Philosophy of Art & Beauty (Aesthetics)

Fall term, 2015

Syllabus

Instructor: Theodore P. Rebard, PhD; office: Sullivan House, room #103; telephone (713)525-3593. Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: 9:00-10:30 and 12:00-4:00; Tuesday and Thursday: 3:30-5:00. Other times by arrangement at mutual convenience. E-mail: rebard@stthom.edu. Texts: Armand Marurer, About Beauty; Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism; Course readings for PHIL 4331. The last are available from Mrs. Hall in the foyer of Sullivan House. (I believe the cost is $15.00, but should be verified with Mrs. Hall.)

Objective: This course will read and discuss several valuable and important works of philosophy and theology with the objective to understand the nature and value of beauty and art. Emphasis will be given to the objective and metaphysical nature of beauty and therefore of art. To be studied also are: art as virtue; examples and media of art, such as literature, painting, sculpture, architecture and music; the working of the person who is the artist; the linkage of art and prudence; the role of art in human lives; God as the ultimate measure of being, beauty, and goodness.

Requirements: Attendance is not optional, and promptness as well as attention are expected. Preparation for all assignment is necessary. Every student is expected to be prepared for oral recitation every day. There will be mid-term and final examinations – to be scheduled according to general agreement. An original (non-research) essay of approximately 12 pp. is required. Suggestions for topics will be available, as also of course any further help in this regard from the instructor.

Method: The course will proceed chiefly by lecture-presentations by the instructor. Of course, questions and commentary from and among students is both expected and encouraged.

Each class session will require preparation by the students from assigned texts and internet sources for examining examples. The first text is Armand Maurer’s About Beauty.

Miscellaneous: No class absences are allowed without explicit permission; unexcused absences will be counted against the final grade in the value of one grade per instance. There is no be no use of cell-phones, no texting, nor any devices huiusmodi; I discourage but do not forbid use of laptops for note-taking. Failures against these policies will be grounds for grade reduction in increments of one full letter grade per incident. NB: Three or more unexcused absences will be sufficient reason for failure (F) in the course, any other considerations notwithstanding.

Grading will be based on two examinations and class participation. At first a numerical grade will be assigned as earned for each instrument (exams and essays). Letter grades correspond to numerical scores in approximately this way: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; any score lower than 60 fails. Within the ranges, + and – are divided by .33 within the tens, as above. (e.g., 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+, etc.)
ANY ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL MERIT A FAILURE IN THE COURSE. THREE OR MORE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL MERIT FAILURE IN THE COURSE.

Finally, while I do not expect that his matter really needs to be mentioned overtly, it remains to say that an excellent academic experience depends among other things on the constant observance of good manners! ‘Etiquette,’ is after all, ‘little ethics,’ and is a language of mutual respect among persons.