

Luís Krus Centre – Lifelong Learning
Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH), NOVA University of Lisbon

Aesthetics and Art Theory

Long Term Courses

Dr Fabio Tononi

e-learning

16 September 2024–28 May 2025, 32 classes, 64 hours



I Semester

September 2024: 16, 23, 30.

October 2024: 7, 14, 21, 28.

November 2024: 4, 11, 18, 25.

December 2024: 2, 9, 16.

II Semester

February 2025: 3, 10, 17, 24.

March 2025: 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.

April 2025: 7, 14, 21, 28.

May 2025: 5, 12, 19, 26, 28.

Objectives

This course examines some problems of aesthetics and art theory by analysing texts from the history of Western thought. Students will develop appropriate critical and analytical reading skills of philosophical and interdisciplinary texts on topics such as *aisthesis*, poetics, taste, the sublime, aesthetic judgement, imagination, beauty, spirit, empathy, ornament, the concept of experience, the aura, the psychedelic experience, the concept of the beholder's share, the theory of the avant-garde, emotion, photography, the essence of art, the concept of influence, the power of images, the end of art, neuroaesthetics, and perception. Furthermore, students will learn to navigate philosophical thought by addressing the following questions: What is aesthetics? What is the difference between speculative aesthetics and empirical aesthetics? What is the difference between an aesthetic judgement and an aesthetic experience? What is art? What is a work of art? What is the role of biology in perception? This course addresses these and other related questions by focusing on the works of various thinkers.

Programme

This course explores a series of aesthetic concepts and phenomena by focusing on some of the most important thinkers in Western thought. It considers debates on visual arts, perception, and literature both in speculative aesthetics – i.e. the analysis of aesthetic concepts on the basis of pure reason – and in empirical aesthetics – i.e. the study of aesthetic phenomena that takes into account empirical findings of disciplines such as biology, experimental psychology, and neurophysiology. The course is structured as follows:

I Semester

CLASS 1 (16 September, 2:00–4:00 PM)

• **Aristotle: *Aisthesis* (c. 350 BC)**

- >Aristotle, *On the Soul*, in Aristotle, *On the Soul. Parva naturalia. On Breath*, translated by W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 1–203.
- >Francis Edwards Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 8–15.

CLASS 2 (23 September, 2:00–4:00 PM)

• **Aristotle: *Poetics* (c. 335 BC)**

- >Aristotle, *Poetics*, in Aristotle: *Poetics*. Longinus: *On the Sublime*. Demetrius: *On Style*, translated and edited by Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, Doreen C. Innes, and W. Rhys Roberts, revised by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 27–141.

CLASS 3 (30 September, 2:00–4:00 PM)

• **Hume: *Taste* (1757)**

- >David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*, in David Hume, *Four Dissertations: I. The Natural History of Religion. II. Of the Passions. III. Of Tragedy. IV. Of the Standard of Taste* (London: A. Millar, 1757), pp. 205–240.

CLASS 4 (7 October, 2:00–4:00 PM)

• **Burke and Kant: *Sublime* (1757/1790)**

- >Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), second part.
- >Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, edited by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 128–159.

CLASS 5 (14 October, 2:00–4:00 PM)

• **Kant and Wittgenstein: *Aesthetic Judgement* (1790/1938)**

- >Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, edited by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 89–127.
- >Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, edited by Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 1–40.

CLASS 6 (21 October, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Lessing: *Imagination* (1766)**

>Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, translated by Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 3–32, 78–84, 98–103.

CLASS 7 (28 October, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Hegel: *Beauty* (1818–29)**

>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, pp. 1–90.

CLASS 8 (4 November, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Hegel: *Spirit* (1818–29)**

>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, pp. 91–115.

CLASS 9 (11 November, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Nietzsche: *The Dionysian and the Apollonian* (1872)**

>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, translated by Ronald Speirs, edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–116.

CLASS 10 (18 November, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Vischer: *Empathy* (1873)**

>Robert Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics’, in *Empathy, Form and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873–1893*, edited by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), pp. 89–123.

CLASS 11 (25 November, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Fechner and Warburg: *Art and Biology* (1876/1923)**

>Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Aesthetics from Above and from Below*, translated by Jason Gaiger, in *Art in Theory, 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 632–635.

>Aby Warburg, ‘A Lecture on Serpent Ritual’, translated by W. F. Mainland, *The Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2: 4 (1939), pp. 277–292.

CLASS 12 (2 December, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Kandinsky: *The Spiritual in Art* (1911)**

>Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated by M.T.H. Sadler (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1977).

CLASS 13 (9 December, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Loos: *Against Ornament* (1913)**

>Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime: Thoughts on Design and Materials*, translated by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 2019), pp. 99–111, 185–211, 229–237.

CLASS 14 (16 December, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Freud: *Motor Imagery* (1914)**

>Sigmund Freud, 'The Moses of Michelangelo', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Totem and Taboo and Other Works (1913–1914)*, translated and edited by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage Books, The Hogarth Press, and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), XIII, pp. 207–238.

II Semester

CLASS 15 (3 February, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Wölfflin: *On Forms* (1915)**

>Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, translated by M.D. Hottinger (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1950), first part.

CLASS 16 (10 February, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Dewey: *Experience* (1934)**

>John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, NY: Perigee Books, 1980), pp. 35–57.

CLASS 17 (17 February, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Benjamin: *Aura* (1935)**

>Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, translated by Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1938–1940*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), IV, pp. 251–283.

CLASS 18 (24 February, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Heidegger: *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950)**

>Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, translated and edited by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1–56.

CLASS 19 (3 March, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Huxley: *Psychedelic Experience* (1954)**

>Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, in Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 1–50.

CLASS 20 (10 March, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Gombrich: *The Beholder's Share* (1960)**

>Ernst Gombrich, *Art & Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 2014), pp. 153–244.

CLASS 21 (17 March, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Greenberg, Poggioli and Bürger: *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1961/1962/1974)**

>Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 3–21.

>Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 1–15.

>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. xlix–lv, 15–34.

CLASS 22 (24 March, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Goodman: *On Emotions* (1968)**

>Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett, 1976), pp. 241–262.

CLASS 23 (31 March, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Foucault: *What is an Author?* (1969)**

>Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, translated by Josué V. Harari, in Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, translated by Robert Hurley and others, edited by James D. Faubion (New York, NY: The New York Press, 1998), pp. 205–222.

CLASS 24 (7 April, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Berger: *Ways of Seeing* (1972)**

>John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1990).

CLASS 25 (14 April, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Sontag: *On Photography* (1977)**

>Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 3–48, 153–180.

CLASS 26 (21 April, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Wollheim: *What is Art?* (1980)**

>Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects: With Six Supplementary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 1–30.

CLASS 27 (28 April, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Barthes: *On Photography* (1980)**

>Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 3–60.

CLASS 28 (5 May, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Baxandall: *Against Influence* (1985)**

>Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 41–73.

CLASS 29 (12 May, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Freedberg: *The Power of Images* (1989)**

>David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. xix–xxv, 1–26, 192–245.

CLASS 30 (19 May, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Danto: *The End of Art* (1997)**

>Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 3–39.

CLASS 31 (26 May, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Zeki, Freedberg and Gallese: *Art and Neuroscience* (2007/2019)**

>David Freedberg, and Vittorio Gallese, 'Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Aesthetic Experience', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11: 5 (2007), pp. 197–203.

>Semir Zeki, 'Notes Towards a (Neurobiological) Definition of Beauty', *Gestalt Theory*, 41: 2 (2019), pp. 107–112.

CLASS 32 (28 May, 2:00–4:00 PM)

- **Nanay: *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Perception* (2016/2019)**

>Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1–19.

>Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 1–21.

Bibliography

1. Gaut, Berys, and Dominic McIver Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).
2. Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (eds), *Art in Theory, 1648–1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
3. Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (eds), *Art in Theory, 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
4. Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (eds), *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
5. Nanay, Bence, *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Requirements

The course and readings will be entirely in English. Therefore, an intermediate knowledge of the English language is required.

Assessment

At the end of the course, the students will be assessed on a short essay in English (max. 5,000 words, footnotes included and bibliography excluded) on a topic relevant to the course and previously agreed with the course instructor.

Biography

Fabio Tononi is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for the Humanities (CHAM) in the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCHS) of NOVA University of Lisbon. He teaches philosophy at the Luís Krus Centre – Lifelong Learning in the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH) of NOVA University of Lisbon.

Tononi is Principal Investigator (PI) of an exploratory project titled IMCS – Imagination and Memory at the Intersection of Culture and Science (2023–2025), funded by CHAM. He is co-founder and co-editor-in-chief of the *Edgar Wind Journal* (ISSN 2785-2903), and a member of the Steering Committee of the Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory at the Institute of Modern Languages Research, which is part of the School of Advanced Study at the University of London.

His research interests include the relationship between art and cognitive neuroscience (specifically as they relate to emotion, empathy, imagination, memory, movement, and the unfinished); the writings of Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind; the essence and tasks of philosophy and science; the interconnection between art and ideology; the concepts of modernism, postmodernism, and hyperculture; Sophocles' three Theban plays; and poetry.

During his PhD, Tononi led the Aby Warburg Reading Group and Seminar at the Italian Cultural Institute in London (2020), the Seminar on Freedom and Free Will at the Warburg Institute of the School of Advanced Study at the University of London (2019–2020), and the Erasmus and Luther on Free Will Seminar at the Warburg Institute (2018–2019).

In 2021, Tononi received a PhD from the Warburg Institute. In 2016, he obtained an M.A. in Art History, Curatorship and Renaissance Culture from the Warburg Institute in collaboration with the National Gallery of London. In 2013, he received an M.A. in Art History from the University of Florence. In 2010, he obtained a B.A. in Art History at the University of Parma.

Since 2017, Tononi has been taking part in the masterclasses of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities of the University of London. In 2012, he completed an internship at Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence.

During his career, Tononi has co-organised two conferences, chaired twelve panels, and participated in more than forty conferences and seminars in Europe and the United States. His publications include: *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson, Bernardino Branca and Fabio Tononi (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024), XXIV, 408 Pages, 49 fig. col., 30 fig. b/w.; and 'Ernst Gombrich and the Concept of "Ill-Defined Area": Perception and Filling-In', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 29: 2 (2023), pp. 1–27.