GSWS 321-4: SPECIAL TOPICS IN GSWS: INTERGENERATIONAL QUEER ACTIVISM: CRITICAL ART AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Professor: Dr. Claire Robson
Email: claire_robson@sfu.ca
Office: AQ 5094
Office hours: TBC
Lecture: Wednesdays 13:30 - 17:20; BLU 10021

“Art is odd, and the common method of trying to fix it into the scheme of things, either by taming it or baiting it cannot succeed.” Winterson (1995).

Course Description:
In this course, participants will study, analyze, and experience first hand the transformative power of collaborative critical art for social change, and its capacity to generate productive and creative partnerships between old(er) and young(er) queers. Participants will experience and critique examples of current arts practice, and learn and practice the basics of accessible ‘grassroots’ genres (including digital video, political theatre, spoken word, Claymation and remix). They will design, produce, promote and publically perform an original piece of collaborative critical artwork about intergenerational conversations and issues.

Participants will be evaluated though their weekly responses, their engagement in collaborative performances, their written reviews of performances, their weekly arts journal, a concluding artist’s statement, and their participation in collaborative processes. In lieu of an individual research paper, the class will write a collaborative paper for submission to the GWSW newsletter and the Journal of Art for Life (JAFL).

This course will be taught by a practicing community artist with strong ties to arts/activist communities in Vancouver and Surrey.

Educational Goals:
In this course, participants will interrogate the possibilities of critical arts engagements and the importance of intergenerational dialogues. They will learn how to analyze and critique cultural arts practices, discuss the ways in which they can be used to bridge and interrogate the gaps and conversations between old and young, and use artistic methods to illustrate some of their own insights and understandings.

Course Texts and Courseware:
- Book chapters and articles will be available on Canvas. Additional readings may be set as the course evolves.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Weekly Responses 20%
Review of Performance 10%
Collaborative Performance 25%
Weekly arts journal 20%
Artist statement 10%
Collective participation 15%

Prerequisite: 15 units
Tentative Course Outline


May 17: Art from the margins: art from, by, and about marginalized people – the dangers of appropriation and voyeurism. Making a two-minute digital video.

May 24: Creative collaborations: Screening of two-minute videos. Visit from intergenerational arts activists from the LGBT Elder Abuse Project.

June 7: Academic perspectives on collaboration and interpretation

June 14: Class collaborations. Visiting artist/scholar Kelsey Blair will begin work on collaborative performances.
June 21: Spoken word workshop.

June 28: Publics, Counterpublics and the role of art.

July 5: Other performance matters: promotion and beyond: public speaking, the role of the emcee, First Nation acknowledgements, media interviews. Dissemination, promotion, social and other media.


July 19: Performance of collaborative works (open to friends, family and public).


August 2: Presentation, peer review, and discussion of draft artist’s statements and journals. Finalization of text for collaborative article.