

CA 812: Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar II (Fall 2021)

Instructor:

Dr. Peter Dickinson (peter_dickinson@sfu.ca)

Seminar Time and Location:

M, 9:30-12:20 pm, GCA 2205

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. Connecting theory to practice, we will use the weekly readings (see below)—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.

Course Readings:

PDF documents of the course readings will be posted to Canvas (<http://canvas.sfu.ca>). Log in with your SFU computing id and password, click on CA 812, and then navigate to the Weekly Readings folder. The readings, most of them fairly recent but not all of them directly addressing the fine and performing arts, have been selected for the ways in which they intersect with both contemporary aesthetic and socio-political concerns—including an ethics of care; Indigeneity and “place-thought”; the Black Lives Matter protests; our new screen temporalities; debt and the commons; and how to make art when the world appears to be ending. Sometimes the connections between the readings will be obvious, at other times more oblique. Our job will be to unpack collectively how they might be put into conversation with each other. To that end, we will want to be attuned to the ways in which certain concepts recur over the course of our discussions. Do not worry if much of this material is new to you, if it doesn't immediately relate to your own discipline, or if the writing seems unduly opaque. We will be unpacking the work together, and in some cases I will be reading these essays for the first time along with you.

Health and Safety:

As we negotiate a return to in-person instruction amid the continued 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. If you are feeling ill or experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19, please stay home and consider joining the class remotely (Zoom links for each class can be found on our course Canvas page).

Unless you have an approved exemption, you are required to wear a mask in all indoor common and learning spaces at SFU, including classrooms. Please come to campus prepared with a non-medical mask. If you forget your mask, I will have disposable masks available for you. If you require a mask exemption in the classroom for medical reasons, please contact the Centre for Accessible Learning at cal_admin@sfu.ca for assistance. If you are requesting mask exemptions on other protected grounds, such as religion, you can contact the Office of Student Support, Rights and Responsibilities at student_support@sfu.ca.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and active participation 10%

- You are expected to carefully prepare each week's readings 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 presentation and discussion facilitation 1 15%

- This should be a simple 10-minute opening salvo to animate discussion on one of the weekly readings I have assigned. In formulating your response, consider some of the following questions: What were the salient or most provocative/contentious points in your assigned reading? What questions were you left with? How does the subject of the reading relate to your own research practice, or to broader interdisciplinary inquiry in the fine, performing and media arts? In what ways does your reading seem to be in dialogue with, respond to, and/or contradict points made in other assigned articles? Following the seminar and your reflections on the discussion, email me by the next day a maximum one-page write-up with additional thoughts/points. **Presentation assignments will be made at the first class; to facilitate this process, please bring along a ranked order of your first, second, and third choices.**

Seminar offering and discussion facilitation 2 10%

- For your second 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 10 minutes on the connections between your offering and your creative research (which can be supplemented 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' third and final in-class presentation should be a 15-minute talk that maps the work you have been doing in your creative work and academic reading and writing. The presentation should be focused around the central "research question" you propose to explore in your final project, and how that question intersects with or has been prompted by the issues you are simultaneously exploring in your paper for this course. 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. Finally, make an effort to connect the practice-based side of your research to the theoretical and contextual frameworks you are exploring in your paper. 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 3,500-5,000 words 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 6	Labour Day: no class
Week 2	Sept 13	Welcome and Setting of Presentation Schedules Thinking about Hospitality and Thinking with Care <u>Readings:</u> Rauna Kuokkanen, "Hospitality and the Logic of the Gift in the Academy" (from <i>Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift</i>); María Puig de la Bellacasa, "'Nothing comes without its world': thinking with care"
Week 3	Sept 20	Presentation 1: Place and/as the Unsheltering of Thought <u>Readings:</u> Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous place-thought"; and Lee Maracle, "Goodbye, Snauq" Offering 1
Week 4	Sept 27	P2: Sounding Breath <u>Reading:</u> Ashon T. Crawley, "Introduction" (from <i>Blackpentecostal Breath</i>) O2
Week 5	Oct 4	P3: Gesturing Hands <u>Reading:</u> Rebecca Schneider, "That the Past May Yet Have Another Future: Gesture in the Times of Hands Up"

O3

Week 6 Oct 11 **Thanksgiving: no class**

Week 7 Oct 18 P4: Assembled Bodies

Readings: Brynn McNab, "Some People are Oil and Water"; and Rodney Diverlus, "Black Lives Matter Toronto: Urgency as Choreographic Necessity"

O4

Proposals and annotated bibliographies due via email by noon on Friday, October 22.

Week 8 Oct 25 P5: Machine Images/Image Machines

Readings: Harun Farocki, "Phantom Images"; and Trevor Paglen, "Operational Images"

O5

Week 9 Nov 1 P6: Screen Time

Reading: Mark B. Hansen, "Body Times" (from *New Philosophy for New Media*)

O6

Week 10 Nov 8 P7: In Debt and In Common

Readings: Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Debt and Study" (from *The Undercommons*); and Jodi Dean, "Faces as Commons: The Secondary Visuality of Communicative Capitalism"

O7

Week 11 Nov 15 Research-Creation and End Times, or the Curious Practice of Polite Visiting

Readings: Natalie Loveless, "Art at the End of the World" (from *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*); and Donna Haraway,

"A Curious Practice" (from *Staying with the Trouble*)

Week 12 Nov 22 Research Presentations x 4

Week 13 Nov 29 Research Presentations x 3

Week 14 Dec 6 **Independent research on papers: no class**

Final papers due via email by noon on Friday, December 10.