

CST 320: Art/Work: Documenting Cultural Production

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NH 305, T. 5:00-7:50 3 credits Fall 2012

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Office Hours: (TBA)

Course Outline

The fields of art, design, architecture and media (and their study) have been transformed over the past century by new industrial technologies and increasing integration within a world market. At the same time, these fields have taken on an increasingly powerful role in shaping the direction of technological innovation and the nature of market change as cultural production has become a driving force in so-called post-industrial, globalized economies.

Students address these broad-based historical shifts by critically examining and documenting the changing political economy of cultural production at the level of local cultural institutions, including museums, performing arts centers, foundations, and art schools, using both written and visual ethnographic techniques.

The course is offered to BA students in Critical and Visual Studies (although it is not restricted to them). It provides a strong foundation in the theoretical and social context of contemporary art- and culture-making.

An Overview:

This class encourages students to look critically at the changing political economy of cultural production. We will focus on NYC and discuss how culture and technological development have become key elements in the city. We will look at the changing political economy of cultural institutions here, focussing mainly on the fine art business. We will study the rebranding of the city since the late 1970s from mugger's paradise to cultural tourist mecca, and consider the shifting roles of fine art, galleries and museums now. We will also track the global franchising of NY universities and museums, and explore how technology and "sponsorship culture" reshape our contemporary understandings of art and culture. What analytical models help us discuss these shifts? How is the art world responding to technological and financial change?

We will begin with a number of theoretical approaches for studying the relation between technology and culture. Students will then analyse the organizational structure, bureaucratic culture, political economy, and ideology of a particular cultural institution and its relation to the city and nation-state.

Research groups will study and make a presentation of the one of the following NYC institutions or on a touring museum exhibition:

1. Museums –MOMA, the Met, Whitney downtown, Brooklyn Museum, Guggenheim global
2. Performing arts centers –Participant Inc., NFPs, Performa
3. Foundations –DIA Foundation, Pollock-Krasner, Warhol Foundation
4. Art schools –New School, NYU, SVA, Pratt (particularly their global wings)
5. Art magazines -Artforum, Frieze, Art in America, Flash Art

The course helps students to initiate contemporary research projects, collect, analyse and articulate new data, surveying and writing about our shifting cultural mediasphere. The course strongly encourages students to develop their skills in writing, making presentations, and also producing art, using a range of techniques such as PowerPoint, video presentations, artworks, as well as expository writing (response papers to assigned texts, and essays) to express their ideas.

Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is strictly required at all classes; unexcused absences will severely effect your grade. Students will be required to read all required readings and actively participate in discussion. Each student will be responsible for helping to facilitate discussion through bringing questions to class about the readings for each week. Active, in-class participation required of students in this class will be expected throughout your time in the program.

Grades and Incompletes: Incompletes will be granted only in accordance with the established policy of the college. The request must be made in advance of the last week of class. It must be made in writing. An incomplete is “available only if the student has been in regular attendance, has satisfied all but the final requirements of the course, and has furnished satisfactory proof that the work was not completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond control” (Pratt Institute Bulletin).

Assignments:

Three one-to-two page response papers on assigned texts by Benjamin, Adorno, McLuhan and Lovink. Due on same day reading is assigned.

One 20-min group presentation in class on an assigned topic. Research required.

Midterm take-home exam. Short-answer questions and essay. Due Oct 30th.

Final individual essay (8-10 pages) and in-class presentation. Research required. Due Nov 27th

Grading:

1. Regular attendance. Unexcused absences may affect your grade.
2. Regular class participation, including short response papers (25% of grade)
3. Group presentations of selected readings (20% of grade)
4. Submission of a midterm paper, due October 30th. (25% of grade)
5. Submission of a final paper, due November 27th. (30% of grade)

Assessment:

Participation, Preparation and Short Response Papers: 25%

As this is a seminar, participation and preparation for our weekly discussions will play a large part in your grade. This does not mean that you have to come to class already understanding every aspect of the texts we read! It does, however, mean that you should be an informed participant. Come with a sense of the text, and with a good idea of where your questions about it begin. Everyone is expected to come to class having read the text thoroughly at least once.

This portion of your grade includes group work in class, and whatever in-class assignments we have. Missing class can affect your participation grade; coming to class late can affect your participation grade. It also includes classroom etiquette: lateness, cell phone use, distractions,

checking Facebook on whatever mobile device—in short, the little things that could erode our conversation.

Part of the Participation grade is based on three response papers. These are one-to-two page papers that respond to some aspect of the texts assigned in the weeks since the last response paper.

Like the presentations, these are meant to be engagements with specific questions in the text, and should be attempts to get deeper into the text, rather than attempts to summarize its points. Beyond that, unless I assign a specific topic in advance, the form is relatively open: you can take one of the readings and see how its claims bear upon a specific photograph or artwork; you can juxtapose two of the readings and try to argue for one over another; you can pick one particular sentence or paragraph and spend three pages unpacking it.

Group Presentations: 20%

Each of you will be required to co-present one 20-min group presentation over the course of the semester. These groups will be assigned on Sept 18th. These are presentations on specific themes which are intended to develop our discussion, and should be researched and composed with an eye to opening up interesting questions and developing our class's ongoing preoccupations. You can bring notes and use Powerpoint, but do not write the whole thing out in advance. You must, however, email me the day before your presentation and give me a brief run-through of what you plan to talk about.

Midterm Exam: 25%

This will be take-home and essay-based, drawn from our readings and discussions in class so far. Taking notes during class will help you with this exam. I will give you a set of three short questions and an essay assignment based on our readings and discussion.

Final Essay: 30%

This research essay should be 7 to 10 pages, and is due, as a hard copy, at the beginning of our class on Nov 27th. Students will develop their own topics for this essay over the course of the semester, with input from myself and from each other.

Some general comments about writing and presentations for this class:

All papers should be instances of academic writing, with a thesis, argument structure, and a conclusion. They should also be standard format—Times New Roman or equivalent, 12 point font, one inch margins, double spaced. Be sure to cite your sources, and use a standard citation format: MLA, APA, or Chicago.

If you are worried about your writing, you can submit drafts to me in advance and I will be happy to help you polish them. You are also welcome to come to me, either in person or via email, for help in developing response paper topics or presentation subjects.

A short written guide on composing a response paper and making a class presentation is provided on the course site.

NB: All papers should be turned in, as hard copies, at the beginning of class on the day that they are

due. All late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day that it is late.

Pratt has specific rules about plagiarism. (See Pratt link on academic integrity). You should adhere to these rules and be sure to cite all your sources clearly. For further information on proper acknowledgement and plagiarism, including expectations concerning paraphrasing source material and proper forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult The Bedford Handbook. Any violations will result in departmental and school adjudication.

No-double-use policy: Your project should be something “new” for you. In particular, you may not select a project topic that largely intersects with a project you already used for another course in the past, or that you will use for another course this term.

Reading:

All readings will come in the form of files found on the Pratt class web page or via online links.

Week by Week:

-Section 1 –Four Analytical Models concerning Culture and Technology

Week 1 Aug 28th Introduction, Course overview. Goals, expectations.

Week 2 Sept 4 Analytical Model #1: New Technologies of Inscription

Walter Benjamin “Short History of Photography” (1931) from “Selected Writings, Vol. 2: 1927 - 1934”, ed. Jennings, 1999 (p.119-138)

John Tagg “Archiving Machine-Camera-Filing Cabinet” from “Grey Room 47”, Spring 2012 (p. 24–37)

One-to-two page response paper on Benjamin due today.

Week 3 Sept 11 Analytical Model #2: Technological Determinism and its Discontents

Marshall McLuhan “Interview” Playboy Magazine (1969) (p.1-23)

Geert Lovink “Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media” 2012 (extract) (p. 147-157, p.176-187)

Malcolm Gladwell “Small Change: Why the Revolution will not be Tweeted” New Yorker, Oct 4th, 2010. (p.1-7)

Watch Marshall McLuhan videos.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y99YI9_n9A

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImaH51F4HBw&feature=related>

One-to-two page response paper on McLuhan & Lovink due today

Week 4 Sept 18 Analytical Model #3: Culture, Audience and Consumption

Pierre Bourdieu “Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste” (1979) (extract) from “Literary Theory: An Anthology” ed. Rivkin & Ryan (p.1028-1035) 1998

Vera L Zolberg ““An Elite Experience for Everyone”: Art Museums, the Public & Cultural Literacy.” (p. 49-65) from “Museum Culture” ed. Sherman/Rogoff, 1994

Raymond Williams “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory” (1973) from “Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies” ed. Davis & Schleifer, 1994. (extract) (p. 7-16)

Joseph Heath & Andrew Potter “The Rebel Sell: How the Counterculture

became Consumer Culture” 2005 (extract) (p. 100-135)

Assignment/sign-up for group presentations.

Week 5 Sept 25

Analytical Model #2: Aesthetics and Institution

Theodor W. Adorno & Max Horkheimer “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass-Deception” (p.1-24)

Max Paddison “Adorno, Modernism & Mass Culture: : Essays on Critical Theory and Music” (extract) (p. 81-96) 1996

Screening: Guy Debord’s “Society of the Spectacle” (88 mins) 1973
http://www.ubu.com/film/debord_spectacle.html

One-to-two page response paper on Adorno due today

Section 2 –Case Studies: Researching the Evolving New York Art Institution/Business:

Along with discussing assigned readings in class, students will do field work in groups in their own time, studying a chosen museum, institution, foundation, performing arts center or art school and then make a group presentation in class on the changing political economy there.

Week 6 Oct 2

Group A: 20-min Group Presentation on the Globalization of the Museum

Brian Wallis “Selling Nations: International Exhibitions & Cultural Diplomacy” (p. 265-281) from “Museum Culture” ed. Sherman/Rogoff, 1994

Saloni Mathur, “Museums and Globalization” Anthropological Quarterly, Vol 78, #3, Summer 2005 (p. 697-708)

Sharon Waxman “Loot: The Battle over the Stolen Treasures of the Ancient World” 2008 (extract)

Week 7 Oct 9

Group B: 20-min Group Presentation on Sponsorship Culture

Chin-Tao Wu “Privatising Culture” New York, Verso, 2003 (extract) (p.123-158)

Ryan McGuinness “Sponsorship: The Fine Art of Corporate Sponsorship, The Corporate Sponsorship of Fine Art” 2005 (extract) (p.16-19, 22-31)

Week 8 Oct 16

Group C: 20-min Group Presentation on NYC Art Gallery System

Laura de Coppet & Alan Jones "The Art Dealers: The Powers Behind the Scene Tell How the Art World Really Works" 2002 (extract) (p.80-109, 333-351)

Sarah Thornton "Seven Days in the Art World" New York, Norton, 2009
"The Auction" (p.3-38)

Jerry Saltz "How to Make it in the Art World", New York magazine, April 25th, 2012. <http://nymag.com/arts/art/rules/>

Christian Viveros-Faune. "London's Big-Deal Art Fair Hits New York, Occupy Hits Back." Village Voice, May 2 2012 (p.1-2)

Gary Indiana "Postmortem: 'Artforum,' Roland Barthes, and Me," ArtUS, Inaugural Issue, Nov 2003 (p.20-22)

Week 9 Oct 23

Group D: 20-min Group Presentation on Relational Aesthetics

Jacques Rancière "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art" (extract) (p. 45-60)

Nicholas Bourriaud "Relational Aesthetics" (extract) (p.1-12)

Claire Bishop "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" from "October" magazine, Fall 2004 (p.51-80)

Week 9 Oct 30

Group E: 20-min Group Presentation on Art Schools & the Global University Franchise

Reading: Howard Singerman "Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University" (extract) (p.186-213)

Steven Henry Madoff "Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century" (extract)

Sarah Thornton "Seven Days in the Art World" 2009
"The Crit" (p.43-73)

Andrew Ross "Debt & Growth, FIRE & ICE" from "While We Were Sleeping: NYU & the Destruction of New York" ed. Miller, 2012 (p.21-27)

Mark Hay "Campus Colossus: NYU and Columbia Pursue a Global University Model, Hotly" capitalnewyorkcom, Sept 16, 2011 (p.1-2)

Take-home midterm exam (short questions and essay) (due Nov 13).

Nov 6	(Fall Break)
Week 11 Nov 13	<p>Group F: 20-min Group Presentation on Changing Cultural Networks</p> <p>Lev Manovich “Post-New-Media Aesthetics” 2000 from “Info-Aesthetics: Information & Form” (forthcoming) (p.1-11)</p> <p>Jesko Fezer “Design for a Post-Neoliberal City” e-flux, 2010. (p.1-7)</p> <p>Benjamin Schwarz “Gentrification & its Discontents: Manhattan was never what we think it was” from “The Atlantic,” June 2010 (p.1-5)</p> <p>Miriam Greenberg “Welcome to Fear City” from “Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World” 2008 (p.133-159)</p> <p>Hand in take-home midterm exam</p> <p>One-page proposal for Final Individual Student Projects due.</p>
Week 12 Nov 20	Guest speaker: TBA
Week 13 Nov 27	Final Individual Student Essay due (7-10 pages), Individual Presentations and Crits
Week 14 Dec 4	Final Individual Student Essay due (7-10 pages), Individual Presentations and Crits
Week 15 Dec 11	Summing Up / Where to next?