

CULS5401: Contemporary Arts and Cultural Interactivity

MA Cultural Management AY 2025-26

Department of Cultural and Religious Studies

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Course Instructor: Prof. Ashley Lee Wong (ashleyleewong@cuhk.edu.hk) & Dr. Kay Mei

Ling Beadman (kaybeadman@gmail.com)

Term B: Fri, 2:15pm-5:30pm, Venue: WMY 406

(Tentative Outline)

Course Description:

This course will introduce topics related to participation, dialogical and relational aesthetics within contemporary art and address the ethical issues and challenges of engaging with diverse communities and publics through international and local examples. Through the course, we will discuss the social turn in contemporary art and different kinds of socially engaged art forms, where artists play diverse roles in staging and intervening in social environments, where the arts have the potential to create impact within society. We will address the sensitivities of working with minorities and disadvantaged groups as artists and cultural managers. In the context of a globalised art world, there are also unique challenges of curating in transcultural contexts. We will also explore artistic research methods for visualising and analysing relational and socially complex artistic practices. The course will also touch up the impact of technology on participatory forms of art such as interactive public art installations and rule-based design interventions in public space. We will look at the performativity of installation art, where galleries are not merely sites of passive viewers, but active spaces of collective engagement. Through the course students will be able to consider the importance of public and education programmes, residencies and workshops, which can be considered a central component of artistic production (rather than as a supplement). The course will be accompanied by guest speakers and field trips, where possible.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs):

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the development and significance of the social turn, participation and dialogue in contemporary art;
2. Identify the key characteristics of post-formalist art forms and dialogic aesthetics within contemporary art;
3. Research and discuss artists and artworks, using the discourses of art and cultural criticism and the key ethical questions related to their work with diverse communities; Describe the structures of contemporary art institutions and the ways in which programmes are developed to enable socially engaged and contemporary art forms; Understand the role of the artist and cultural manager in mediating between communities and cultures with sensitivity to local and global contexts;
4. Understand the intersections of cultural studies, methodology, art spaces and artistic practices;
5. Design and create public and educational programmes that engage with diverse communities and publics.

Assessment:

Assignments	Percentage	Description
Attendance and participation	10%	Attendance and in-class participation (individual) including participating in weekly reading summaries.
Assignment 1	20%	Study journal (individual) - a weekly journal entry of reflections from class and readings.
Assignment 2	30%	Presentation and short paper (individual) – a study of a participatory artwork and mapping of relations and ethical challenges of the artwork.
Assignment 3	40%	Group project and work-in-progress presentation (group) – design a public programme that engages with artists and communities.

Course Syllabus and Schedule: (Tentative)

* Note: the readings listed below are for reference only. Specific articles and pages for readings will be assigned in class each week. The course contents and schedule are subject to change from time to time according to field trip and guest speaker planning.

Week 1 (9 Jan): Intro to Contemporary Arts and Cultural Interactivity (Ashley & Kay)

This class will introduce the course and key topics and assignments.

Week 2 (16 Jan): Participatory and Socially Engaged Art (Kay)

This class will distinguish between participatory and socially engaged art practices, whilst understanding the overlap. Socially engaged art will be examined as a form where artists work collaboratively with communities to address specific community concerns.

Readings:

Pablo Helguera. Education for Socially Engaged Art, (p.9-25), 2011.

Aastha Chauhan. Tate Research Working Papers, 2015

Blurred Lines: Art, Activism, Popular Culture and Social Change

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/blurred-lines>

Nato Thompson

Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011. (p.16-32)

https://monoskop.org/images/1/16/Thompson_Nato_ed_Living_as_Form_Socially_Engaged_Art_From_1911-2011_2012.pdf

Supplementary reading/ videos:

Interview by Ronny Koren with Jeanne van Heeswijk IN [oncurating.org](https://www.on-curating.org/issue-43-reader/jeanne-van-heeswijk.html), Issue 43 / 2019 <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-43-reader/jeanne-van-heeswijk.html>, (p.105-111).

Ursula Le Guin. The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction. IN *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literacy Ecology*, p. 149-154, 1986.

Interview with Amy Cheung, <https://festivalreviews.org/2024/08/12/filmmaker-amy-cheung-timebank-the-game/> (published 12th August 2024).

Week 3 (23 Jan): Participation and The Social Turn in Contemporary Art (Ashley)

This class will provide a background on the social turn in contemporary art and look at the ways in which notions of participation are employed within art and policy discourses.

Readings:

THE SOCIAL TURN: COLLABORATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS CLAIRE BISHOP. (2006). In *Artforum international* (Vol. 44, Number 6, pp. 178-). Artforum Inc.

Chapter 3: "Dialogical Aesthetics", In: Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, University of California Press, 2004, pp 82-123, n211-217.

Supplementary reading:

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. 1st [edition]. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012. Print.

Kester, Grant H. *Beyond the Sovereign Self: Aesthetic Autonomy from the Avant-Garde to Socially Engaged Art*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2024. Print.

Week 4 (30 Jan): Ethical Standpoints: Understanding and Applying (Kay)

This class will discuss the ethical considerations in working in diverse communities and contexts and the power positions of artists and curators. We will workshop a framework for artistic /curatorial proposition, that considers: Concept; Rationale: Process & Methodologies; Context.

Readings:

Lorraine Code. *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations*. New York/ London: Routledge, p.1-22, 1995.

Mieke Bal. Telling, Showing, Showing Off. *Critical inquiry*, 18 (3), p. 556-594, 1992.

Wiebke Groenemeyer. *The Curatorial Complex: Social Dimension of Knowledge Production*. Leiden/ Boston: Fink Verlag, p.167-210, 2018.

Eva Riedke. Inner Dialogues: Negotiations Unfolding between the Field and one`s Desk". *EthnoScripts*, 23(1), p.35-58, 2021.

Supplementary reading:

Lorraine Code. Feminist Epistemology and the Politics of Knowledge: Question of Marginality. SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory, p.9-25, 2014.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. London/ NewYok/ Dublin: Zed Books, p. 163-185, 2021.

Elena Vacchelli. Embodiment in qualitative research: collage making with migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. *Qualitative Research*, 18(2), p.171-190, 2018.

Week 5 (6 Feb): Art in Communities (Ashley)

This class will discuss the ways in which artists have worked within diverse communities. Looking at the work of Theaster Gates, we will discuss the unique social issues and concerns the artwork addresses to understand the potential roles that artists play in society.

Readings:

Trivic, Zdravko. "Arts and Community: What Can the Arts and Space Do for the Community and Vice Versa?" In *Community Arts and Culture Initiatives in Singapore*, 1st ed., 135–48. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021. doi:10.4324/9781003006473-6.

Trivic, Zdravko. "Spaces for the Arts - What Can Space Do for the Arts?" In *Community Arts and Culture Initiatives in Singapore*, 1st ed., 103–17. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021. doi:10.4324/9781003006473-4.

Lasser, E. W. (2013). Scaling up: Theaster Gates, Jr, and His Toolkit. *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 6(1), 79–86. <https://doi.org/10.2752/174967813X13535106841368>.

Guest speaker: TBC

Introduction to Assignment 2: Group Presentation

Week 6 (13 Feb): Artistic Research Methodologies (Kay)

This class will look at artistic research methodologies and the ways in which research has also evolved with participatory models of artistic production. By considering research as a collaborative and collective process of knowledge production, the distinction between art and research depends on the institutional contexts in which the work is presented. The class will look at participatory art as research and methods for studying participatory artworks.

Readings:

Loveless, Natalie S. (2015). "Introduction: Art in the Expanded Field." In *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. (p. 1-18)
<https://dokumen.pub/qdownload/how-to-make-art-at-the-end-of-the-world-a-manifesto-for-research-creation-9781478004646-1478004649.html>

Lucy Cotter. "Artistic Research in a World on Fire." In *Reclaiming Artistic Research*. 2nd Edition. 2024. Hatje Cantz (p. 11-37)
<https://encountersproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/RECLAIMING-ARTISTIC-RESEARCH-1-1.pdf>

Brad Haseman. "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm." In *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, Estelle Barrett, Barbara Bolt

(Eds), 2010. Bloomsbury. (p.147-157)

Supplementary reading :

Estelle Barrett. (2007). Experiential learning in practice as research: context, method, knowledge (p.115-124).

Uwe Flick. (2018). The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection. (Chapter 1, p.3-15).

Karin Knorr-Cetina. Epistemic Cultures. IN *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. 7(2). p.873-880, 2015.

DAI Jinhua. (2012). Coordinates, Confusion, and Cultural Studies (Chapter 7) IN *Creativity and Academic Activism* by Meaghan Morris and Mette Hjort.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith. (2021). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. London/ NewYok/ Dublin: Zed Books, p. 239-252

-- No Class -- (20 Feb) Chinese New Year

Week 7 (27 Feb): Transcultural Curating and Its Challenges (Ashley)

This class will discuss the challenges of curating within a globalised art world and aspects of transcultural curating. We will look at biennials as transcultural contexts and the specificities of addressing the local within the global.

Readings:

Bhagwati, A. (2018). Of Maps, Nodes and Trajectories: Changing Topologies in Transcultural Curating. In *Situating Global Art* (Vol. 89, pp. 191–212). transcript Verlag.

<https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839433973-013>

Barbara Lutz. (2019). Learning from Crisis? On the Transcultural Approach to Curating documenta 14. *Transcultural Studies* (Heidelberg), 10(1), 89–120.

<https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.jts.2019.1.23786>

Week 8 (6 Mar): Individual Presentations

Week 9 (13 Mar): Individual Presentations

Week 10 (20 Mar): Digital Participation and Interaction in Public Space (Ashley)

This class will discuss how digital technologies have enabled widespread participation online and how technologies have been used to develop interactive public art installations in urban space. The class will also discuss historical and contemporary examples of performance art and forms of rule-based participation. In particular, we will discuss the performance work of Tino Seghal and his “constructed situations” and Studio Moniker’s notion of “conditional design”. The class will include a workshop providing an overview of interactive technologies and with examples of interactive artworks.

Readings:

Savage, Karen, and Dominic Symonds. “Chapter 8: Swarm.” *Economies of Collaboration in*

Performance : More than the Sum of the Parts. 2018. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-95210-9, pp. 217-223, 227-238. (Excerpt)

Paul Christiane. "10. Augmented Realities: Digital Art in the Public Sphere." In: Knight, Cher Krause, and Harriet F. Senie, eds. *A Companion to Public Art*. 1st ed. Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

Introduction to Assignment 3

Week 11 (27 Mar): Aesthetics and Performativity in Installation Art (Kay)

This class considers installation art as a form that configures objects and space into an immersive environment for the viewer. The class will examine the historical lineage of installation art and discuss contemporary examples both internationally and in Hong Kong.

Readings:

Claire Bishop. "Introduction: Installation art And Experience." In *Installation Art - A Critical History*. (p.6-13) 2005. Tate

<http://www.acastronovo.com/ClassHtms/ClassDocs/Bishop001.pdf>

Juliane Rebentisch. *Aesthetics of Installation Art*. Berlin: Sternberg, (p. 7-18, p. 251-263) 2012.

Sybill Omlin, Perform the Space: Performance Art (Re) conquers the Exhibition Space IN Ocurating, https://www.oncurating.org/files/oc/dateverwaltung/old%20Issues/ONCURATING_Issue15.pdf, (p.3-12)

Supplementary reading:

John Dewey. *Art as Experience*. 1934

-- No Class -- (3 Apr) Easter Friday

Week 12 (10 Apr): Field Trip: TBC

Week 13 (17 Apr): Group presentations on final projects.

Final assignment due two weeks after the last day of class. **Deadline: 2 May 2026.**

Use of generative AI tools

Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Please refer to the University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, you will be required to submit a signed declaration.

In the case of group projects, all members of the group should sign the declaration.

For text-based document assignments submit via VeriGuide:

https://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/portal/plagiarism_detection/login.jsp and submit the receipt the statement, in the form of a copy of the receipt along with your assignment.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions, etc., produced by staff members/ teachers of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

Assessment Criteria:

Grade A / A-: Well-structured essay or presentation with clear framework for discussion. Clear evidence of sophisticated analysis or innovative thinking with depth and complexity of argument beyond course readings and lectures. Evidence of creative thought and articulation of own ideas.

Grade B+ / B: Mostly well-structured essay or presentation with a well-developed framework for discussion. Logical development of ideas with some complexity of argument expressed. Some evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.

Grade B- / C+: Essay or presentation has a satisfactory structure with mostly accurate material. Logical presentation attempted and successful in a limited way. Limited evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.

Grade D: Poor and unclear essay or presentation structure. Weak development of argument. Little support from the literature. General appearance of resources lacks clarity.

Grade F: No submission or incoherent framework with little relevant material selected and poor use of examples. No development of argument and absence of own ideas.