

CA 812: Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar II (Fall 2022)

Instructor:

Dr. Peter Dickinson (peter_dickinson@sfu.ca)

Seminar Time and Location:

M, 9:30-12:20 pm, GCA 4390

Office Hours:

By appointment, GCA 3855

Course Description:

CA 812 continues the work begun in CA 811. We will engage in critical discussions of contemporary issues relevant to the fine and performing arts, focusing on how these issues are taken up across different artistic disciplines, in social discourse, and within MFA students' individual practices. While we will be reading one common text over the course of the term (Maggie Nelson's *On Freedom*), a core part of our weekly discussions will derive from individual students' presentation offerings (see below). Connecting theory to practice, we will use these offerings—and the ideas, histories and critical positions outlined therein—as touchstones to generate questions that might then be applied to the research papers that will accompany students' final thesis projects. Students will develop their ideas for this paper cumulatively over the successive weeks of the course by: 1) offering a reading/video/audio file/precedent work of art or theory or social discourse for the class to review and from which to pose questions in connection to your own work; 2) using these questions to draft a proposal and working bibliography for your paper; 3) giving a capstone presentation on your *creative research* to date and how you see that research relating to the intended argument and organizational structure of your paper; and 4) submitting a final copy of the paper that includes as an appendix a working draft of the proposal for your graduating project.

Required Course Text:

We will be reading one common text over the course of this class: Maggie Nelson's *On Freedom: Four Songs of Care and Constraint* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2021). The paperback version of this book will be released on Sept. 6, 2022. I have pre-ordered 10 copies and will bring them to our first class, at which time you can purchase a copy directly from me for \$20.

I will post a photocopied PDF of the book's introduction to our course Canvas page in advance of our first class.

Health and Safety:

As we continue to negotiate the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, please practice self-care and care for others in all activities related to this course, including our weekly meetings.

Classroom Culture and Accessible Learning:

It is my goal to create a learning environment where all feel comfortable to participate and are provided with every available means to do so. Please remind me, and your peers, of your preferred gender pronouns, and please respect those preferences in others.

If you require specific accommodations with any aspect of the course, consider registering with SFU's Centre for Accessible Learning at cal_admin@sfu.ca. Otherwise, please talk to me privately **before the second week of class** to discuss anything you wish me to be aware of in terms of your anticipated contributions to and performance in the class. If, at any time, you feel you require additional outside support, you may contact the Office of Student Support, Rights and Responsibilities at student_support@sfu.ca.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and active participation 15%

- You are expected to carefully prepare each week's readings/materials and come to class ready to discuss them; to post a short comment or question or thought bubble related to the readings on the relevant Discussion Thread on the course Canvas site by midnight of the day before each class (except if you're presenting that class); and to listen and respond to your peers and me.

Seminar offering and discussion facilitation 20%

- For your first in-class presentation, you will recommend a short reading or video/audio/web link or other precedent artwork or text for the class to review. This should be posted to Canvas or otherwise made accessible to the class by an emailed file or link no later than the Saturday before your scheduled presentation on the offering. You will then facilitate a discussion about this offering by speaking for no more than 15-20 minutes on the connections between your offering, your creative research, and your plans for the paper you will write in this class in support of that research. (Please feel free to supplement the introduction of your offering with additional contextual materials.) Listening to the questions and feedback offered by your peers, you will send to me via email the next day one of the following: 1) a maximum 300-word statement that could potentially serve as draft abstract for your paper proposal (if your presentation is scheduled before that proposal's due date); or 2) a maximum 300-word reflection that considers how you might reconfigure or supplement your paper proposal based on your peers' feedback (if your presentation is scheduled after the paper proposal's due date). **Offering assignments will be made in the first class, and we will try to work out an order that meshes in terms of an equitable distribution of workload and timing with the reading presentations.**

Paper proposal and annotated bibliography 15%

- This two-page proposal should outline the practical and theoretical focus of your research to date, the main question(s) you wish to explore in your final paper, the relevance of said question(s) to your MFA project (and/or your artistic practice more generally), and what additional directions you anticipate your research taking. To that

end, you should list and annotate at least five bibliographic sources relevant to your research and/or your final paper that you intend to explore further.

Research presentation

20%

- Students' second, end-of-term presentation should be a 15-minute artist talk that maps the work you have been doing in your creative research and how that intersects with your academic reading and writing, or other/related activities/explorations. The presentation should be focused around a core question you propose to explore in your final MFA project, and how that question intersects with or has been prompted by the issues you have been exploring throughout your time in the program, including in your seminar courses. Even if, at this stage, you don't have an "answer" to your question (in terms of what your project might look like, or whom it might seek to engage), what, beyond just working in (or out of) a particular "area of interest," are you trying to get at? What are some other artists/theorists/works that are relevant to your research? What exactly about these works is interesting/generative/instructive for your practice? Drawing on examples from past work, as well as your plans for future work, provide the class with an idea of how all of this relates to the specific decisions you have already made or will seek to make in pursuing your final project: e.g., space, timing, materials/equipment, scores, collaborators, audiences, etc. This presentation differs from your offering in that you will mostly be focused on some of the more practical considerations/concepts you are currently working through in relation to your graduating project. While it is not necessary to connect explicitly the practice-based side of your research to the theoretical and contextual frameworks you are exploring in your paper, you should feel free to do so. Supervisors will be invited to attend these presentations. **Once again, we will establish as best as possible a preferred order for these presentations.**

Final paper

30%

- This document of approximately 3000-3500 words (roughly 8-10 double-spaced pages) should summarize the academic research you have been pursuing in relation to your MFA project, and as supplemented specifically by the work you have undertaken in this course. Like the research presentation, it should be structured around a central question. Think of this paper as the background essay that situates your artistic practice theoretically, historically, conceptually, etc., and that demonstrates your academic preparation for your graduating project. As it will be included as part of the supplementary documentation archived in the library along with your final MFA project defence statement and other materials, it should be formatted according to library thesis conventions, using either the MLA or Chicago Manual of Style system of citation. For further guidance in approaching the paper, see the abstracts of former MFA students on the Contemporary Arts website, and consult the pdf versions of their essays on the SFU Library's Summit Digital Deposit system. Feel free, as well, to consult your supervisor in drafting this paper. Finally, papers may include appendices of visuals or any other relevant materials. One mandatory appendix for the version of the paper you submit in this course should be a working draft of your [graduating project proposal](#)—if

only because you will present and defend this before the Graduate Program Committee in early January.

Weekly Syllabus:

Week 1	Sept 12	Welcome and Setting of Presentation Schedules Nelson, introduction
Week 2	Sept 19	Nelson, ch. 1 Offering 1
Week 3	Sept 26	Nelson, ch. 1 Offering 2
Week 4	Oct 3	Nelson, ch. 2 Offering 3
Week 5	Oct 10	Thanksgiving: no class
Week 6	Oct 17	Nelson, ch. 2 Offering 4 Proposals and annotated bibliographies due via email <u>by noon on Friday, October 21.</u>
Week 7	Oct 24	Nelson, ch. 3 Offering 5
Week 8	Oct 31	Nelson, ch. 3 Offering 6
Week 9	Nov 7	Nelson, ch. 4 Offering 7
Week 10	Nov 14	Nelson, ch.4 + Afterword

Offering 8

Week 11	Nov 21	Offerings 9 and 10
Week 12	Nov 28	Research Presentations x 5
Week 13	Dec 5	Research Presentations x 5

Final papers due via email by noon on Friday, December 9.

Course and Grading Policies

- All students are advised to become familiar with SFU regulations pertaining to student conduct (<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-05.html>), and to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.
- **No late assignments will be accepted without a documented medical excuse.**
- **Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated.** Consult the following website for more information: <https://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html>. **Ignorance of the standards set out by the School and university will not preclude the imposition of severe penalties for any instance of academic dishonesty.**
- All assignments (oral and written) will be assessed according to **content** and **expression**: that is, **what** you say and **how** you say it. All assignments will be given letter grades and will be assessed according to the following standards:

Grade	GPA/%	Description	Comments
A+	4.33 95-100%	Outstanding	Demonstrates an outstanding knowledge of concepts and techniques with a very high degree of skill and originality; an exceptional ability to communicate; evidence of outstanding research skills and an extensive knowledge base.
A	4.0 90-94%	Excellent	Demonstrates an excellent knowledge of concepts and techniques with a high degree of skill and elements of originality; a strong ability to communicate; excellent research and conceptual skills.
A-	3.67 85-89%		
B+	3.33 80-84%	Very Good	Demonstrates a very good knowledge of concepts and techniques, some originality and independence of thought; above average research and conceptual skills.
B	3.0 75-79%	Good	Demonstrates a good knowledge of concepts and techniques; an ability to organize and analyze ideas and to communicate clearly and fluently; good indication of research.
B-	2.67 70-74%		

C+	2.33 65-69%	Satisfactory/Marginal	Demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of concepts and techniques, together with some skill in using them; an adequate indication of research.
C	2.0 60-64%		
F	0.00 0-49%	Fail	Demonstrates an inadequate understanding of the subject matter; poor organization and communication skills. A student at this level has failed to meet the minimum requirements to pass.
FD	N/A	Fail (academic discipline)	This grade is awarded when a student has committed academic dishonesty (see Policy S10.01 Appendix 3). The grade will remain on a student's transcript until two years following graduation at which time it will convert to F.
N	0	Incomplete	Some or all of the coursework is incomplete. The instructor does not expect the student to ever complete the coursework.
DE	N/A	Deferred	Some of the coursework is not yet complete for valid (documented) reasons (e.g., medical). The instructor and student have determined a mutually agreeable timeline for the completion of the coursework.
GN	N/A	Grade Not Available	Grade not available due to circumstances beyond instructor/TA control.
AE	N/A	Compassionate Pass	The student has done at least 50% of the coursework, and would pass the course by completing the remainder, but has a compelling reason not to do so (e.g., medical, family crisis/death, etc.).