

Performing the Problem Spring 2008

Instructor - Barbara DeGenevieve & Sheelah Murthy

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Time - Tuesday, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Building and Room Number - Columbus Room 201

Class description:

"If you believe your world is formed by what you look at, and you decide you just won't look at the usual things, your world will change." John Baldessari

"The act of looking is very brave; the chance of seeing something that will change you is very high." Laurel Nakadate

The most 'reality'-based disciplines – performance, photography and video – seem to also be the most culturally problematic. Because there is such an inherent performative aspect to lens-related media, the class will explore this contested terrain combining camera technologies (still and video) with performance. Through a series of assignments, theoretical readings, and class discussions, we will be wrestling with a range of subjects that explore domains of cultural sensitivity (race, sexuality, gender, and class) in which the ethics of representation continue to create heated debate. This class will also address the ways in which camera technologies and performativity are the media and vehicles with the greatest potential for direct communication, as well as annoyance, disturbance, transgression, offense, intrusion, obscenity, and deception.

Required readings/materials:

CDs, DVDs, mini DV tapes, a 1-2 gig jump drive. An external drive will be useful, especially if you plan to do continued work and larger projects (you must have the exact version of Final Cut to edit back and forth from home to school – if you don't have current programs, get the new template installed on your laptop by CRIT.

Will be posted on the portal and occasionally sent in email to the class. Make hard copies and bring them when we have discussions of readings.

Grading policy and evaluation procedures:

Credit:

Credit for this course is earned by completing the required number of projects, doing the reading, and participating in all class discussions.

Requirements:

1. Attend all classes on time and participate fully in class activities, and workshops.

2. Come to class well-rested and alert. Rude awakenings are in store for anyone who falls asleep. If you're tired, stand up or get some coffee.
3. Do assigned readings and be ready to talk about them in class.
4. Watch videos/slide presentations with your full attention, making observations and taking notes that will help you participate meaningfully in class discussions and critiques.
5. Turn in each project on time and in adherence with the specific instructions.
6. Be prepared and willing to revise, re-shoot or re-edit your work if it does not meet excellent technical and conceptual standards.
7. Complete and present 4 projects plus a final project.
8. Keep a "digital sketchbook."
9. Bring your laptops to class for taking notes and adding to your digital sketchbook. Create a file in your bookmarks bar for the class and bookmark relevant URLs.
10. No emailing, no text messaging.

Classroom policies:

Academic Integrity:

All students are responsible for ensuring that original work is correctly attributed. Students must give clear and complete attributions for the work of others in their films. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in failure of the course.

Attendance policy:

Attendance is mandatory. Any absence or tardiness MUST have a valid and verifiable reason. Any unexcused absence or lateness will impact your grade. Three (3) absences result in an automatic failure of the class. If you are going to absent or late, the only way it won't count against you is to inform us ahead of time of absence, and as soon as you know you'll be late. Leaving class early is acceptable only for a verifiable and valid reason. Without a reason, it will be considered an absence. Attendance will be taken for AM & PM sessions.

Absences:

In the event you are absent it is your responsibility to make up the material covered in class (screening the film, obtaining notes and assignments).

Tardiness:

Three (3) late arrivals equal one absence.

Late work and makeup assignments:

All projects must be ready on the day they are due by the start of class. Presentations can only be made up in a subsequent class if you have a valid and verifiable reason for the

project not being presented on time. If you are 30 minutes late for class, the work you bring for your assignment will not be critiqued unless there is time at the end of class and you have a valid and verifiable reason for your lateness. No assignment will be accepted after one week. All contingencies described above are at the discretion of the instructors.

Incomplete Policy: No incompletes are given for this class

ONE OTHER REQUIREMENT: Keep an ongoing DIGITAL JOURNAL – USE IT TO COLLECT IMAGES AND TEXT YOU FIND IMPORTANT. If an artist you don't know is mentioned in an article or in class – google the artist, drag and drop images and notes into your journal. Find a system of organization that works best for you.

THE TOPICS AND ONGOING INTERTWINED IDEAS THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE CLASS:

1. SAVING THE WORLD, PHILANTHROPY, HUMANITARIANISM, SECULAR HUMANISM, JUSTICE -- TO HELL WITH GOOD INTENTIONS!
2. UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS: MORAL PROGRESS? WAR, TORTURE, PATRIOTISM
3. USING OTHERS: RELATIONAL ART, THE INTERNET, THE PUBLIC, AND STRANGERS WITHOUT CANDY
4. ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION: THIS IS MY TURF - GET OUT! SERIOUSLY FUNNY -- CAN WE LAUGH YET?
5. RACE, ETHNICITY, FEMINISM, AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS
6. GENDER: MASCULINITY, FEMININITY, EVERYTHING INBETWEEN AND BEYOND
7. SEXUALITY & PORNOGRAPHY -- THE (INTELLECTUAL) SLEAZE FACTOR, EMBRACING YOUR INNER (INTELLECTUAL) SLUT
8. SCOPOPHILIA: SURVEILLANCE OR VOYEURISM (WE LOVE TO WATCH)
9. TRUTH OR FICTION: DON'T ASK ME TO TELL LEGALLY PROBLEMATIC: ARTISTS BEHAVING BADLY (WE CAN'T GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING ANYMORE)

**Artist Lectures this semester:
(Others will be added as information becomes available)**

Wednesday, January 30: 6pm Rirkrit Tiravanija at the Cultural Center

Thursday, January 31: 6pm Getting Off: Sex, Pornography, and Masculinity in the 21st Century Panel at Jane Adams Hull House, 800 S Halsted

Saturday, February 2: 1pm Rirkrit Tiravanija and Mark Dion at the MCA

Tuesday, February 5: 6pm Willie Doherty in the CO Auditorium

Wednesday, February 6: 6pm Adi Nes in the CO Auditorium

Wednesday, February 27: noon Brian Ulrich in CO 215

Monday, March 17: 6pm Susanne Lorenz in the CO Auditorium

Monday, March 24: 6pm Angela Ferreira in the CO Auditorium

Wednesday, April 9: noon Melanie Schiff in CO 215

Thursday, April 24: 6pm Anthony Goicolea in the CO Auditorium

Friday, April 25: 9pm Susie Silver at G2

Monday, April 28: TBA Charlotte Cotton, Round Table Discussion

Assignments (Choose 3 or any combo to make 3 projects):

1. Make a fool out of yourself. Base this performance on that act but approach it in a serious manner.
2. Make a piece using a live video feed that addresses any or all of the following: looking, watching, voyeurism, exhibitionism, surveillance.
3. Make a piece in which you explore/inhabit/become a stereotype.
4. Make a piece in which you indulge in objectification of the exotic.
5. Make a piece in which you take a subject position not that of your biological gender.
6. Make a piece in which you take a subject position of a person of another race.
7. Make a piece that addresses your own racism.
8. Make a piece that is guaranteed to offend or piss people off.
9. Using found footage from the internet (footage that you find either offensive or problematic in some way)
10. Make a piece you would consider (sexually) pornographic

11. Do something with photographs from Abu Ghraib
12. Make a piece of art that will save the world
13. Make a piece that will save yourself
14. Make a piece that combines #12 with with #15 or #16
15. Make the most self indulgent, narcissistic, selfish piece you can make
16. Lie to us, deceive us, punish us for believing you
17. Make a documentary about the most problematic issue you can imagine. Convince your skeptical viewer of its cultural importance.

(Your final project can also be chosen from this list, or it can be a continuation of ideas you've developed in one of the other 4 you will complete – the fourth being the manifesto.)

Schedule:

The syllabus is flexible and subject to change – expect readings, field trips, and guest presentations to be added throughout the semester. Always come to class prepared to work.

Week 1 - January 29:

INTRODUCTION

Students discuss their backgrounds and experience.
Review syllabus

Discussion:

How do you define “problematic”?

What the world considers problematic vs what we consider problematic

Contradictions within ourselves: What is problematic?

What are the subjects that have become problematic?

What does it mean to make problematic work?

For next class:

Read: To Hell with Good Intentions by Ivan Illich

Project 1: Write a one page manifesto or rant and perform it live or as a direct address video. Imagine yourself as a charismatic leader of a group of enthusiastic believers who are looking to you for the answers to fixing the problems of this world. What do you tell them? What is your prescription? Here is your chance to preach your personal gospel. Go for it. Embrace your inner messiah or your inner dictator.

Week 2 - February 5:

CRIT/Discuss Project 1: Problematic Manifestos

SAVING THE WORLD, PHILANTHROPY, HUMANITARIANISM, SECULAR HUMANISM, JUSTICE – TO HELL WITH GOOD INTENTIONS!

Discuss reading: To Hell with Good Intentions by Ivan Illich

Screen/Discuss: Stranger with a Camera (Barrett, 2000)

For next class:

Read: Grassroots Postmodernism by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash pg 117-136

Week 3 - February 12:

UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS: MORAL PROGRESS??? WAR, TORTURE, AND THE BRINGING OF DEMOCRACY

Discuss reading: Grassroots Postmodernism by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash pg 117-136

Screening and selection of visual work

Week 4 - February 19:

USING OTHERS: RELATIONAL ART, THE INTERNET, THE PUBLIC, AND STRANGERS WITH THINGS TO SAY

Week 5 - February 26:

CRITS – Project 2

Week 6 - March 4:

ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION: THIS IS MY TURF – GET OUT!
SERIOUSLY FUNNY – CAN WE LAUGH YET?

Week 7 - March 11:

RACE, ETHNICITY, FEMINISM, AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Week 8 - March 18:

CRITS – Project 3

Week 9 - March 25:

GENDER: MASCULINITY, FEMININITY, EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN AND BEYOND

Week 10 - April 1:

SEXUALITY & PORNOGRAPHY – THE (INTELLECTUAL) SLEAZE FACTOR,
EMBRACING YOUR INNER (INTELLECTUAL) SLUT

Week 11 - April 8:

CRIT-Project 4

Week 12 - April 15:

SCOPOPHILIA: SURVEILLANCE OR VOYEURISM (WE LOVE TO WATCH)

Week 13 - April 22:

TRUTH OR FICTION: DON'T ASK ME TO TELL LEGALLY PROBLEMATIC:
ARTISTS BEHAVING BADLY (WE CAN'T GET AWAY WITH
ANYTHING ANYMORE)

Week 14 - April 29:

NO CLASS, CRIT WEEK

Week 15 - May 6:

FINAL CRITS

GENERAL ACCESS COMPUTER LABS:

112 S. Michigan Ave. Building rooms 9th floor

(312) 345-3766; x53766 (Main)

(312) 345-3790; x53790 (Lab Supervisor)

908: Monday – Saturday: 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.

901: Monday – Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Saturday 12 a.m. – 9:30 p.m. (monitor on duty)

*Late Night: MI908 only; 9:30 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.

*Late Night checkout is administered by the 112 S. Michigan Ave. building Media Center, room 805. Authorized Computing Center users only. Authorization is required for this lab.

Authorizations are required for the Photography Lab and equipment. We will need to know what equipment you will need to arrange authorizations. If you miss a group authorization you are responsible for making your own arrangements. You will not be able to check out equipment or use the lab without authorization.

Performing the Problematic

Spring 2000

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