

CURE3404 PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY ART 公共及社區藝術

Professor SaeHim Park

Fall 2025

Tuesdays 10:30AM-1:15PM, ERB 408

Language of Instruction: English

Please note that this course outline is the July 2025 version for reference. The syllabus, including assigned readings and course policies, will be finalized later.

Course Description

This course critically examines public and community art as dynamic practices deeply intertwined with questions of identity, space, politics, and social engagement. Drawing from interdisciplinary theories in cultural studies, anthropology, feminist and disability studies, and environmental humanities, we explore how public art constructs, challenges, and reimagines notions of “public” and “community.” Through case studies ranging from participatory art and disability aesthetics to contested monuments and environmental interventions, students will investigate the complex relationships between artistic practices, institutional structures, and lived experiences. Emphasizing critical engagement with histories of nationalism, labor, and digital publics, this course encourages students to interrogate how public art operates within—and against—dominant narratives to foster critical forms of care and collective belonging.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the public and community art, including key debates and theoretical frameworks.
- Critically define and analyze the concepts of “public” and “community” with flexibility and nuance.
- Compare and apply insights from diverse local and global case studies to evaluate public and community art practices.
- Engage with thematic and methodological approaches to public art through focused case studies.

Course Components (Teaching Modes and Learning Activities)

This course combines theoretical learning with critical inquiry to deepen students' engagement with public and community art. It fosters a critical understanding of the forms, functions, and limitations of public institutions, encouraging reflection on their values, audiences, and ethical

implications. Students will explore how such institutions can be evaluated, challenged, and reimagined toward more socially just practices.

Assessment Types

This course emphasizes both individual work and group collaboration, balancing personal reflection with collective inquiry. Evaluation is based on independent assignments, group projects, and active participation. Students are expected to engage thoughtfully, offer constructive feedback, and contribute relevant examples to foster a dynamic, participatory learning environment.

- General Attendance and Participation – 10%
Regular attendance and constructive peer feedback during presentations are expected.
- In-Class Presentations – 30%
Active engagement in discussions and group work is required. Students should bring examples of public or community art related to each week's theme, drawing from local or global contexts, to contribute to the collective learning.
- Midterm Individual Field Visit Reflection – 30%
A written reflection that critically integrates personal narrative, interview insights, and field observations with clear analysis and coherent organization.
- Final Group Presentation – Public and Socially Engaged Art Project – 30%
A well-structured and engaging group presentation analyzing a public or community institution—artistic or cultural—that serves a community of interest. Presentations should demonstrate critical insight and draw on course methods and themes, supported by relevant materials.

Course Schedule, Required and Recommended Readings

All journal articles and book chapters are available as full PDFs either through the library's electronic resources or on the course website.

Week 1 (September 2): What is Public? What is Community?

This week introduces the key concepts of "public" and "community" through foundational theories of nationalism, spatial formation, and counterpublics. We will explore how various publics are imagined, mapped, and contested in relation to art and identity, drawing on selected readings from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped* (1994), and Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005).

Week 2 (September 9): Public Art and the Social Life of Things

This week examines how objects move across cultural contexts and accumulate new meanings, publics, and functions. Focusing on DIY practices and popular icons like Hello Kitty and Pokémon, we explore how participatory public art emerges through everyday engagements with consumer culture. Readings include excerpts from Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things*, Christine Guth's *Hokusai's Great Wave*, Joseph Tobin's *Pikachu's Global Adventure*, and Christine Yano's *Pink Globalization*.

Week 3 (September 16): Anthropological Turn in Art

This week examines how contemporary artists adopt and critique ethnographic methods, questioning the politics of representation and cultural translation. We explore the figure of the artist as ethnographer and consider the ethical and methodological challenges of working across difference. Readings include Hal Foster's "The Artist as Ethnographer?", Miwon Kwon's analysis of ethnographic traces in art, Trinh T. Minh-ha's reflections on documentary, Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone, and excerpts from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.

Week 4 (September 23): Limits of Participation and Politics of Visibility

This week challenges the assumptions behind participatory art and its promises of inclusion. We critically examine the politics of spectatorship, the "salvage" logic underlying humanitarian narratives, and the limitations of empathy and visibility in public engagement. Readings include Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells*, Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included*, and Liisa H. Malkki's *The Need to Help*.

Week 5 (September 30): Art as Work: Funding Institutions and the Question of Labor

This week examines the material conditions of artmaking by exploring how funding, labor, and value shape artistic practices. We discuss art as work, institutional patronage, and feminist critiques of productivity, drawing on Sarah Wilbur's *Funding Bodies* and Kathi Weeks' *The Problem with Work*.

October 7: No Class, The day following the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival**Week 6 (October 14): Disability Arts and the Promises of Accessibility**

This week explores disability arts and crip aesthetics as forms of institutional critique and care. We examine access as both a political demand and an artistic practice, engaging with local and global examples of disability justice in art. Key materials include Amanda Cachia's *The Agency of Access*, Stella Young's TEDx talk "I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much," resources

from the Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong, and Kat Chudy's *Looking After Each Other* exhibition at MMCA Seoul.

Midterm Individual Field Visit Reflection Due

Week 7 (October 21): Artists Writings as Public Art

This session focuses on artists' books as a distinctive form of public art that challenges traditional display and distribution methods. Through a hands-on workshop and a visit to the Hong Kong Asia Art Archive, we will explore how bookmaking fosters community engagement and creates alternative publics. Materials and activities include selected artist writings (TBD) and the Asia Art Archive's bookmaking workshop.

Week 8 (October 28): Public Monuments and Community Building

This week examines public monuments as contested sites of memory, community building, and placemaking. Focusing on several case studies, we explore how allyship influences public art and shapes historical narratives. The session includes a guest speaker (TBD) and a class exercise analyzing public statues.

Week 9 (November 4): Public History and Memory in Museums of Hong Kong

This session explores how museums in Hong Kong engage with public history and collective memory. We will examine museum practices as sites of negotiation and contestation around identity, history, and belonging. The week includes a guest speaker (TBD) and a museum visit.

Week 10 (November 11): Environment – Global (1)

This week explores the intersections of environment, colonialism, and geopolitical violence through Pacific Island case studies. We examine ecological legacies and infrastructural imperialism shaping the histories and memories of places like Bikini Bottom and Kwajalein Atoll. Readings include Holly Barker's article on *SpongeBob* and violence in Bikini Bottom, and Greg Dvorak's *Coral and Concrete*. Supplementary materials include Natasha Francisco's documentary on Kwajalein and Ebeye, a Los Angeles Times report on radioactive contamination, and recommended readings on infrastructure and empire by Ruth Oldenziel and William Tsutsui.

Week 11 (November 18): Environment – Local (2)

This session explores the intertwined histories of urban environments and ecological memory in Hong Kong. Through the documentary *City of Shells: Our Forgotten Oyster Reefs* (2025) and The Nature Conservancy's local initiatives, we examine how environmental narratives influence community identity and urban conservation efforts.

Week 12 (November 25): Final Group Presentation