

**ARTSSCI 4VC3: Visual Culture Inquiry**  
**Winter 2021 (Term 2)**  
**Tuesdays 8:30-11:20 am**

**Instructor: Dr. Kristin Patterson**

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**Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:20-12:30 pm via MS Teams, or by appointment**

**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 political 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 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:**

Zine or Timeline, due Tuesday, Feb 9th, 15%

Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, due March 2nd, 10%

Project Progress Presentation, due March 30th or April 6th, as assigned, 15%

Final Project or Paper, due 1 week after presentation (April 6th or April 13th), 20%

Student Led Discussion, as assigned, 15%

Discussion & Post a Quote, weekly, 25%

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

**Course Format:**

Most lecture content for the course will be pre-recorded and available for student viewing prior to course meetings. Discussions, presentations and course activities will take place synchronously each week during scheduled class time via MS Teams. Recorded lectures and links to class meetings will be provided in Avenue under weekly content.

**Lecture Topics:** *Schedule may be subject to changes*

## **Week 1: January 12: Introduction; Dada Disruptions**

### **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](http://courses.ischool.utexas.edu/kimsmith/2009/fall/INF385H/Duchamp_Readymades.pdf)
- ◆ "Dada and the Power of Nonsense," BBC Arts & Ideas Podcast, July 22, 2020. (Link on Avenue).

### **Websites:**

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

## **Week 2: January 19: 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 3: January 26: 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 4: February 2: 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>
- ◆ Suzanne Lacy, "Introduction," *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995), pp. 19-47.

### **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 5: February 9: 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.

### **Reading Week: February 15-21**

## **Week 6: February 23: 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](http://markdery.com/?page_id=154)
- ◆ Julie Perini, "Art as Intervention," in *Uses of a Whirlwind* (2010)
- ◆ Jacques Ranciere, "Problems and Transformations of Critical Art" (2004)

### **Websites:**

- ★ Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution: <http://beautifultrouble.org>  
Read the following from the "toolbox":  
TACTIC: Hoax, Identity Correction, Infiltration  
PRINCIPLE: Play to the Audience that Isn't There, Everyone has Balls/Ovaries of Steel, Making the invisible visible  
CASE STUDY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal

### **At Home Screening:**

- ◆ Yes Men Save the World (2009)

## **Week 7: March 2: 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 8: March 9: Migrant and Refugee Art and Politics**

### **Readings:**

- ◆ T.J. Demos, "Charting a Course," in *The Migrant Image* (2013)
- ◆ Jean Fisher, "Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance," in *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers* (2008)

## **Week 9: March 16: Indigenous Activism / DIY Fieldtrip to McMaster Museum of Art**

### **Readings:**

- ◆ Gerald Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice," in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1-24.
- ◆ Loft, Steven. "Sovereignty, Subjectivity, and Social Action: The Films of Alanis Obomsawin," in *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*,

eds., Melanie Townsend, Dana Claxton, and Steven Loft (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2005), 60-67.

- ◆ Monica Kin Gagnon, "Worlds in Collision: Dana Claxton's Video Installations," *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000), 33- 47.

#### **At Home Screening:**

- ❖ Alanis Obomsawin, *My Name Is Kahentiiosta* 29 min. (1995): [https://www.nfb.ca/film/my\\_name\\_is\\_kahentiiosta/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/my_name_is_kahentiiosta/)

#### **Week 10: March 23: 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/>
- ◆ 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>
- ◆ 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.

#### **Week 11: March 30: Student Presentations**

#### **Week 12: April 6: Student Presentations**

#### **Week 13: April 13: Course Conclusion**

#### **Policy on Late Submissions of Coursework**

The penalty for late assignments is 5% of the grade per day following the deadline to a maximum of five days after which the assignment will no longer be accepted. Students are expected to contact the instructor immediately if special consideration for medical or compassionate reasons is required. Late submissions for the Post-a-Quote assignment are not accepted.

#### **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.

#### **SENATE-APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS**

##### **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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the *Academic Integrity Policy*, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

**Some courses may** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., online search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT**

**Some courses may** use online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

### **ONLINE PROCTORING**

**Some courses may** use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

### **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**. It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn,

WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

### **REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK**

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

### **EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

### **NOTES FOR ALL ARTS & SCIENCE COURSES**

1. Some of the statements above refer to a "Faculty Office"; please note that the Arts & Science Program Office serves in this capacity.
2. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email regularly. Announcements will be made in class, via A2L, and/or via the course email distribution list <d-as4CV3@mcmaster.ca>.

### **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/their views in a respectful manner in class and if for any reason you find the material difficult to view or discuss with please contact me.