

**Philosophy 240: Philosophical Problems in the Arts**  
Winter 2011

**General information**

Time: TR 12:30 PM – 2:18 PM  
Location: Townshend 255  
Webpage: <<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/caplan16/240.htm>>

**Instructor** Ben Caplan

Office: 337F University Hall  
Office hours: T Th 2:30 – 3:18 PM, or by appointment  
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**Graders** Ben Horne, Erik Wedin

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**Course description**

We'll be talking mainly about fiction and music. Our discussion will be informed, on the one hand, by reading what philosophers have to say about fiction and music and, on the other, by reading some fiction, watching some fiction, and listening to some music. We'll be discussing a host of questions about emotion (e.g. why do we care about fictional characters when we know that they're not real people?), interpretation (e.g. can what an author intends settle what is true according to the fiction?), ontology (e.g. what is a musical work?), and morality (e.g. can a moral flaw increase the aesthetic value of a work of fiction?).

**Readings**

Readings will be available electronically through Carmen (which is not the course webpage). A schedule will be posted and updated on the course webpage (which is not Carmen).

**Course requirements**

Students will be required to complete five (or maybe four) short assignments, each of which will be worth 20% (or maybe 25%) of the final grade. Each assignment will be announced in class and posted on the course webpage at least one week before it is

due. One or more of the assignments might be a short paper. (A short paper is not longer than 3 pages.)

### **Disabilities**

Students who might need accommodations are encouraged to contact me and the Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall, 292-3307).

### **Academic misconduct**

Academic misconduct is a serious offense. You are expected to know what counts as academic misconduct. You are also expected not to commit it. Among other things, your work must be your own, and you must cite all of your sources. If I suspect that you have committed academic misconduct, I am required to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM), which may impose punishments that range from failure to suspension and expulsion.

Academic misconduct is defined in Section 3335-23-04 of the *Code of Student Conduct*, which you are expected to be familiar with. Ignorance of the *Code of Student Conduct* is no excuse for academic misconduct.

The *Code of Student Conduct* is available here:

<[http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc\\_12-31-07.pdf](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf)>.

Information on the Committee on Academic Misconduct is available here:

<<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>>.

### **GEC requirement**

This course satisfies the Breadth—Arts and Humanities—Visual and Performing Arts (2(C)(2)) requirement.

Goals: Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes: (1) Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art; and (2) students develop abilities to be an informed observer or active participant in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

In this course, students develop their abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art—and to be informed observers of film and listeners of

music—through a sustained reflective engagement with *Let the Right One In* (2008), *American Psycho* (2000), and Johnny Cash’s cover of “Hurt” (2002).

## **Tentative outline**

Let me emphasize that the outline below is *tentative*. On the one hand, I might add additional readings as we go, so we might cover *more* material than is indicated below. On the other hand, how much material we cover depends on how quickly we cover it, and I don’t want to dictate ahead of time how quickly we will cover the material that we will cover, so we might cover *less* material than is indicated below. As we go along, the schedule will be updated on the course webpage (which, recall, is not Carmen).

## **Part I: Fiction**

### **1. Fiction and the emotions**

Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Elements of Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 172-184.

### **2. Truth in fiction**

David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15.1 (Jan. 1978): 37-46.

### **3. Interpretation**

Kendall L. Walton, “Categories of Art,” *Philosophical Review* 79.3 (July 1970): 334-367.

Robert Stecker, “Art Interpretation,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52.2 (Spring 1994): 193-206.

Carl Matheson, “Literary Rationality,” in David Davies and Carl Matheson, eds., *Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Literature: An Analytic Approach* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2008), 237-250.

Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Elements of Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 145-162.

### **4. Ontology of fiction**

Peter van Inwagen, “Creatures of Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14.4 (Oct. 1977): 299-308.

## **5. Fiction and morality**

Anthony Lane, "To the Limit," *New Yorker* 76.8 (17 April 2000): 124-125.

Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Elements of Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 255-274.

## **Part II: Music**

### **6. Music and the emotions**

Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Elements of Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 201-220.

### **7. Ontology of music**

Jerrold Levinson, "What is a Work of Music?," *Journal of Philosophy* 77.1 (Jan. 1980): 5-28.

## **Part III: Visual Art**

### **8. Forgery**

David Grann, "The Mark of a Masterpiece," *New Yorker* 86.20 (12 and 19 July 2010): 50-72.