Here are the topics to be explored:

1) The "ontology of art": What is it? What questions is it intended to answer? Is there any more to the ontology of art than idle (and useless) re-description of the artworld data? How does an ontology of art add to our explanatory and/or justificatory power?

2) Is testimony about aesthetic properties of artworks a sufficient condition for aesthetic knowledge? Or is "direct acquaintance" with the works themselves necessary for such knowledge? Is there an interesting disanalogy between the epistemic credentials of testimony in the sciences and testimony in the arts? Perhaps only expert testimony is relevant here: But who are the artworld experts? By virtue of what do they qualify as experts? Here we will look carefully at Kant's views about the "autonomy" of "judgments of taste" and ask whether he saw the situation clearly.

3) How, if at all, do the norms sustained within artworld practice (both creative and critical) compare and contrast with moral norms and/or linguistic norms? Here we will look carefully at the Kripke-Wittgenstein "rule following problem," and ask whether it has important consequences for artworld practice (Hint: it does).

4) The interpretation of artistic objects appears similar to the interpretation of natural language constructions. In fact both activities appear to be governed by pretty much the same norms of success; moreover, skeptical challenges can be generated by the same sorts of considerations (e.g., Quinean indeterminacy of translation, Walton-inspired problems about indeterminacy of artistic category).

We will explore the relation(s) between artistic genres and natural languages, examining syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions. This can become very technical very quickly; but we will keep that to a minimum.

5) Aesthetic properties: Are they Subjective? Objective? Response-dependent? Heavily context-sensitive? Are they like moral properties? Semantic properties? Complex sociopolitical properties? Does it matter? Why? (Hints: Yes, it does matter; and yes, they are like semantic properties).

Above all, we will NOT lose sight of relevant artistic data during our explorations. A healthy dose of pragmatist insistence upon "primacy of practice" will animate our work. If some theory—epistemic, ontological semantic, or whatever—sits poorly with observable properties of artworld practice, we'll go with the practice rather than the theory.

Requirements: Graduate students can earn graduate credit in LLS, metaphysics, or moral theory depending upon their choice of term projects (two 10-15 page papers, submitted in draft and re-done in light of comments). Undergraduates' grades will be based upon two written exams. The course will be run as a discussion group; grades will depend, in part, upon engagement and participation.