

Making Art in/with Communities

Arts & Sciences and Civic Engagement | LASE 3559 | MUSI 3559

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Office Hours: by appointment

Meetings: Tuesdays, 4-4:50pm, Architecture Building, Room 425 (CAM 425)
Thursdays, 4-6, various locations off Grounds

Class Website: <http://www.artinwithcommunity.net/>

Class Email: artandcommunity@virginia.edu

What do we mean by community art? How can site-specific performance be used as a platform for social change? Is art-making a right or a privilege? Can art act as a lens through which we come to know and understand the world and, more importantly, our local communities?

Description

Why are we here?

This practice-driven course explores the relationships between collective art-making and civic engagement. We will carefully consider the history, ethics, and organizational structures of community engaged art practices and then meet with local organizations and artists to better understand the arts and communities specific to Charlottesville. Drawing from a variety of practices including site-specific performance and public art, we will develop context specific approaches to art making that provide a sustained opportunity to live and work off Grounds. Building on what we learn and experience, we will design a larger collaborative art project in Charlottesville.

We will strive to create an experience of making something that we can draw from for the rest of our lives, a challenging imperfect experience that models a way of being together and asks questions about our individual and collective standards and value systems. Our community will extend beyond the temporal and spatial confines of a “course” to become a collective exploring a variety of projects and causes.

Civic Responsibility

Why does this matter?

We will address the history, ethics, pedagogical approaches, and organizational structures of art and civic engagement as well as practice the skills necessary to design, implement, and facilitate a mindful program based on collective research, conversations, and experiences. We will think and work in context--the context of a particular space, the context of the local community, and the contexts that materialize over time and in collaboration. It is our hope that by joining forces and sharing resources with local communities, we might in some small way alter the dynamic between the University and its underrepresented neighbors.

Because this is a year-long course, we will have time and space to explore longer learning trajectories and the generative conversations that emerge in making things together. This course is part of a pilot program on Community and Civic Engagement. We will be experimenting with ways that community and civic engagement can enhance our learning experiences as part of a larger initiative to rethink the college curriculum. Broadly, we are interested in aesthetic engagement, empirical and scientific engagement, engaging difference, and ethical engagement and we will discuss these forms of engagement throughout the year. A significant portion of class time will occur off grounds in the greater Charlottesville community and will require considerations beyond those of the traditional classroom.

Learning Objectives

What will we do?

Engage: We will engage with current and historical approaches to community through the arts.

Experiment: We will experiment with different models for designing, facilitating, and evaluating community art practices.

Question: We will learn how best to ask questions and challenge art practices that are exploitative and/or oppressive.

Listen: We will become active listeners not only with our ears but, most importantly, with our entire bodies.

Share: We will recognize and examine the dangers of unidirectional outreach and learn to embody the role of the student and teacher simultaneously.

Make: We will create short site-specific projects that consider various contextual dimensions (historical, social, geographic, etc). You will take risks and try on different lenses.

Structure

How will this work?

During the Fall 2016 semester, we will meet on-grounds for 50 minutes a week, analyzing theory and case studies, and off-grounds for a 2 hour lab session, conversing with various communities and arts organizations about developing arts programs and projects in downtown Charlottesville. Moving around within Charlottesville is an important component of the course and we will often ask you to use public transportation. Short site-specific projects designed to help you engage with these ideas will be due every few weeks. Towards the end of the semester we will focus on designing and planning a larger community art project that will take place in Spring 2017.

Assessment

How will we mark our progress?

Attendance and participation are important in building our community. You are expected to be present and prepared for every session, however, two unexcused absences are permitted without penalty. Each unexcused absence over two will lower your final grade by 5%. Because of the interdependent nature of this class, please email the whole class if you are planning to miss: artandcommunity@virginia.edu, unless there are personal reasons for not emailing everyone.

15% **Student-led discussion**

In small groups, you will be asked to lead a discussion sessions. You will research an artist/organization/institution and develop a set of questions and topics to drive discussion. Your session plan is due 3 days before the meeting takes place, giving us time to provide feedback.

40% **Mini Projects and Reflections**

Small projects over the course of the semester will ask you to make something off Grounds. The first project is an individual exercise and the last three will be completed in groups. Everyone must submit a one page reflection with each project. The reflection is a time and space for you to explore discussion topics in more depth, collect project ideas, and track your thinking about art and community. The projects will be presented and discussed on the Thursday they are due.

15% **Case Study**

In groups of three, you will research, analyze, and present on community-engaged art projects or programs that are currently active or were recently presented/performed. This assignment will help to map the current field of socially engaged art and to assess the successes and shortcomings of particular cases both at a local and national level.

30% **Project Proposal**

As a small group, create a grant proposal for a community arts project in Charlottesville. We will define our goals, create a timeline, and plan a substantial project that we will work on next semester (spring 2017).

Responsibilities / Policies

What will we expect of each other?

Honor Code: We expect you to follow the Honor Code. Production courses often call into question traditional notions of fair use, copyright, and plagiarism. If you have questions about a specific project, talk with us during office hours.

Communication: We will make every effort to reply to emails within 24 hours. If we don't reply within 24 hours, please email us again.

Violence Prevention: We are committed to reducing incidents of violence, harassment, bias, and hazing at UVA and in the broader community. We also believe that every person can play a part in reducing these incidents. If you are interested in becoming a more active bystander ask Peter and Katie about the Green Dot program and other organized prevention efforts underway at UVA.

Just Report It: If you would like to make a report of bias, hazing, or sexual/gender-based harassment or violence, either anonymously or in your own name, you can do so through the university's Just Report It website:

https://advocate.admin.virginia.edu/public_report/index.php/pid606829?

Circumstances: Let us know if you have a disability or another condition that might require modification to these course procedures and exercises. For information visit

<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/sdac/sdac.html>

Resources: If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual/gender-based violence or harassment, information on reporting options and resources can be found here:

www.virginia.edu/sexualviolence. Resources for people who have experienced bias related to age, color, disability, marital status, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, or family medical information can be found here:

<http://www.virginia.edu/justreportit/bias/student-support/>. Resources for people who have experienced hazing can be found here: <http://www.virginia.edu/justreportit/hazing/>

Schedule: This is a new course, expect that the syllabus and schedule will change as we move through the year.

Schedule

When are things happening?

What is community?

Weeks 1 – 3

08.23 Introduction

introduction and course structure
goals and outcomes

08.25 Context and Community

What communities do we belong to? How do we shape a new community through this course?

Location

Meet at Arts Ground in the Architecture courtyard and walk as a group to the downtown mall.

Reading

Lippard, Lucy. *Lore of the Local*. p. 8-13, 18-20, 32-38

Write down two thoughts or questions related to the readings that you would like to discuss.

08.30 Place / Charlottesville

What is the history of the relation between Charlottesville and the University? How is Charlottesville perceived?

Reading

Saunders, James Robert, and Renae Nadine. Shackelford. *Urban Renewal and the End of Black Culture in Charlottesville, Virginia: An Oral History of Vinegar Hill*. Chapters 1+2

09.01 Place / Charlottesville

Location

African American Heritage Center

Reading

Introduction to Deep Listening – Pauline Oliveros

Project

Listening Project

09.06 Implicit Bias Discussion

Context

<https://www.projectimplicit.net/about.html>

Discussion with Charlie Ebersole of Project Implicit

09.08 Collaboration

What are some different kinds of collaboration?

What is often left out in discussions about collaboration?

Location

IX Art Park (take the bus)

Collaboration Exercise with Matthew Slaats and BeCville – Cardboard

Reading

Thompson, Nato. "Seeing Power in Spaces," *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century*.

What does the field of socially engaged art look like? Constitute?

Weeks 4-9

- Historical overview
- Ethics
- Home (Housing 2 home)
- Refugee/Immigrant/Displacement (IRC)
- Monuments/Murals (Lee park/ Charlottesville Mural Project)
- Environment/Ecology
- Youth

Designing Projects

Weeks 10-16