

**FROM ART TO THE FIVE-AND-DIME: “COLLECTIONS” IN CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL
PHILOSOPHY WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE WORKS OF WALTER BENJAMIN**

PHIL XXXXX · Semester Year · Class Time · Class Meeting Place

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Course Description: What is a collection? The goal of this seminar is to answer this question. The idea of a collection is usually associated with those things we hold dearest to our hearts. For instance, one’s art collection, baseball card collection, or comic book collection is both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable for you. But have you ever thought about the stuff you put in your grocery cart as a collection or the books you house on your shelves at home as a collection. What about the tissues you pitch into a waste basket after they have been used? Are these collections too? We will focus our attention on the ontological and aesthetic questions that arise in the idea of a “collection.” And what we hope to accomplish in this class is a better appreciation of what qualifies as a “collection.”

Check the course webpage frequently for updated information about this course: [enter course website here]

Required Text: Benjamin, Walter (1968). *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Excerpts from Cavell, Stanley (2005). *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cazeaux, Clive, ed. (2000). *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. London: Routledge. ISBN 0415200547

Excerpts from Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1951). *Philosophical Investigations*. London: Routledge.

More suggested texts citations are available on the course website.

Requirements: Actually doing philosophy involves class discussion, in which students dialogue back and forth with the instructor and with each other. This is a seminar style class that places a premium on class discussion. Since this is the case, attendance is vital for success in the course.

Participation (15%). You should come to class prepared to talk about the article(s) you read for that day. By raising a question, a comment, or criticism of the reading, you earn participation points. The participation grade will be

based on the extent to which you participate in discussion and the quality of your comments.

Presentation (15%). You will be expected to present one/two articles to the class. A presentation consists in outlining at least the main argument of the reading. You may also include some of the auxiliary arguments if they are important components of the main argument of the paper. An exceptional presentation will include a few criticisms of the main argument. You need to demonstrate that you have command of the argument. If you are too confused by the argument, then summarize what you think the main argument of the reading is and present a few questions.

Mini-papers (30%). You will be responsible for completing two mini-papers of no more than 5 pages (strict limit). The first paper is due DUE DATE, and the second paper is due DUE DATE. For each of them, I will prepare a few questions for you to use as a guide for writing the paper. If you want to create your own topic to write about, then please make an appointment with me to discuss it.

Final Paper (40%). The student will be expected to complete one 10-12 page paper on a topic of the student's choice. More information, i.e., suggested topics, will be distributed sometime toward the middle of the semester. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the paper by DUE DATE, a bibliography by DUE DATE, and a detailed outline by DUE DATE.

Failure to complete any of these requirements will severely effect your grade.

Policies:

Cheating. Cheating on any course requirement shall not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying from one's own clandestine notes, from someone else's paper, or quoting or paraphrasing an author without crediting the source (plagiarism). If the student is caught cheating, then s/he will receive a 0 on the work and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric impairments. Please contact the instructor at the beginning of the course to discuss any such accommodations that you may require for this course. For more information, the student should contact the Center for Disability Services.

Notice. The student is advised. All material contained herein, including course design, content, lectures, correspondence, Internet content, and written material, is the intellectual property of the instructor. In addition, the instructor reserves the right to change, revise, or alter any portion of this syllabus at any time, at his sole discretion, for any reason, without further notification to the student. This syllabus is in accordance with the [university or college handbook].

Grading: There are no averages in this class, so put your calculators away. Grades will be determined according to a linear point scale. The more points you accumulate the higher your grade. In-class participation is worth a total of 100 points, each presentation is worth 50 points (100 total points available), each mini paper is worth 100 points (200 points total), and the final paper is worth a total of 250 points. The total number of points available equals 650.

The grading scale is as follows: 585 for an A-, 520 for a B-, 455 for a C-, 390 for a D-. Anyone who fails to earn 390 points fails the class.

Course Schedule & Assignments: The course schedule is available online at the class website. Since this is an advanced philosophy class that emphasizes discussion in the classroom (and outside the classroom) the schedule may change frequently. The class website and blog will be the primary forms of communication with the student, and the student should check these website regularly.

Reading Assignments	Homework Assignments (TBD)
General Introduction to Aesthetics: Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche on Aesthetics in Cazeaux.	Week 1
Heidegger on Works of Art: Martin Heidegger, “On the Origin of the Work of Art” in Cazeaux	Week 2
The Aesthetic Object: Mikel Dufranne, “The World of the Aesthetic Object” in Cazeaux	Week 3
A Role for the Aesthetic Object: Roland Barthes, “The Plates of the Encyclopedia” in Cazeaux	Week 4
A Particularly Aesthetic Object: Michel Foucault, “Las Meninas” in Cazeaux	Week 5
Collecting “Thoughts”: Excerpts from Wittgenstein’s <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> (read Preface carefully)	Week 6
Benjamin on Collections: Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library” in <i>Illuminations</i> .	Week 7
More of Benjamin on Collections: Walter Benjamin, “The Image of Proust” in <i>Illuminations</i>	Week 8
Benjamin on the Mechanization of Aesthetic Objects: Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in <i>Illuminations</i>	Week 9
Cavell on Collections: Stanley Cavell, “Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow” in <i>Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow</i>	Week 10
More Cavell on Collections: Stanley Cavell, “The World as Things” in <i>Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow</i>	Week 11
Instrumental v. Intrinsic Value in the	Week 12

Aesthetic Object: Georg Simmel, “Value and Money” in Cazeaux	
Affect and the Aesthetic Object: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Percept, Affect, and Concept” in Cazeaux	Week 13