

The Arts of Living: Thinking as a Way of Life
Arts and Sciences 1138, First-Year Seminar
1 Semester-hour Credit
Day/Time TBD Room TBD

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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

Many people assume that philosophy and literature are nice additions to a “real” education. But this is a relatively new perspective on these disciplines. From the time of the ancient Greeks until the Industrial Revolution, the humanities were considered the center of a real education. More, they were understood to equip their students with an “art of living.” This seminar will explore the idea of an art of living from the ancients to the moderns. Some questions we will consider: what did the ancients mean when they described thinking as an art of living? What makes up this art? How can we practice it? How does modernity transform our understanding of what it means to live a good life? And how can we reclaim this ancient tradition with an eye to making it work for us in our current, dizzying, hypermodern moment?

Texts

Our course will be based on several shorter essays by some of the most interesting philosophers and historians of ideas of ancient and recent note. These essays will be collected in a course pack that will be available to seminar participants.

Course Policies

- Students are expected to attend every seminar, every time. Because our class will revolve so much around conversation, your engaged participation in the course will be vital for our success. Reasonable accommodations will of course be made in cases of illness or emergencies; please be as proactive as possible in getting a hold of the instructor if something happens!
- Our seminar will live or die based on your engaged, careful participation. You are expected to have done the readings for each seminar ahead of time and come with two or three questions related to each week’s reading.
- You will produce over the course of the semester a series of Reading Journals that will record not only your summaries of the readings but also your thoughts about them. It’s hoped that you will find these Journals to be a place of honest reflection, and also a place to generate ideas that you can then feed back into the class. Only I will read them, but you are encouraged to use them as the basis for our class discussions.
- At the end of the semester you will present a short oral presentation along with 2 or 3 members of your class on a topic related to our class. More information on these presentations will be provided as we move through the semester.

Grading

This course will be graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. Your Participation counts for 40% of the grade; your Reading Journals count for 30%; and your Oral Presentation counts for 30% of your grade. To achieve a Satisfactory grade in the course, you must earn at least 70% in

the course.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.

Biographical Statement

I have been teaching literature and philosophy for over thirteen years. While I regularly teach classes in reading, writing, literature, and poetry, I have also taught courses in modern art, philosophy, critical thought, and queer studies. I’ve been honored to win the “Best Course at the University of Washington” award during my time at that university. I have written on the relationship between art and politics and have a special interest in the way that perspectives in philosophy and literature can not only change the way we think but transform the way we live. I’m currently finishing a book on the Surrealist artist Claude Cahun, who created an anti-Nazi resistance movement on the island of Jersey during World War II; using literature as her main weapon, she was able to destabilize the Nazi leadership and foment insurrection in the ranks. Here, as in my teaching, I pay special attention to the real-world impacts that art and thought can have in turbulent times.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 – Framing “the Art of Living”

Week 2 – Beginning to think about the Arts of Living

READ: John Sellars, “What is Philosophy as a Way of Life?”
DUE: Reading Journal 1

Week 3 – Ancient Perspectives I: The Problem of Socrates

READ: Plato, “The Apology of Socrates”

Week 4 – Ancient Perspectives II: The Trial of Socrates

READ: Plato, “The Apology of Socrates” (continued)

Week 5 – Ancient Perspectives III: The Challenge of Socrates

READ: Plato, “The Apology of Socrates” (continued)

DUE: Reading Journal 2

Week 6 – Ancient Perspectives IV: From Theory to Practice

READ: Epictetus, “The Manual”

Week 7 – Mid-semester Break: No class**Week 8 – Modern Perspectives I: The Return of the Art**

READ: Pierre Hadot, “What is Ancient Philosophy?” (selection)

DUE: Reading Journal 3

Week 9 – Modern Perspectives II: Thinking Modernity

READ: Marshall Berman, “Modernity: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow”

Week 10 – Modern Perspectives III: The Purpose of Thinking in Modernity

READ: Isaiah Berlin, “The Purpose of Philosophy”

DUE: Reading Journal 4

Week 11 – Modern Perspectives IV: Modernity, Power, Hope

READ: Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics”

Week 12 – Modern Perspectives V: The Art of Living in Hypermodernity

DUE: Reading Journal 5

Week 13 – Group Oral Presentations, I**Week 14 – Group Oral Presentations, II**