

AMST 2694 S01

Decolonizing Public Humanities: Intersectional Approaches to Curatorial Work, Cultural Production, and Community Organizing

Instructor: Dr. Micah Salkind

Semester: Fall 2017

Class Meeting Time: Tues/Thurs 4:00-6:20pm

Department: American Studies/Public Humanities

Office Hours: By appointment a half hour before class

OCRA password: decolonize

Course Overview

This course will decenter experiences and cultural expectations attendant to whiteness, cis-maleness, able-bodiedness, heterosexuality, and middle/upper-classness in the public humanities, and thereby explore the contemporary problems and possibilities of intersectional approaches in the field. What do paradigms of “diversity,” “public engagement,” and “cultural organizing” have to teach us about effective and ethical public humanities approaches? Do different, multiply marginalized communities of affinity practice entirely different public humanities? How are cultural interventions changing to accommodate the demands of an increasingly segmented public sphere?

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will be able to think critically about what constitutes the public humanities and will be comfortable dismantling genre silos and hegemonic practices in the (inter)disciplinary constellation of curatorial work, cultural production, and community organizing.
- 2) Students will develop a working definition of intersectionality and apply intersectional analysis to extant and proposed public humanities projects.
- 3) Students will be prepared to offer generous critique of work in the public humanities with respect to how well it achieves its own stated goals and outcomes related the representation and inclusion of multiply marginalized publics.
- 4) Students will be able to identify a set of questions and/or problems related to a local (Providence/Southern New England) cultural initiative and use the framework of intersectional analysis to propose projects/interventions to address them.
- 5) Students will become comfortable creating timelines, publicity materials, budgets, case statements, etc. that are guided by intersectional analytical approaches.

Assignments

Over 14 weeks, students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class (35 hours total). Required reading for the seminar meetings is expected to take up approximately 7 hours per week (98 hours). In addition, writing and researching weekly response essays and the final paper is estimated at total of approximately 40 hours over the course of the term.

Identify Problem/Deficit/Question (5%) Due October 3, 2017

Working individually or in small groups, your project this semester is to define and research a contemporary problem confronting the public, which you will conceive narrowly and plausibly in conversation with the instructor. In this initial paper (~3 pages), explain the problem and consider how it affects various, multiply-marginalized publics; consider whether this problem is well-researched already in academic circles, and, if so, gesture to some of the existing secondary research on the topic. For this course you must also look broadly outside of academic literature to consider ways that such problems/deficits/questions have been addressed by those working beyond the academy (in social justice activism, art, media, etc.). Explain how different approaches might compliment each other and begin to speculate about ways you might address the problem in your own work for the course and beyond.

Survey The Field (30%) **Due October 17, 2017**

Write a case study examining how different activists, artists, curators, and/or cultural institutions in the US, and internationally, have used public humanities methods (e.g., public art, exhibition, digital production, storytelling, theatrical or dance performance, writing, reading and teaching, creating/making spaces, or other form of participatory public events) to explore your topic and/or change public understandings of it. Can you tell what publics were targeted by extant projects? What do you know or suspect about the cultural worldviews of the workers, participants, and witnesses of the event(s)? How did their marketing and content attempt to bring publics together across cultural or social differences? What do these moments suggest about possibilities for similar interventions? With reference to at least ten texts (scholarly books, scholarly articles, or reputable digital documentation or commentary), build your capacity for grappling with the problem you have defined. Your survey essay (~5 pages) must explain these texts in conversation, with particular attention to two questions: 1) how do the public (journalistic, televisual, or social media) conversations differ from the scholarly ones (if there has been scholarly work done) and 2) how and where is this conversation taking place locally (in the Providence metropolitan area/Southern New England)?

Interviews (15%) **Identified by October 24, 2017 (5%); Reflection by November 14, 2017 (5%); Transcripts by November 28, 2017 (5%)**

You will interview two people working in Providence/Southern New England on addressing your issue, and then transcribe the interviews. You will turn in a one-page reflection on the interviews explaining what surprised you as well as what do you wish you'd asked if you were to do it again. You will also contribute your interview transcripts and recordings to a class archive.

Project Proposal (30%) **Due December 19, 2017**

With reference to all of the above work, propose a public humanities project that intervenes in the problem that you have defined and researched. Your project proposal must include a rationale, a table showing needed human, intellectual, and material resources you would assemble as well as an explanation of how they will be acquired. You will create a budget, and a timeline with weekly and monthly task deadlines spanning the project's timeline. The ideal project would be able to be realized in the spring semester of 2017, either independently or

through the Projects in the Public Humanities course, but speculative projects showing deep engagement and thoughtful consideration of difficult issues are encouraged. Students may work together on their project proposals, as group projects are welcome.

Attendance and Meaningful Participation (20%)

Each week the class will engage in robust discourse and welcome guest practitioners, either visiting locally or from the region, who will share their work. Attendance, active reading and active listening, and making connections across the disparate subjectivities and methods evidence articulated in their presentations and in the readings, are crucial to building classroom trust and fostering inter-subjective thinking. Students will receive an interim participation assessment at the time of mid-semester evaluations.

Absence Policy

Because a substantial amount of this class is devoted to discussion and guest speaker visits, students are required to attend class except in compelling circumstances, including religious holidays, personal illness, or emergencies pertaining to family or loved ones. Absences will be excused without regard to reason when students write a short reflective paper on the day's reading and send it in within three days of the missed class session.

Accommodations Policy

Students with visible and invisible disabilities are fully entitled to accommodations in this course, per university policy. If students encounter a situation that might require some modification of any course procedures or assignments they are welcome and encouraged to speak with the instructor after class, during office hours, or by appointment.

Guidelines for Success

The classroom is a space for the open exchange of ideas in a climate of mutual respect. To that end, the successful student in this class is prepared before showing up; is engaged while in class; listens before and after respectful disagreement; and is open to contradictions and complications on the path to learning. Showing up *before class starts* is a crucial part of creating a space for this work to take place.

Required Texts (To Be Purchased)

Platforms: Ten Years of Chances Dances, Chicago, IL: Chances Dances, 2016.

Syllabus

Week One

September 12, 2017

Introduction to the Course and Intersectionality

(ALL READINGS AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)

- Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1). <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/download/18630>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In *Feminist Legal Theory: Foundations*, edited by D. Kelly Weisberg, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993, 383–395.
- Cohen, Cathy J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (January 1, 1997): 437–85.

Week Two

September 19, 2016

American Institutions and The Challenges of Incorporating Difference

- Ferguson, Roderick A. *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 1-18, 209-232.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Ferguson, Karen. *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism*. Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 1-22, 169-209
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- MacFarquhar, Larissa. "What Money Can Buy." *The New Yorker*, January 4, 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/01/04/what-money-can-buy-profiles-larissa-macfarquhar>.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)
- Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions, 2013. 1-99.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)

Week Three

September 26, 2017

Oral History as Praxis

- Johnson, E. Patrick. *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008, 1-108
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Valk, Anne M, and Leslie Brown. *Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 1-78.

- (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- *Pouring Tea* documentation from Black Lavender Experience 2010
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)

Guest Speaker TBC

Week Four

October 3, 2017

Exhibiting Indigenous and Anti-Colonial Narratives

- Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012, 1-72.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Frankel, Noralee. *Review of Mining the Museum*, by Fred Wilson. *The Public Historian* 15, no. 3 (1993): 105–108.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Yellis, Ken. “Fred Wilson, PTSD, and Me: Reflections on the History Wars.” *Curator* 52, no. 4 (October 2009): 333–348.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Wilson, Fred. “A Change of Heart: Fred Wilson’s Impact on Museums.” Victoria & Albert, From The Margins To The Core? Sackler Conference on Arts Education, March 24-26, 2010, <https://vimeo.com/11838838>
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

Field Trip: TBC

Identify Problem/Deficit/Question due on canvas

Week Five

October 10, 2017

Decolonizing Place-Making

- Dávila, Arlene M. *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 1-26, 181-204.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- *Mark Bradford: Merchant Posters*. Aspen CO: Aspen Art Museum, 2010.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Saval, Nikal. “Three Artists Who Think Outside the Box.” *NYTimes.com*, December 3, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/03/t-magazine/art/theaster-gates-mark-bradford-rick-lowe-profile.html>.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

- Tomkins, Calvin. "What Else Can Art Do?" *The New Yorker*, July 22, 2015.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/22/what-else-can-art-do>.
○ (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

Week Six

October 17, 2016

Improvisation and Resilience in Community Arts

- Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 1-118.
○ (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Lipsitz, George. *How Racism Takes Place*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. 131-166.
○ (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Fischlin, Daniel, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation*, 2013. 1-31, 141-243
○ (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)

Survey The Field due in class

Week Seven

October 24, 2016

Queer Social Dance and Utopian World-Building

- Buckland, Fiona. *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. 1-15, 128-158.
○ (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Rivera-Servera, Ramon H. *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012. 1-45, 168-203.
○ (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Salkind, Micah, and Latham Owen Zearfoss. "Borderless Musical Imaginaries Mixtape: House, Chances and Recuperating Queer Genealogies." Performance/Lecture presented at the Extinct Entities, Links Hall, Chicago IL, January 26, 2014.
○ (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- *Platforms: Ten Years of Chances Dances*, Chicago, IL: Chances Dances, 2016.
○ (TO BE PURCHASED)

Last day to confirm interviewees

Week Eight

October 31, 2016

Researching and Exhibiting Public Housing Narratives

- Fennell, Catherine. *Last Project Standing. Civics and Sympathy in Post-Welfare Chicago*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 1-32, 207-238.
- Conquergood, Lorne Dwight. *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Edited by E. Patrick Johnson. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013. 1-25, 170-223.

Week Nine

November 7, 2016

Choreographies of Liberation

- Cox, Aimee Meredith. *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2015. 1-37, 155-185.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Bailey, Marlon M. *Butch Queens up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. 1-28, 124-181.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)

Guest Workshop: TBC

Project Proposal work outside of class

Week Ten

November 14, 2017

Community Art's Institutional Afterlives

- Cahan, Susan E. *Mounting Frustration: The Art Museum in the Age of Black Power*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016. 1-31, 109-170
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Powers, Nicholas. "Why I Yelled at the Kara Walker Exhibit." Blog. *Indypendent*, June 30, 2014. <http://indypendent.org/2014/06/30/why-i-yelled-kara-walker-exhibit>.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)
- Battaglia, Andy. "The Doctor Is In, at the New Museum." *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2016, sec. US. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-doctor-is-in-at-the-new-museum-1467070910>.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

Public Lecture – Carleton Turner (Alternate Roots)

Interview Reflection due

Week Eleven

November 21, 2017

Sustaining The Work: Food Justice and Decolonizing Gustatory Culture

- Alkon, Alison Hope, and Julian Agyeman. *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011. 1-23, 147-348.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA BROWN LIBRARY)
- Guthman, Julie. "Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice." *Cultural Geographies* 15, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 431-47.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)

Guest Speakers: TBC

Week Twelve

November 28, 2016

Intersectional Coda: Bridging and Everyday Activism

- Puar, Jasbir K. "'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg than a Goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory." *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-66.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Butler, Octavia E. 2004. "Amnesty." *Callaloo* 27 (3): 597-615.
 - (AVAILABLE ON CANVAS)
- Hodson, Hannah. "Talking with Reina Gossett and Grace Dunham About Everyday Activism and Why Empathy Is Everything." *Autostraddle*, October 24, 2015.
<http://www.autostraddle.com/talking-with-reina-gossett-and-grace-dunham-about-everyday-activism-and-why-empathy-is-everything-297608/>.
 - (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

Guest Facilitator: TBC

Interview Transcripts uploaded to Canvas by Monday, November 30

Week Thirteen

December 5

Final Reflections and Presentations

Week Fourteen

December 19

***Project Proposal* uploaded to Canvas or emailed by midnight**