Revised Syllabus – March 15
Artivism and the Social Imagination
Senior Honors Seminar 493H
Social Thought and Political Economy
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Spring 2011

Mondays, 4:40PM – 7:10PM
Machmer Hall, E-35

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Office Hours (on UMass Campus, STPEC office, Machmer Hall, E-27A)
Mondays: 2PM - 4PM or by appointment

In this interdisciplinary course, we explore how artists have historically responded to the call for social change. Drawing from an array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, we will investigate a variety of themes and issues, such as artistic citizenship, feminist art, public art, art and the role of art in social movements, the avant-garde, the role of artistic institutions, how artists invoke new social imaginations, the role of artists in cultivating social change, the relationship between art and new or alternative public sphere(s), the tensions between the socially “real” and the “imaginary,” political art vs. activist art, and the impact of artistic expressions and movements in transforming collective mentalities or consciousness. While a close analysis of various art texts and practices may occur throughout the semester, the course largely centers on the multi-dimensional social processes that constitute the production and reception of artistic practices and objects. Throughout the semester we will consider how creative (art)iculations vary through time and circumstance, offering opportunities to examine how art mediates between those who are heard, seen, and silenced within particular social conditions.

Required Course Books

All required texts for this class are available for purchase at Food for Thought Books located at 106 North Pleasant Street in the Center of Amherst (413.253.5432).


Assigned Essays/Articles
All assigned essays/articles for this class are digitally available on the course website.

Please note that readings and assignments are subject to change. Please refer to course website for changes.

**Required Activities to Receive a Grade**

- Complete assigned readings in advance of each class meeting; you are expected to bring readings to class.

- Regular attendance, class participation, and co-facilitate class discussion. As a seminar, regular attendance and class participation is crucial to an engaging classroom community of committed learners. Three (3) unexcused absences will prevent you from obtaining a final course grade. Thus, you are allotted 2 unexcused absences.

- Submit assigned work in a timely manner. Apart from excusable circumstances, which include a family emergency and/or illness, a detached limb, or the observation of a religious holiday, all papers must be submitted in a timely manner. Unauthorized late papers will be will be penalized 1/2 grade for every day it is late (e.g. A to A-) with a maximum penalty of 1 grade off. In other words, the paper must be submitted within 48 hours past the deadline. Contingencies (crashed computers, empty printer cartridges, illnesses, break-ups, hangovers) happen. Therefore, I will accept 1 (ONE) late paper during the semester (to be turned in no more than 48 hours past the deadline). All late paper submissions will have to be submitted as a hardcopy and left in my Hampshire College campus mailbox, located in Room 218 Franklin Patterson Hall. Final research papers MUST be submitted on time. I will not accept late final papers.

The required written work for this seminar consists of the following—REVISED MARCH 15:

- **ONE 5-7 Page Analytical Paper; ONE 10 PAGE ANALYTICAL PAPER.** Reflection papers synthesize the assigned readings laying out the central arguments proposed. All students must submit hardcopies of their papers in class. Papers are due on: February 14 and March 25.
- **2-3 Page Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography of a minimum of 10 non-course assigned readings – Due in class on APRIL 4**
- **20-25 Page Final Research Paper - Due on Friday, May 11**

**Grading Breakdown:**

1. Class Attendance, In-Class Presentations, and In-Class Participation: 25%
2. Two Analytical Papers: 35%
3. Final Paper Proposal, Annotated Bibliography & Final Paper: 40%

**CELL PHONES SHOULD BE TURNED OFF BEFORE ARRIVING TO CLASS!**

In-Class laptop computer usage is to be limited to course-related activities and not casual web surfing for personal enjoyment.
Paper Format

All paper assignments should have a cover page containing your name. Each subsequent page should be double spaced with page numbers. All page margins should be exactly 1.25 inches and the type font should be nothing larger or smaller than 12 points. It is imperative that you spell-check your paper before submitting it. Lastly, plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the course and will be reported to the Director of STPEC and the Dean’s office.

An “Active” Syllabus

A course syllabus is considered a contractual agreement between students and faculty members. We all agree to complete the work listed and abide by the course and college guidelines during the semester. “An Active Syllabus” is one that allows the Professor to amend the syllabus as the semester progresses. When the need arises, assigned readings will be eliminated, or modified. At other moments, a particular essay or video documentary may effectively replace a reading assignment or activity already listed on the syllabus. Keep in mind that our in-class seminar discussions may stimulate these changes. Viewing education as a dynamic and dialogical process, I may amend the course readings and/or assignments based on how the course proceeds.

Course Calendar

Keep in mind that changes to this course calendar may occur throughout the term.

(*) Optional Reading

Unit 1: Setting the Stage/Conceptual Frameworks
Art, Aesthetics, Culture & Ideological Hegemony, & Public Sphere

Week 1: Jan 24

♦ Introductions; Review Syllabus; Why this class? Begin Discussion on Activist Art vs. Political Art

Art, Aesthetics, Activism

Week 2: Jan 31

♦ Stephen Davies, “Definitions of Art,” from The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics
♦ Alan Goldman, “The Aesthetic,” from The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics
♦ Leo Tolstoy, “What is Art?” from Art and its Significance
♦ John Dewey, “Art as Experience” from Art and its Significance
*Nina Felshin, “Introduction” from But is it Art: The Spirit of Art as Activism

Week 3: Feb 7

Raymond Williams, “Culture;” “Ideology;” and “Hegemony” from Marxism and Literature
Janet Wolff, “Art as Ideology” from The Social Production of Art
Howard Becker, “Aesthetics, Aestheticians, and Critics” from Artworlds
Vera Zolberg, “The Art Object as Social Process,” from Constructing a Sociology of the Arts
*Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction (selections)
*Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” from Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays

Art & Social Imaginaries

Week 4: Feb 14 - Submit First Analytic Paper
Class Canceled

Public Sphere(s), Art Republics, & The Public of Art

Week 5: Mon, Feb. 21 – Holiday – No Class Meeting!
Class Meeting on Tues, Feb 22: Note Change – More Info TBA
*Charles Taylor, “What is a Social Imaginary?”
Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship” from Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display
T.V. Reed, “Singing Civil Rights: The Freedom Song Tradition,” from The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle
*Ellen Graff, Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942
  o Chapter I – “The Dance is a Weapon”
  o Chapter II – “Proletarian Steps: Workers Dancing”
Week 6: Feb 28

- Anthony Lee, “Workers and Painters: Social Realism and Race in Diego Rivera’s Detroit Murals,” from *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*
- Eva Cockcroft, John Pitman Weber, and James Cockcroft, “Mural Painting as a Human Process: The Community,” from *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*
- Judy Baca, “Our People are the Internal Exiles,” from *Cultures in Contention*
- Lucy Lippard, “Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power” from *Modern Art Culture: A Reader*
- *Alan Trachtenberg, “Signifying the Real: Documentary Photography in the 1930s,” from The Social and The Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*
- *Gregory Sholette, “Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-Public Sphere”*
- *Cher Krause Knight, “A Short History of the United States’ ‘Official’ Public Art” from Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*
- *Cher Krause Knight, “Conventional Wisdom: Populist Intentions within Established Paradigms,” from Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*

Unit II: Citizenship and Art(ist) Republics

Art, Space & Citizenship/Artistic Citizenship

Week 7: March 7

- Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics”
- Kenneth H. Tucker, Jr. “From the Imaginary to Subjectivation: Castoriadis and Touraine on the Performative Public Sphere” *These Eleven, #83* (Nov 2005): 42-60
- Suzanne Lacy, “Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys,” from *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*
- *Jurgen Habermas, ‘The Public Sphere” (selections)*
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* Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” from Habermas and the Public Sphere
* Cher Krause Knight, “Culture to Go: From Art World to the World” from Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism

Week 8: March 14 – Spring Break – No Class Meeting!

Unit III: Art & Body(ies): Public/Site Specific Artivism

Week 9: March 21

* Harry Elam, Taking it to the Streets

Friday, March 25 -- Submit Second Analytic 10 Page Paper by 3PM at STPEC Office

Week 10: March 28 -

* Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space”
* Jayne Wark, “The Origins of Feminist Art,” from Radical Gesture: Feminism and Performance Art in North America
* Elizabeth Hess, “Guerilla Girl Power: Why the Art World Needs a Conscience,” from But is it Art: The Spirit of Art as Activism
* Richard Schechner, “A Polity of Its Own Called Art?”
* Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, “Patriotism, Fear, and Artistic Citizenship” from Artistic Citizenship

Week 11: April 4-Submit Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

In-Class Presentations of Final Paper Proposals
* T.V. Reed, “ACTing UP Against AIDS: The (Very) Graphic Arts in a Moment of Crisis”
* George Lipsitz, “Not Just Another Social Movement: Poster Art and the Movimiento Chicano” from American Studies in a Moment of Danger
* El Museo del Barrio, Pressing the Point: Parallel Expressions in the Graphic arts of the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements (Selections)

Unit IV: Avant-Gardes & the Culture(s) of Spontaneity;
Concluding Thoughts – What is Artivism?

Week 12: April 11

- Stuart Hobbs, *The End of the American Avant-Garde*

Week 13: April 18 – Holiday
Class Meeting on Wed, April 20 – Note Change – More Information TBA

- Coco Fusco, “Fantasies of Oppositionality,” from *Essays in Afterimage*
- Louise Tythacott, *Surrealism and the Exotic* (Chapters 1 and 2)
- Michael Richardson, “Surrealism Faced with Cultural Difference,” from *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*

Week 14: April 25

- James M. Harding and John Rouse, *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance* (selections)
- Robin D.G. Kelley, “Keepin’ it Surreal: Dreams of the Marvelous,” from *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

Week 15: May 2 – Final Paper Presentations; Wrap Up

- Gregory Sholette, “Counting on Your Collective Silence: Notes on Activist Art as Collaborative Practice”
- Carol Becker, “Herbert Marcuse and the Subversive Potential of Art”

Submit Final Papers by 3PM at STPEC Office on Friday, May 11!