

overview of
**ART AND
ORGANISM**

*Biological
Perspective
on Art and
Aesthetics:
a seminar*

offered since 1979
University Studies 413 cross-listed with
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology 413
HESLER 427

Instructor, Neil Greenberg
ngreenbe@utk.edu

[WEEKLY SCHEDULE 2018](#)

TOPICS (see below)



PREMISE: Art is central to one of the most wholly human of our cultural endeavors, and yet one undeniably linked to, if not wholly emergent from, our basic biology. But biology embraces many different kinds of questions, methods of investigation, and centering concepts. The essential elements of four main biological approaches to behavior will be summarized, integrated, and brought to bear on art and aesthetic experience.

RESOURCES: Basic information and key readings are entered on the A&O website along with subordinate and collateral notes and connections. The website is, therefore, a work in progress. It is *dynamic* in that both pages and their interconnections are always changing. Each page is richly interlinked with other pages and with readings or links to readings. Each page resembles a blog in that I try to keep it up to date and in synch with emerging literature and thinking. An important theme is that of *connections*. The scaffolding for these involves the

integrative biology of behavior with an emphasis on art and aesthetic experience. Wherever possible, links are provided to recent expressions of the ideas in scholarly and popular culture.

- **INTRODUCTION: The Art and Science of Art and Science**
- **read an read an read an essay about artist Marina Abramovic to kick off a discussion about WORDS and TRUTH: [2018 ART and ORGANISM class notes 1-16 on words and truth.docx](#)**
- **[CONNECTIONS](#)**
- **[PRESENTATION: Natural History of Extraordinary Experience](#)**
 - **The Biological Background: ECOLOGY and EVOLUTION:** “the contexts and adaptive importance of art”
- **[BIOLOGICAL NEEDS](#)**
- **[INTEGRATIVE BIOLOGY OF ART: EVOLUTION](#)**
- **[Evolution of Aesthetics Colloquy Presentation](#)**
 - **The Biological Background to Art: DEVELOPMENT:** assimilating or accommodating new experiences. “Artful scribbling: “the beginning of external representations in infancy and its changes throughout development”
 - **The Biological Background to Art: PHYSIOLOGY** “homeostasis—it’s all a dynamic balance of cooperating and competing alternatives”
 - **The Biological Background to Art: Integration and Meaning -- "knowing and realizing"**
 - **The Biological Background to Art: output and expression -- "corporealization of the psyche"**
 - **The Biological Background to Sociality/ The Social Background to Art**
 - **The Cultural Evolution of Art 30,000BC to last week (Guest presentation by [Professor Jan Simik, Department of Anthropology](#))**
 - **Art and Other Organisms**
 - **Art as Inquiry**
 - **Art and Cultural Evolution**
 - **Artist as Seen and Seer**

[Glossary of terms in A&O](#)

[INDEX of Key Terms](#)

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Each student will identify a major project to be developed throughout the semester and presented to the class in the concluding week ... Each week different aspects of the biological background will be explored and applied to each project.

