philpapers.org](http://philpapers.org).

### Schedule

*Readings are tentative and are likely to be adjusted to suit the interests of members of the seminar.*

January 4 Introduction

January 11 Setting the Stage: Values, Reasons, Obligations, and Experts  
Robbie Kubala. Draft MS. Grounding Aesthetic Obligations. [A copy will be provided.]  
B4B Introduction and Chapters 1-2.

January 18 Aesthetic Hedonism and Normativity  
B4B Chapter 3.  
James Shelley. 2010. Against Value Empiricism in Aesthetics, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 88.4: 707-20.  
Useful background: Robert Stecker. 2006. Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Value, *Philosophy Compass* 1.1: 1-10.  
Useful background: Jerrold Levinson. 2002. Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60.3: 227-38.

- January 25 Aesthetic Hedonism, Normativity, and Expertise  
B4B Chapter 4.  
Presentation by Servaas van der Berg.
- February 1 The Network Theory  
B4B Chapters 5-7.
- February 8 Aesthetic Disputes  
Egan, Andy. 2010. Disputing about Taste, *Disagreement*, ed. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 247-92. [A copy will be provided.]  
B4B Chapter 8.
- March 1 Reasons, Motivations, and Pleasures  
B4B Chapter 9.  
Matthen, Mohan. 2017. The Pleasure of Art, *Australasian Philosophical Review* 1.1. With commentary.
- March 8 The Metaphysics of Aesthetic Value  
B4B Chapter 10.  
Robert Hopkins. 2001. Kant, Quasi-realism, and the Autonomy of Aesthetic Judgement, *European Journal of Philosophy* 9.2: 166-89.
- March 15 Individuality, Meaning, Happiness, and Virtue  
B4B Chapter 11.  
Nicholas Riggle. 2016. On the Interest in Beauty and Disinterest, *Philosophers' Imprint* 16.9: 1-14.  
Sara Protasi. Draft MS. The Perfect Bikini Body: Can We All Really Have It? Loving Gaze as an Anti-oppressive Beauty Ideal. [A copy will be provided.]
- March 22 Research Presentations
- March 29 Research Presentations
- April 4 Research Presentations

### **Policies**

You are expected to know and to comply with all pertinent UBC and SFU regulations, not excepting regulations of academic misconduct. All pertinent regulations are hereby included as part of this syllabus.

Syllabus revisions may be made at the discretion of the instructor. This syllabus is based on the most recent information about the seminar, but it may be modified as needed in order to best achieve course objectives. You are responsible for attending to any changes posted here.