

ARTS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

NARH2200, Fall 2022, Online (synchronous via Zoom, Tuesdays 6-7:50pm)

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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.

We will be learning together during multiple ongoing crises and care and resiliency will be an individual and collective concern. Your health and your family's health should be your priority. If you are dealing with illness, sick family members, travel difficulties, a bad internet connection, increased anxiety, childcare challenges, or any other issues, please reach out and we will figure out accommodations.

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 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*.

READINGS AND MATERIALS

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

ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion (20%): The primary assignment of the course is spirited discussion of the readings and materials. I will be considering the following criteria regarding your contribution to discussion:

number, quality, referencing of readings and materials, and responsiveness to others' ideas. I will determine a midterm discussion grade by the end of October that will not be binding but give you an indication of where you stand regarding your participation in discussion.

There are also two specific required tasks of contributing to discussion, which will be incorporated into this grade: 1) leading a week of discussion with another student, and 2) annotation of readings.

Leading Discussion: Please sign up for leading discussion in the first module. I will meet with the two discussion leaders to help plan what you will do in class.

Collaborative Annotations in Hypothesis: Each week there is a starred reading for collaborative annotation before class. Please read the article first on your own and then add comments in Hypothesis (a separate link in the Module). You are required to submit at least 4 annotations (2 of your own and 2 replies to fellow students) in Hypothesis by Sunday night at 9pm so that discussion leaders can take questions and comments into consideration for class on Tuesday. (*Make sure to select text and annotate rather than just highlight.*)

There are many ways to provide initial annotations that are productive. You can ask a question about something that you do not understand; express admiration for vivid explanation or writing; marvel at a concept or idea expressed in the piece; propose an alternative interpretation of material discussed; point out links to other weeks' readings; explore connections between issues raised in the material and your own observations, etc. Your replies to other students should engage their annotation in a fruitful way, as you would in an in-class discussion.

Experiencing Art (20%): 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 30.

Performance Analysis (20%): Write a 5pg *critical analysis* of *David Byrne's American Utopia*. Due Oct 21.

Communities/Publics (20%): Pick an arts organization you know and research how it defines who it serves (its audiences, publics, or communities). It can be a museum, a community center, a dance school, an advocacy organization, etc. Consider how its rhetoric (what it says about itself) is enacted and square that with your experiences there. Does its mission match its action? What might be missing? Write a 5pg paper utilizing *ethical reasoning* in critiquing the arts organization and how it serves its publics; reference at least two of the assigned readings. Due Nov 18.

Final Paper (20%): 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 6.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction: The Arts Now
Aug 30

Experiencing Art

- Week 2
Sept 6 Moral Imagination
How do the arts connect people?
Readings: *Zadie Smith, “Some Notes on Attunement,” *New Yorker* (2012)
Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited” excerpt (1959)
Paula M.L. Moya, “Does Reading Literature Make You More Moral?,” *Boston Review* (2014)
Teju Cole, “A Reader’s War,” from *Known and Strange Things* (2016)
Case Study: Colm Tóibín, “A Priest in the Family,” *Mothers and Sons* (2006)
- Week 3
Sept 13 Imagination in Public
How do the arts imagine conceptions of society?
Readings: *Doris Sommer, *The Work of Art in the World* (2014): Prologue, ch.1
Jena Osman, *Public Figures* (2012): 1-11
Watch: [Bogatà Change](#) (min15 to min20)
Case Study: Spend 15mins near a monument, wherever you are in the world, observing the interaction of people with it. Take a picture that best captures that interaction to share in class.
- Week 4
Sept 20 Arts as Politics
Do the arts serve political purposes?
Readings: Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (2014): ch. 2
Jed Perl, *Authority & Freedom: A Defense of the Arts* (2021): ch.1
*Wesley Morris, “The Morality Wars: Should Art be a Battleground for Social Justice?,” *New York Times* (2018)
Case Study: Zadie Smith, “Getting in and Out,” *Harpers* (2017)
- Week 5
Sept 27 Arts as Research
What is the role of the arts in a university?
Readings: Alvin Johnson, “Notes on the New School Murals” (1945)
*“Organized by Fascination: A Roundtable Conversation on Arts, Institutions, and Pedagogy,” *I Stand in My Place with My Own Day Here: Site-Specific Art at The New School* (2019)
Christina Olsen, “Museums Need to Be Braver,” *Artnet News* (2022)
Look at: [The Orozco Room](#) (click on Gallery, lower right, to see all photos)
[Offense+Dissent: Image, Conflict, Belonging](#) (esp. [Red Scare, Yellow Curtain](#))
Case Study: [The New School Art Collection](#)

Fri, Sept 30 Assignment Due: Experiencing Art

Mediation of the Arts

- Week 6
Oct 4 Curation [*this week’s discussion will be conducted asynchronously; no Zoom meeting*]
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)

Case Study: [Wendy Red Star, Travels Pretty](#) (Summer 2022)

Week 7

Criticism

Oct 11

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: Kendra Walker, [In Conversation: Rashid Shabazz: Introducing Diversity into Art Criticism](#) (2021)

Week 8

Performance: Watch *David Byrne's American Utopia* (dir. Spike Lee, 2021) (available on Hulu, HBO Max, Apple TV; you can join these for free trials or pay \$3.99 to view on YouTube)

Reading: *Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *ArtForum* (2007)

No class meeting on Oct 18

Fri, Oct 21 Assignment Due: Performance Analysis

Week 9

Creative Arts Therapy

Oct 25

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)

Case Study: [Subway Therapy: Covid-19 Community Journal](#)

Arts in/of/for/against Communities

Week 10

Communities 1

Nov 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)

Watch: [Don't Bomb These Walls](#)

Case Study: 5Pointz

Week 11

Communities 2

Nov 8

How do the arts foster or disrupt communities?

Readings: *Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind* (2012): ch. 4

Wilson Valentín-Escobar, "'Freedomland at the New Rican Village'"

Case Studies: [The Laundromat Project](#)

[Chinatown Art Brigade](#)

- Week 12 Art as Social Practice
 Nov 15 What does it mean to understand art as practice?
Readings: Rachel Sherman, “The Art of Conversation: The Museum and the Public in Tino Sehgal’s *This Progress*,” *Public Culture* (2014)
 *Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, *Contested City* (2019): chs. 4-5
 Case Studies: [The Black School](#)
[Ghana Think Tank](#)
- Nov 18 Assignment Due: Communities/Publics**
- Institutions and Policy**
- Week 13 Institutions
 Nov 22 How do institutions structure value, access to the arts?
Readings: Georgina Kleege, *More Than Meets the Eye* (2017): ch. 4
 Orhan Pamuk, “Manifesto for Museums” (2016)
 *Barry Schwabsky, “Agents of Malaise: Are Museums in Crisis?,” *The Nation* (2022)
 Case Study: [Decolonize This Place](#)
- Week 14 Policy
 Nov 29 How does the government intervene (or not) in the arts?
Readings: *Bill Ivey, *Arts, Inc.* (2008): Introduction
 Hua Hsu, “Starving Artists,” *New Yorker* (2020)
[City Council Meetings as Theater](#) (2022)
 Case Study: [NYC’s Department of Cultural Affairs](#)
- Week 15 What did we do?
 Dec 6 **Assignment Due: Final Paper**

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance: Students maximize their learning with peers and faculty when all members of the class are present and engaged in the regular collective work of the course. Attendance and participation lay the foundation for thriving in the classroom. Though there can be many justifiable reasons for absence from class, multiple absences impact the learning environment for all students and warrant some grade reduction in an environment where learning is both individual and collective.

Absences will be counted from the first day a student is enrolled in the class. After two absences (whether they are concurrent or not), I will initiate a discussion with you to devise a plan for attending class and meeting expectations for the remainder of the semester. More than three absences normally mandate withdrawal or a failing grade for the course. Any exception to this threshold is dependent upon meeting with me.

Withdrawal: You cannot complete the course for a passing grade if you have not submitted any assignments before November 1. The last day to withdraw from a course (to avoid a possible failing grade) is November 20.

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, software, computer programming, oral presentations, math, time management, and ADHD coaching. Sessions are available from 7:00am-midnight Monday-Friday and 12:00-5:00pm on Saturdays (starting October 1). Online appointments are scheduled via [WCONLINE](#). You can also email learningcenter@newschool.edu to request in-person sessions, held at 66 W. 12th Street on the 6th floor, or to schedule a last-minute virtual walk-in appointment. For a complete list of services and general information, visit www.newschool.edu/learning-center.

Accommodations. In keeping with the university's policies of providing equal access for students, any student 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) at studentdisability@newschool.edu.

Student Support and Crisis Management. [SSCM](#) works with students who are struggling with non-academic challenges, distressing experiences, and crisis situations. Contact SSCM staff for assistance in navigating challenges and connecting to on-and off-campus services and resources, including for emergency financial, housing, food, or other needs. SSCM is located at 80 5th Avenue on the 3rd floor; studentsupport@newschool.edu or call 212.229.5900 x3701. Office hours are Mondays through Thursdays, 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; Fridays, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Food and housing security. Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact [Student Support and Crisis Management](#) for support and access to resources. The New School also has a [food pantry](#) (click on link for hours and all information).

Student Health and Support Services. [Student Health and Support Services](#) works collaboratively to support the physical, emotional, and social well-being of its students and promotes a university-wide culture of wellness. They educate students to become discerning health consumers and advocate for their well-being to enable their learning and success both in and out of the classroom. They mobilize resources and support for students facing urgent and critical concerns. Our high-quality services and programs are student-centered, inclusive, and based on public health, social

justice, holistic and integrative approaches, which empower students to successfully attain their educational goals.

For information about the wide range of medical, counseling, and other services, groups, and opportunities go to the website above, or go in person to 80 Fifth Avenue, 3rd floor (check the website for drop-in hours for medical and counseling services), call 212.229.1671, or email shs@newschool.edu. For after-hours health concerns call 212.229.1671 and a nurse will answer the phone and provide care advice.

Financial Aid. The [Office of Financial Aid](#) can help you manage your education costs. They welcome students and family inquiries about Financial Aid eligibility and financing options; tuition and fees; cost of living in New York City; managing your personal finances; individual billing and payment issues. You can reach the office at fnaid@newschool.edu or 212.229.8930, or stop by 72 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, Monday through Friday, 10:00-4:45pm.

Student Emergency Assistance Program. This program provides currently enrolled students experiencing acute financial distress with one-time financial assistance. It cannot be used to cover tuition; it is expected that a student in need will work with Student Success staff or outside resources to take steps towards long-term stability. Students in need can complete an online application for emergency funding support. Questions and concerns can be submitted to emergencyfund@newschool.edu.