

Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Interdisciplinary Studio: Art of Collective Practice
Spring 2017, Tuesdays 6:20-9:00pm
Silver 406
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Office Hours-By appointment

Arts of Intervention: Social Practices in Public Spaces

OVERVIEW

The contemporary art world is replete with artists that perform or install works in public spaces as a method of provoking critical dialogue about the social, political, and economic conditions that shape modern life. In this course, you will engage with the emerging field of social practice: socially oriented research and practice by artists that includes but is not limited to urban interventions, utopian proposals, guerrilla architecture, “new genre” public art, social sculpture, project-based community practice, interactive media, service dispersals, street performance, and social media. This course explores a variety of social forms that can be utilized as containers for your ideas, and examines how the idea of public space has evolved over time, up to and including considerations of virtual public space. In this course we will consider artists as members of society who intervene in and create structures of participation, frequently with the intention of changing the actual, economic and political conditions that construct social reality. We will research and produce projects about complex and sometimes contested social sites like The Classroom, The Library, The Newspaper, The Lecture, The Potluck, The Road Trip, The Walk, The Party, The Salon, and The Community Center. Students will examine and discuss the work of contemporary artists such as The Guerilla Girls, Krzysztof Wodiczko, The Yes Men, The Illuminator, Martha Rosler, Rick Lowe and Suzanne Lacy. We will read and discuss the work of authors such as Lucy Lippard, Shannon Jackson, Clare Bishop, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Pablo Helguera, Nato Thompson, Greg Sholette and Grant Kester.

2) LEARNING GOALS:

- 1- Develop a critical language with which to discuss the field of Social Practice art, as well as the structures of power to which social practice artists frequently respond.
- 2- Knowledge of the historical and theoretical context out of which these art practices have emerged, up to and including the most current discourses and debates.
- 3- A detailed understanding and appreciation for the work of at least one contemporary artist working in this field.

4- Develop the analytical tools necessary to reflect on the nature of participation itself. How do we participate and/or not participate in the shaping of our own lives and the lives of those around us?

RELEVANT TEXTS

- Lippard, Lucy, "Trojan Horse: Activist Art and Power." 1984
- Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.
- Debord, Guy, *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994 (reprint)
- Thompson, Nato, "The Interventionists: User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life." Cambridge, MA. MIT Press. 2004
- Kester, Grant, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008.
- Jackson, Shannon, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York, NY. Routledge, 2011.
- Boyd, Andrew (ed), *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*. OR Books, 2012.
- Bishop, Claire, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.
- Helguera, Pablo, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011
- Shollette, Gregory, "Counting on Your Collective Silence: Notes on Activist Art as Collective Practice."
- Manne, Liz (ed), *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy*. The Culture Group, 2014.
- Hall, Stuart, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," *People's History and Socialist Theory*. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1981.
- Kanouse, Sarah, "Cooing Over the Golden Phallus." *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, September 2006.
- Davis, Ben, "A Critique of Social Practice: What Does it Mean to be a Political Artist," in *International Socialist Review*, 2009

STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ASSESSMENT

In this class you will be asked to do a lot of work as a team, on your own time. The amount of time and effort that you put into project work, along with the quality of your participation in the class will be the critical factors comprising your grade. The most important things you can do are to show up to class prepared to participate in discussion and be a responsible and accountable collaborative partner. Here's a guideline for how grading works in this class:

Attendance and Participation: 50%

Come to class, on time, prepared, and participate: The class meets only 13 times in a semester, so one absence is significant. Two is bad. Three is almost 25% of the class, which I would consider a lot of missed class. Also, our classes will be very full, moving from one exercise to another as we try to cover a lot of ground in limited time. It's important that you show up on time. Three late arrivals (more than a few minutes) will count as one absence. So, show up on time and prepared to participate.

Class Presentations/Online Discussion

Each of you will at some point in the semester be asked to lead class discussion, and also present examples of community engaged art projects as part of a “show and tell” component to the class. In addition, you will also be asked to participate in online forums to discuss the material, provide related resources, etc. All of this work counts towards the participation part of your grade.

1- Discussion leadership: For each reading, a pair of students will act as moderators for both the online (NYU Classrooms- Forums) and in class discussion of the reading, writing a primary response that will also set up the framework for discussion in class. The primary response should be a minimum of 500 words, due the day before class, at around 3:00. The moderators’ post should outline central points in the reading that the moderators feel pertain to the concerns of the class, and ask questions for other students to react to. Moderators will be required to guide the discussion on line, responding to and moderating commentary, as well as guiding the discussion in class. Most classes will begin with a discussion of the readings. All other students will also write responses to the reading in the comments section of the moderators post. They can provide additional information, opinions and comments to respond to the initial post and answer the framing questions provided on the reading page. Reading responses are due at class time.

2- Show and Tell: Each team will be asked to present to the class an example of a community engaged art project that you find interesting. This is wide open- anything that you find noteworthy, or moving, or funny. Good or bad, so long as it provides the class with material to discuss. The expectation is that your presentation and discussion of it will last 15-20 minutes, so try to keep things brief. The mode or technology of these presentations is up to the group.

Papers: 20%

There will be a final paper. The final paper will amount to a critical reflection on the experiences you’ve had over the course of the semester, both inside and outside the classroom. It ought to refer to the readings and conversation that have taken place over the course of the semester.

Outside Project- 30%

The imposition of the semester calendar in the production of a collaborative, community-engaged art project would be counterproductive. There is not an expectation that you will have produced completed work by mid-December. This is not to say that you can’t do so. Sometimes projects are very manageable within that timeline, depending on a variety of factors. What is expected is that the work that you do, or the process you begin, is something that the committee member of GOLES can complete without you, or that you- or others- will complete it in following semesters. What’s important is that you end the semester in good relationship with one another

and with GOLES, and that some kind of progress on a creative project- one that can and will be ultimately completed- has been made.

Results matter, but so does process. In the end, the quality of the work that you do is what will make you proud of yourselves, and that's what matters more than any grade. But how you get there, the preparations you make and the process by which you make it all come together is something that I will pay attention to.

Finally, collaboration, collegiality and respect for one another are required. Students in one group may receive differing grades if it becomes clear that they are doing more or less work. I reserve the right to grade students separately from the rest of their group based on their contribution to the project.

Academic Integrity

All students are responsible for understanding and complying with the NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity. Please read that statement, which is available at http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Project Logbook. Students will be expected to keep a logbook for the project work that they engage in with other students and/or community partner organizations.
2. Research Presentations. Students will be asked to conduct research, in teams, as part of their project work. This research will be presented to the class as a whole in whatever manner the team deems appropriate.
3. Final Paper. Students will be asked to turn in a final reflection paper, 7-10 pages in length, that will critically examine their own collaborative project work in light of the readings and discussions that have taken place over the course of the semester.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

January 24, 2017- Getting Started

Group Exercise #1 Setting the Space.

- Discussion about the classroom as a space of learning and exchanging
- Introduction to each other and the course:
- Review Syllabus, Schedule, Expectations and Requirements (NYU Classrooms/Project logbook).

Group Exercise #1- Who's here, and what's at stake?

Using the technique of intergroup dialogue and report backs we'll try to better understand the group's interests, investments, and aspirations..

Group Exercise #2: Class Asset Mapping

How do we practice working together as a community as we come together in this space ("classroom")? Using mapping exercise to develop criteria for forming groups.

Group Exercise #3: Reading and Listening to Friere.
Intergroup Dialogue and Report Back

Assign Project #1: Exploring Implicit Agreements

Look around you and identify two or more non-verbal, implicit agreements that have been made (or are being made). Photograph each one, or represent each one with a visual or written presentation.

Examples: hedges between properties in the suburbs (private). Waiting in line (public).

01/31/17- Class Two- Contexts and Histories

Readings from:

Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration (pages 23-28)

Collaborative Futures (Pages 43-48)

Collaboration Quotes

Notes from Debate

What is Consensus?

OPTIONAL VIEWING OF RE:GROUP PANEL DISCUSSION

Discuss Readings

Report Back from Assignments

Class Exercises

02/07/17- Class Three- Pedagogical Frameworks

Readings From

Christine M. Cress, Peter J. Collier, and Vicki L. Reitenauer, *Learning Through Service: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines*. Stylus Publishing, May 2005.

Jodi Rios, "Reconsidering the Margin: Relationships of Difference and Transformative Education," in: *Service-Learning in Design and Planning: Educating at the Boundaries*, edited by Tom Angotti, Cheryl Doble and Paula Horrigan, New Village Press, January 2012.

-Discuss Readings

-Discuss Field Trips, potential projects, and potential teams

02/14/17- Class Four- Histories of the LES

Readings From:

Clayton Patterson et al, *Resistance: A Radical Social and Political History of the Lower East Side*. Seven Stories Press, New York City, 2007.

Many URLs, but especially Loisaida Barrios

Additional Sources TBD

- *Group Exercise #4: Field Trip!*

-We will meet in the LES at one of several possible historically meaningful sites and talk to activists from the neighborhood

Group Assignment #3- Interviews

02/21/17- Class Five- Site Visit #2

-Discuss Interview Assignments

-Debrief from last two weeks

-Where do we go from here?

In this class student teams will present potential ideas, designs

There will be a feedback session and ensuing dialogue.

02/28/17- Class Six-Cultural Organizing

Readings from:

The Culture Group, *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy*. Air Traffic Control. 2014.

03/07/17- Class Seven-Activist Art- Theory and Practice

Readings from:

Lucy Lippard, "Trojan Horse: Activist Art and Power." 1984

Gregory Sholette "Notes From Nowhere." 2006

03/21/17- Class Eight- Gentrification

Readings From:

Sarah Shulman, *Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. University of California Press. Berkeley, CA. 2012

03/28/17- Class Nine- ABC NO RIO

Readings from:

ABC No Rio documents

We'll meet at ABC No Rio, which is located at 156 Rivington Street. We'll get a talk and tour of the building from Steve Englander and then conduct class in the building.

04/04/17- Gentrification Redux

Readings from:

Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. Routledge. New York, NY. 1996

04/11/17- Visiting Artist Chloe Bass

Readings TBD

We'll have a visit to talk with artist Chloe Bass, and the evolution of Bushwick Open Studios, a project that she initiated and spearheaded for approximately 7 years. Talk to be followed by project work.

04/18/17- Visiting Artist Robert Sember

Readings: Robert Sember, "Live to be a Legend," in *Caring Culture: Art, Architecture and the Politics of Public Health*. Sternberg Press. Belgium, 2011.

We'll visit with artist Robert Sember, member of the international sound art collective Ultra Red, and participating artist in the Vogue'ology project, a long-term investigation and celebration of the New York City ballroom scene.

04/25/17- Final Presentations

05/02/17-Final Presentations