

Making Art/Impacting Policy

Artists and Dialogue H48.1050/2050

Art & Public Policy, Fall 2010

Wednesdays, 6:20-9 pm

Bobst Library, Lower Level Room 139

Instructor: Mariam Ghani

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 5-6 pm

665 Broadway, Room 606

Catalog description:

This seminar will present critical frameworks for and in-depth case studies of art that creates, stages, facilitates and/or provokes public dialogue on public policy. Readings will alternate between the historical, theoretical and practical, with a focus on texts by and interviews with artists and their collaborators. Much of the semester will be spent studying several key projects from initial context through inception, collaborations, implementation, and community and critical responses. Case studies will include Suzanne Lacy's Oakland projects in the context of the California "war on youth" of the 1990s; Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, Thatcher labor politics, and the culture of historical re-enactment; Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses and the experiences of the women in its Young Mothers Residential Program; and Group Material's year-long *Democracy* project as a model for Creative Time's recent exhibition *Democracy in America: The National Campaign*. Each student will be expected to lead one discussion session and produce and present in class an 8-12 page final paper, which may be substituted by a creative project of equal commitment. Students in the course will also have the opportunity to observe firsthand, and/or participate in, the research for and production of a dialogical project in progress.

Credits: 4 points

Prerequisites: none

Course policies:

Grading is ABCDF and will be based on the following ratio:

Fieldwork participation: 5%

Discussion leadership: 10%

Final paper/project: 60%

Class participation*: 25%

*Participation includes attendance, punctuality, preparation for and contribution to discussions.

There will be no grades assigned until the end of term. If you have concerns about your standing in the course at any earlier point in the semester, feel free to come see me during office hours for an informal evaluation.

Papers should follow MLA style. I grade syntax and structure according to the classic Strunk and White rules. You will be required to submit a 1-page proposal for your final

paper or project, which we will discuss in an individual meeting before you begin the work.

Students are expected to arrive prepared to discuss the readings assigned each week. Each student will also be assigned to lead the discussion of at least one reading. Discussion leaders should prepare a more detailed analysis of the text and its larger context (historical, art-historical, biographical, social, political, cultural). A simple summary of what you read is not sufficient. Find something generative in the text, unpack its meaning, and examine it critically. Discussion leaders may also choose to distribute additional recommended readings or present a/v materials to supplement their discussions.

Students are also expected to read the news on a regular basis and keep a file of articles, editorials and images that resonate with course themes or strike you as particularly provocative. Bring one item from this ongoing file into class each week and be prepared to initiate a discussion around it. If your own practice is currently centered on a particular issue, configure an RSS feed to deliver you stories focused on that issue; otherwise, try using a service like Google News to show you multiple perspectives on the same story.

Occasionally, I may change the schedule of assigned readings to reflect the flow of discussion in the classroom. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if such a change was made.

I am available by email or during office hours if you have any questions or concerns about the course.

Required texts (available in the bookstore):

Course packet

Finkelpearl, Tom. *Dialogues in Public Art*. Paperback edition, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001. ISBN 0262561484

Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art*. Paperback edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. ISBN 0520238397

Media:

Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (at the Avery Fisher Center, Bobst Library)

Suzanne Lacy's *No Blood, No Foul* and *Code 33* (via Video Data Bank, Chicago)

Coco Fusco/Guillermo Gomez-Peña's *The Couple in the Cage* (AFC, Bobst)

Recommended resources:

Group Material archive in the Fales Collection, Bobst Library

Course Schedule

September 8th

Week 1: Introduction & Expectations
Syllabus review; discuss course structure; assign discussion sessions
Outline of critical frameworks
Fieldwork overview

Due next week: excerpts from Kester chapter 1 (pp 25-31) and chapter 2 (pp 60-81);
Mierle Laderman Ukeles manifestos from course packet

September 15th

Week 2: Critical Frameworks 1: Art / Aesthetics
Discussion: "but is it art?", audience vs. participant, art vs. life
Fieldwork discussion

Due next week: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Chin/Cheney interviews in *Dialogues in Public Art (DiPA)*

September 22nd

Week 3: Case studies: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Mel Chin's Revival Field
Screening/discussion: *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*
Interventions in existing dialogues/structures/institutions;
artist/artwork as *agent provocateur*

Due next week: Bakhtin text from course packet

Recommended: Adrian Piper texts from course packet

September 29th

Week 4: Critical Frameworks 2: Dialogue
Discussion: speech acts, dialogical understanding, Freire's dialogics
Case studies: Jeremy Deller's *Conversations About the War in Iraq* (with presentation of last year's fieldwork results)
Adrian Piper's *Funk Lessons* and *Calling Cards*
Artist/artwork as facilitator/medium for public dialogue

Due next week: *The English Civil War, Part II* excerpts from packet

October 6th

Week 5: Case studies: Sharon Hayes, Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*
Re-enactment and political speech
Fieldwork assignments

Due next week: Kester chapter 3

October 13th

Week 6: Critical Frameworks 3: Dialogical Aesthetics
Discussion: avant-garde shock, "orthopedic" vs. dialogic approaches to viewers, active listening, process as product

Due next week: Phillips and Lippard texts from packet

Recommended: Interview with Helen & Newton Harrison from packet

October 20th

Week 7: Critical Frameworks 3: Public
Discussion: constructions of the public or publics, public art and public dialogue, place vs. site, the Habermasian “public sphere”
Case study: Helen & Newton Harrison and “conversational drift”

Due next week: Lacy and Lacy & Kester texts from packet

October 27th

Week 8: Case study: Suzanne Lacy’s Oakland Projects (1991-2001)
Screening/discussion: *Code 33* as media spectacle; the concentric circles of audiences for dialogical work; artwork as space/stage/platform for public/private/facilitated dialogues

Due next week: Nancy text from packet, Lowe/Shakur interviews from *DiPA*

Recommended: Kwon text from packet

November 3rd

Week 9: Critical Frameworks: Community
Case studies: Lacy, Deller, Project Row Houses
Literal vs. metaphorical constructions of dialogic space
Discussion: site vs. community, politically coherent communities vs. temporarily instated communities

Due next week: Kester chapter 4

November 10th

Week 10: Critical Frameworks: Representation
Case study: Dawn Dedaux
Ethics of participatory practice; problematics of community-based art; the artist as community delegate

Due next week: Ahearn/Symes + Avalos/Hock/Sisco interviews from *DiPA*; 1-page proposal for final paper or project

**Please make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your proposal.

November 17th

Week 11: Case studies: *Bronx Bronzes*, *Welcome to America’s Finest Tourist Plantation* as deliberate or unwitting agents of dialogue
Discussion: position of artists/artworks in relationship to communities represented/addressed

Due next week: Ranciere text from packet; Kester chapter 5

November 24th

Week 12: Critical Frameworks: Policy / Politics
Discussion: critical art – positions, forms, contents, contexts
Artist/artwork as agent of lasting change in policy (e.g. Ukeles, Chin, Lacy) vs. art as a particular/reserved space where political dialogues can be enacted differently (e.g. Deller, Hayes, *Democracy*)

Due next week: *A Guide to Democracy in America* and *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* excerpts in course packet

December 1st

Week 13: Case studies: Group Material's *Democracy* and Creative Time's *Democracy in America*
Discussion: the repurposing of institutional time, space and resources;
Democracy as a model for both artistic and curatorial practices; the construction of a temporary community through/for an exhibition

Due next week: Rough draft/version of final paper/projects

December 8th

Week 14: Wrap up of critical frameworks
Fieldwork reports
Presentation of final paper/projects

December 14th -- Final paper/projects due (by email or in my mailbox by 5 pm)