

ARTSSCI 4VC3: Visual Culture Inquiry
Fall (Term 1) 2016
Tuesdays, 11:30-2:20, BSB 238

Instructor: Dr. Kristin Patterson

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00-11:30 am, Commons 105-F

Chat Hours: Thursdays, 11:00-1:00 pm

Course Description:

This course focuses on socially engaged artistic and activist practices. We will consider the strategies and uses of artistic aesthetic taken up by individuals and collectives for the purpose of social interaction, intervention or change. We will explore the materials, methods, and theoretical approaches taken by artist activists through readings, case studies, and student projects. We will consider existing scholarship on socially engaged art, as well as closely analyze specific practices on a local, national and global scale. Together we will investigate, analyze, and assess the value of these hybrid practices as aesthetic, social, and political activities.

Course Objectives:

- Students will gain exposure to a wide range of activist and socially engaged artistic practices.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how various political groups, past and present, utilize creative forms of media to advance their interests and/or effect social change.
- Students will engage with theoretical concepts and scholarly debates on artistic and creative activism and art as a means for social change.
- Students will gain knowledge of artistic activism on local, national, and global scale.
- Students will be encouraged to analyze and critique the political potential of art.
- Student will have the opportunity to analyze the potential aesthetic, social, and political value of a range of art practices in person and through reproductions.
- Students will refine research, writing, and critical thinking skills through course assignments.

Required Texts and Materials:

Students will be responsible for reading articles, watching interviews/videos and visiting websites provided on Avenue to Learn under weekly headings.

Course Assignments:

Short Response Papers, due September 27th & October 18th, 2 x 15%, 30%

Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, due November 1st, 10%

Project Presentation, due November 15th or 22nd, 15%

Group Manifesto, due November 29th, 5%

Final Project, due December 6th, 20%

Student Led Discussion, as assigned, 5%

Participation & Discussion, including Post a Quote, weekly, 15%

***Details of all course assignments will be posted on Avenue to Learn>Content>Assignments.*

Late Policy and Penalties:

All written assignments are to be submitted via Avenue to Learn by midnight on the on the due date specified above. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day for up to 5 days.

Assignments more than 5 days late will not be accepted.

Lecture Topics:

Week 1: September 6: Introduction, Vocabulary and Historical Survey of Art and Activism Readings:

- ◆ Marcel Duchamp, "Apropos of Readymades," talk at Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 19, 1961.
http://courses.ischool.utexas.edu/kimsmith/2009/fall/INF385H/Duchamp_Readymades.pdf

Websites:

- ★Dada: The Art Story: <http://www.theartstory.org/movement-dada.htm>

Week 2: September 13: Visit to McMaster Museum of Art

Readings:

- ◆ Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" (1968)
- ◆ Jacques Ranciere, "Problems and Transformations of Critical Art" (2004)

Websites:

- ★Look through and read about the images: German Expressionism in MoMA Collection:
http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/ge/themes/postwar_politics#

Week 3: September 20: Spectacle, Situationists and Détournement

Readings:

- ◆ Asger Jorn, "Detoured Painting," (May 1959)
<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/painting.html>
- ◆ Guy Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Art and Politics," (1963).
<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/newforms.html>
- ◆ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (1967). Read whole book or minimum Chapters: 1-4 & 8-12. <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/16>
- ◆ "Détournement as Negation and Prelude," *Internationale Situationniste* 3 (1959), available online at <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/315>

Week 4: September 27: Civil Rights Activism, Feminist and Post-Colonial Art

Readings:

- ◆ Leslie Hill, "Suffragettes Invented Performance Art," in Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay, eds. *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 150-156. ebook:
<http://www.tandfebooks.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/doi/view/10.4324/9780203141571>
- ◆ Adrian Piper, "Notes on Funk I-IV" (1983-85); "My Calling (Cards) #1 and #2" (1990)
- ◆ Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *The Drama Review* 38(1) (Spring 1994): 143-167.

- ◆Iftikhar Dadi, "Shirin Neshat's Photographs as Postcolonial Allegories," *Signs* (Autumn 2008): 125-150.

At Home Screening:

- ❖Couple in the Cage: <https://vimeo.com/79363320>

Week 5: October 4: Posters, Propaganda, and Activism

Readings:

- ◆Richard Meyer, "This is to Enrage You: Gran Fury and the Graphics of AIDS Activism" in *But Is It Art?* (1995)

- ◆Alison Green, "Citizen Artists: Group Material" (2011):
<http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.26/citizen-artists-group-material>

Websites:

- ★Group Material: <http://www.franklinfurnace.org/research/projects/flow/gpmat/gpmattf.html>

- ★Act Up: <http://www.actupny.org/documents/capsule-home.html>

- ★Keith Haring Foundation: <http://www.haring.com>

Week 6: October 18: Art and Protest: War and Memory

Readings:

- ◆Laura Cottingham, "The War is Always Home,"
<http://www.martharosler.net/reviews/cottingham.html>

- ◆Roland Bleiker, "Art After 9/11" *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* Vol. 31, No. 1, Art and Politics (Jan.-Mar. 2006), pp. 77-99.

- ◆Robert Bailey, "Unknown Knowns: Jenny Holzer's Redaction Paintings and the History of the War on Terror," *October* (Fall 2012): pp. 144-161.

Week 7: October 25: Culture Jamming and Art Pranks

Readings:

- ◆Mark Dery, *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs*, 1993
http://markdery.com/?page_id=154

- ◆Julie Perini, "Art as Intervention," in *Uses of a Whirlwind* (2010)

Websites:

- ★Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution: <http://beautifultrouble.org>

Read the following from the "toolbox":

TACTIC: Hoax

TACTIC: Identity Correction

TACTIC: Infiltration

PRINCIPLE: Play to the Audience that Isn't There

PRINCIPLE: Everyone has Balls/Ovaries of Steel

PRINCIPLE: Making the invisible visible

CASE STUDY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal

At Home Screening:

- ❖ Yes Men Save the World (2009)

Week 8: November 1: Participatory Art and Relational Aesthetics

Readings:

- ❖ Nicolas Bourriaud, Excerpts from "Relational Aesthetics" (1998)
- ❖ Hal Foster, "Arty Party," *London Review of Books* (2004)
- ❖ Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" (2004)

Week 9: November 8: Visit to Workers Art and Heritage Centre

Readings:

- ❖ Steve Arnold, "The Stelco strikes of 1946 retold for a new generation" *Hamilton Spectator*, August 24, 2016 <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/6821773-the-stelco-strikes-of-1946-retold-for-a-new-generation/>
- ❖ Nato Thompson, "Contributions to a Resistant Visual Culture Glossary," pp. 167- 178 in *JAP* vol. 1 n. 3 (2004): <http://www.joaap.org/new3/thompson.html>
- ❖ Jacques Ranciere, "The Emancipated Spectator" (2009)

Websites:

- ★ Read about the exhibitions at WAHC: <http://wahc-museum.ca>
- ★ Read through Activist Comics: <http://activistcomics.org>
- ★ Graphic History Collective: <http://graphichistorycollective.com>

Week 10: November 15: Presentations

Week 11: November 22: Presentations

Week 12: November 29: Visit from Tara Burse/Social Networks and Media Activism

Readings:

- ❖ Critical Art Ensemble, "Electronic Civil Disobedience," Ch. 1 in *Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas*: <http://www.critical-art.net/books/ecd/>
- ❖ www.indymedia.org, "Indymedia: don't hate the media, be the media," in *We Are Everywhere*, pp. 228-243.
- ❖ Dorothea van Hantelmann, "The Societal Efficacy of Art", in *How to Do Things with Art: The Meaning of Art's Performativity* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2010).

Week 13: December 6: The Future of Socially Engaged Practices

Readings:

- ❖ Tom Holert, "Burden of Proof: Contemporary Art and Responsibility," *Artforum* (March 2013), pp. 251-59.
- ❖ W. J. T. Mitchell, "Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 39, No. 1 (Autumn 2012), pp. 8-32.

◆Coco Fusco, “Occupy Response,” *October* (Fall 2012): 46-47.

◆Martha Rolser, “Occupy Response,” *October* (Fall 2012): 59-61.

***Please note that the course includes visits to local galleries and museums*

Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines:

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the **Platinum** standard of the Office of Sustainability; <http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/>. All written work should be submitted in the following format: online submissions via Avenue to Learn. For any handouts or paper submissions students are asked to please exclude title page, to use single line spacing and sans-serif font.

Academic Integrity Statement :

McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

MSAF Statement:

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office as appropriate.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Statement:

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement:

Please Note:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme

circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.

Note to Students:

We will be viewing and discussing controversial material. Many activist and socially engaged practices focus on a politics of difference and raise issues around racial and gender identities, oppression and resistance. Graphic violence, alternate life styles, and explicit sexuality are themes pursued by some contemporary artists. Some works may express viewpoints with which you do not agree. Some contemporary pieces are made expressly with the intent of provoking new ways of seeing or thinking about art or the world around us. I urge each student to express his/her views in a respectful manner in class and if for any reason you find the material difficult to view or discuss with please come and see me.