

## ARTS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AN INTRODUCTION

The New School  
NARH2200, Fall 2019  
Wednesday, 4-5:50pm  
Rm. 713, 66 W. 12<sup>th</sup> St.

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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.
- Assignments focus on the shared capacities of *critical analysis*, *communication* (written and oral), and *ethical reasoning*.

### 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](https://canvas.newschool.edu) with your New School user name and password.

### ASSIGNMENTS

**Experiencing Art (25%):** Write a 5pg paper that provides a *critical analysis* of a personal experience with the arts through the lens of moral imagination, imagination in public, or politics. You *must* incorporate and think through at least two of the assigned readings. Due Sept 25.

**Performance Analysis (25%):** Write a 5pg *critical analysis* of the performance, “Martha Graham+Modernism.” Due Oct 23.

**Defining Communities/Publics (25%):** Write a 5pg paper exploring *ethical reasoning* in defining the arts for/with/by communities and publics, referencing at least two of the readings in this section. Think about how the communities or publics are defined, what forces provide stability and instability, the benefits and drawbacks of grouping together, and how the arts intervene in these questions. Due Nov 20.

**Final Paper (25%):** Write a 5pg paper based on three readings/materials from the class that best exemplify what you have learned about how the arts work in the world. You might consider an issue that was new to you, or a perspective with which you disagree, or the confirmation of a fundamental belief of yours. Due Dec 18.

### CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 Aug 28	Introduction <u>Reading:</u> Zadie Smith, “Some Notes on Attunement,” <i>New Yorker</i> (2012)
Week 2 Sept 4	Moral Imagination How do the arts connect people? <u>Readings:</u> Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited” excerpt (1959) Paula M.L. Moya, “Does Reading Literature Make You More Moral?,” <i>Boston Review</i> (2014) Teju Cole, “A Reader’s War,” from <i>Known and Strange Things</i> (2016) <u>Case Study:</u> Colm Tóibín, “A Priest in the Family,” <i>Mothers and Sons</i> (2006)
Week 3 Sept 11	Imagination in Public How do the arts imagine conceptions of society? <u>Readings:</u> Doris Sommer, <i>The Work of Art in the World</i> (2014): Prologue, ch.1 Jena Osman, <i>Public Figures</i> (2012): 1-11 <u>Case Study:</u> Artwork in Union Square—spend 10mins near a monument in Union Square, observing the interaction of people with the monument. Take a picture that best captures that interaction to share in class.
Week 4 Sept 18	Arts as Politics How do the arts serve political purposes? <u>Readings:</u> Elaine Scarry, <i>On Beauty and Being Just</i> (2001): 86-109 Wesley Morris, “The Morality Wars: Should Art be a Battleground for Social Justice?,” <i>New York Times</i> (2018) <u>Case Study:</u> Zadie Smith, “Getting in and Out,” <i>Harpers</i> (2017)
Week 5 Sept 25	Arts as Social Research How do the arts form research into society? <u>Readings:</u> Alvin Johnson, “Notes on the New School Murals” (1945) Sally Bick, “In the Tradition of Dissent: Music at the New School for Social Research, 1926-33,” <i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i> (2013) <u>Case Study:</u> The New School and modernism, Orozco Room <b>Assignment Due: Experiencing Art</b>

- Week 6  
Oct 2      **Performance:** Martha Graham + Modernism: Trauma, Interdiction, and Agency in “The House of Pelvic Truth”  
2pm, Auditorium at 66w12 [no class at 4pm]
- Oct 9      NO CLASS—Yom Kippur
- Week 7  
Oct 16      Curation  
How is curating a form of engagement with the public?  
Readings: Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Curating, Exhibitions and the Gesamtkunstwerk,” from *Ways of Curating* (2014)  
Ellen Gamerman, “Everybody’s an Art Curator,” *Wall Street Journal* (23 Oct 2014)  
Radhika Subramaniam, “Small Acts, Forlorn Practices,” from *Activating Democracy* (2016)  
Visit by Anna Harsanyi, “In the Historical Present” (exhibition at Kallen Gallery until Oct 6)
- Week 8  
Oct 23      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)  
Emily Nussbaum, “Confessions of the Human Shield,” from *I Like to Watch* (2019)  
Case Study: “Martha Graham + Modernism”  
**Assignment Due: Performance Analysis**
- Week 9  
Oct 30      Creative Arts Therapy  
What are the healing powers of the arts interpersonally?  
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)  
Visit by Melissa (Kate) McIntosh, Creative Art Therapist
- Week 10  
Nov 6      Communities 1  
How do the arts foster or disrupt communities?  
Readings: Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another* (2002): ch. 5  
Ricardo Montez, “‘Trade’ Marks: LA2, Keith Haring, and a Queer Economy of Collaboration,” *GLQ* (2006)  
Case Study: Graffiti
- Week 11  
Nov 13      Communities 2  
How do the arts foster or disrupt communities?  
Readings: Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind* (2012): ch. 4  
Claire Potter, “Safe in the Nation We’ve Made: Staging Hamilton on Social Media,” from *Historians on Hamilton* (2018)  
Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, *Contested City* (2019): ch. 4

- Week 12 Art as Social Practice  
 Nov 20 Readings: Rachel Sherman, “The Art of Conversation: The Museum and the Public in Tino Sehgal’s This Progress,” *Public Culture* (2014)  
 Gabriele Bendiner-Viani, *Contested City* (2019): ch. 5  
**Assignment Due: Defining Communities/Publics**
- Nov 27 NO CLASS—Thanksgiving
- Week 13 Institutions  
 Dec 4 How do institutions structure value, access to the arts?  
Readings: Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (2010): ch. 6  
 Georgina Kleege, *More Than Meets the Eye* (2017): ch. 4  
 Orhan Pamuk, “Manifesto for Museums” (2016)  
 Holland Cotter, “Making Museums Moral Again” (2016)
- Week 14 Policy  
 Dec 11 How does the government intervene (or not) in the arts?  
Readings: Bill Ivey, *Arts, Inc.* (2008): Introduction  
 Mariana Mogilevich, “Arts as Public Policy: Cultural Spaces for Democracy and Growth,” from *Summer in the City* (2014)  
 CreateNYC, “What We Heard” (2018)
- Dec 18 **Assignment Due: Final Paper**

### CLASS POLICIES

**Attendance:** All credit students are required to attend class each week, and there is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence. All absences are treated the same. Your grade for the course as a whole will be lowered one step upon 2 absences (i.e., from B to B-). Three or more absences will result in an automatic failure of the class. *You cannot complete the class for a passing grade if you have not submitted any assignments before November 13. The last day to withdraw from a class is November 17.*

**Lateness:** If you are more than ten minutes late to a class it will count as an absence. Late papers will not be accepted and no incompletes given.

**Cell Phones + Laptops:** Cell phone and laptop use is prohibited at all times in the classroom. Turn them OFF before class. Exceptions will be made to accommodate students with documentation.

**Academic Honesty.** Plagiarism—the use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work—or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in serious academic penalties, from a failing grade in the class to expulsion from the university. For information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should visit the University Learning Center. The university’s Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy can be found [here](#); the Intellectual Property Rights Policy can be found [here](#).

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Libraries.** [The New School Library](#) offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage.

**The University Learning Center.** The [University Learning Center](#) (ULC) provides individual tutoring sessions in writing, ESL, math, and economics, and time management. Sessions are interactive, with both tutor and student participating. Appointments can be scheduled via [Starfish](#) or stop by for a walk-in session. The ULC also offers several academic and skill-building workshops. The ULC is located on the 6th floor of 66 West 12th Street, 212.229.5121, [learningcenter@newschool.edu](mailto:learningcenter@newschool.edu).

**Disabilities.** In keeping with the university's policies of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS), 63 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Rm 425, 212.229.5626, [studentdisability@newschool.edu](mailto:studentdisability@newschool.edu).