

ARTS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AN INTRODUCTION

The New School
NARH2200, Fall 2016
Mondays, 4-5:50pm
Rm. 615, 66 W. 12th St.

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A poem can change the world. Or just one person's life. What explains the connection between an artwork and an individual, a wider public, a world? This course serves as an introduction to a pathway of courses that investigate this question by examining the variety of ways in which the arts make and meet people. We explore different modes of engagement: from the creation of stories that help us imagine and understand the complex lives of others to the research that informs this process; from criticism and curation that deeply analyze artworks to arts in the service of political ends; from the institutions and markets that channel the arts to creative therapies and communal art-making processes that help heal wounds and envision new lives together. Different publics build and need different artworks, so we also look at how networks – cities, institutions, collectives – shape, deter, or support the arts. We think through what arts and engagement mean: who defines these ideas, to what ends, for what purposes, for how long? Case studies ground our broad investigation into how imagination and creativity connect to societal insight and action. The course also introduces students to the variety of theory, practice, and experience in the arts in which New School faculty are engaged.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the ways in which the arts are linked to social, political, economic, urban and demographic forces.
- Build a varied, nuanced understanding of what “engagement” may encompass (i.e., imagination, research, criticism, politics, therapy, etc.).
- Introduce students to the variety of theory, practice, and experience in the arts in which New School faculty are engaged by short visits from faculty in class and/or assignment of writings and materials by them.
- Prepare students for more advanced courses in this curricular area by introducing modes of engagement, varieties of publics, and different definitions and examples of creativity and expression.

READING AND MATERIALS

The required reading and materials are available on Canvas and are compiled by week. To access the materials directly, log on to canvas.newschool.edu with your New School user name and password.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reflection Paper (25%): Write a 5pg paper that looks at a personal experience with the arts through the lens of moral imagination, imagination in public, or politics. You *must* incorporate and think through assigned readings. Due October 10.

Exhibition Critique (20%): Write a 3-5pg response to the exhibition “Free Play” at Kellen Gallery, Shelia C. Johnson Design Center, 66 5th Ave. (The exhibition opens September 29.) What considerations or principles guide your choices? Due October 31.

Defining Community (20%): With your final project in mind, write 3-5pgs about the audience or community the artwork engages. Think about how it is defined, what forces provide stability and instability, the benefits and drawbacks of grouping together, and how the arts intervene in these questions. Due November 21.

Final Project (35%): This will be defined as the class proceeds in conversation with your classmates and me. Due December 19.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction

Aug 29 Reading: Zadie Smith, “Some Notes on Attunement” *New Yorker* (2012)

Visit: Artworks in the lobby of 66w12

I would like to meet with each student individually between Aug 31-Sept 9 for 20 minutes. We will meet in my office (Rm 908, 66w12). Please email me by Friday, Sept. 2, with two possible meeting times within the following possibilities:

Thurs., Sept 1: 10am-12pm

Tues., Sept 6: 1-6pm

Wed., Sept 7: 12-2pm

Fri., Sept 9: 10am-12pm

Sept 5 NO CLASS—Labor Day

Week 2 Moral Imagination

Sept 12 How do the arts connect people? With what purposes?

Readings: Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited” excerpt (1959)
John Lederach, *The Moral Imagination* (2004): ch. 7

Paula M.L. Moya, “Does Reading Literature Make You More Moral?,” *Boston Review* (2014)

Case Study: Colm Tóibín, “A Priest in the Family,” *Mothers and Sons* (2006)

Week 3 Imagination in Public

Sept 19 How do the arts imagine conceptions of society?

Visit: Margarita Gutman, Professor of Urban Studies and International Affairs

Readings: Doris Sommer, *The Work of Art in the World* (2014): Prologue, ch.1

Arjun Appadurai, “Archive and Aspiration,” in *Building Bicentennial: Argentina* (2005)

Margarita Gutman, “The Power of Anticipation. Itinerant Images of Metropolitan

Futures Buenos Aires 1900 1920,” in Javier Monclus and Manuel Guardia (editors)

Culture, Urbanism and Planning, Hampshire, England (2006): 85-112

Case Study: Urban Futures

Week 4 Arts as Politics

Sept 26 How do the arts serve political purposes?

Readings: Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (2001): 3-33, 46-53, 86-124

Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power* (2015): ch.2

Case Study: [Mmuseum](#) (with Laura Sanchez, MA '16), 4 Cortlandt Alley

- Oct 3 NO CLASS—Rosh Hashanah
- Week 5
Oct 10 Arts as Social Research
How do the arts form research into society?
Readings: Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989): Prologue, ch.1
Hal Foster, “The Artist as Ethnographer,” from *The Return of the Real* (1996)
Case Study: The New School and modernism
Visit: Orozco Room
Assignment Due: Reflection Paper
- Week 6
Oct 17 Curation
How is curating a form of engagement with the public?
Visit: Radhika Subramaniam, Director of the Shelia Johnson Center and Assistant Professor of Art and Design History
Readings: Radhika Subramaniam, “Small Acts, Forlorn Practices,” from *Activating Democracy* (2016)
Lisa Corrin, “Mining the Museum: Artists Look at Museums, Museums Look at Themselves,” from *Mining the Museum: An Installation* (1993)
Ellen Gamerman, “Everybody’s an Art Curator,” *Wall Street Journal* (23 Oct 2014)
Look at statesofincarceration.org
Case Study: Humanities Action Lab, “States of Incarceration”
- Week 7
Oct 24 Criticism
How are the arts elucidated for a public?
Readings: Sally Banes, “On Your Fingertips: Writing Dance Criticism,” in *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (1994)
Arlene Croce, “Discussing the Undiscussable,” *New Yorker* (1994)
A.O. Scott, *Better Living Through Criticism* (2016): 13-33
Case Study: Bill T. Jones, *Still/Here* (1994)
- Week 8
Oct 31 Creative Arts Therapy
What are the healing powers of the arts interpersonally?
Visit: Melissa (Kate) McIntosh, Art Therapist
Readings: Louise Montello, “A Psychoanalytic Music Therapy Approach to Treating Adults Traumatized as Children,” *Music Therapy Perspectives* (1999)
Arthur Robbins, “Chaos and Form,” *Art Therapy* (2011)
Janis Timm-Bottos, “Endangered Threads: Socially Committed Community Art Action,” *Art Therapy* (2011)
Case Study: Art Therapy
Assignment Due: Exhibition Critique
- Week 9
Nov 7 Communities 1
How do the arts foster or disrupt communities?
Readings: Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another* (2002): ch. 5
Joseph Heathcott, “The Bold and the Bland: Art, Redevelopment, and the Creative Commons in Post-Industrial New York,” *City* (2015)
Watch: *Don’t Bomb These Walls* (2012) vimeo.com/33334707

Case Study: Graffiti

Week 10
Nov 14

Communities 2

How do the arts foster or disrupt communities?

Visit: Katy Rubin, Theatre of the Oppressed NYC

Readings: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970): chs. 1-2

Case Study: Incarceration/Criminal Justice

Week 11
Nov 21

Art as Social Practice

Readings: Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011): chs. 1-2

Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (2012): intro

Case Study: bring to class a contemporary artist engaged in social practice

Assignment Due: Defining Community paper

Week 12
Nov 28

Institutions

How do institutions structure value, access to the arts?

Readings: Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (2010): ch. 6

Orhan Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence* (2009): 494-503

Orhan Pamuk, "Manifesto for Museums" (2016)

Holland Cotter, "Making Museums Moral Again," *New York Times* (17 March 2016)

Case Study: Lincoln Center

Week 13
Dec 5

Policy

How does the government intervene (or not) in the arts?

Readings: Bill Ivey, *Arts, Inc.* (2008): Introduction

Paul Bonin-Rodriguez, *Performing Policy* (2015): ch. 1

Case Study: Policy Initiatives

Week 14
Dec 12

Final Project Presentations

Week 15
Dec 19

Final Project Presentations

Assignment Due: Final Project