

CA 811: Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar 1 (Fall 2018)

Instructor:

Dr. Peter Dickinson (peter_dickinson@sfu.ca)

Seminar Time and Location:

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

Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 1:30-3:00 pm, or by appointment: GCA 3510

Course Description:

This course engages in critical discussion 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 and MA students' individual practices. Weekly readings will be structured around a series of paired action words (e.g., thinking-feeling, sensing-feeling, practicing-knowing, understanding-failing, etc.) that will mutually inform and help constellate our approach to the issues analyzed in each text. Connecting theory to practice, we will use these readings—and the ideas, histories and critical positions outlined therein—as touchstones to generate structured research questions that might then be applied to a final paper/project that bridges the concerns of the course and students' MFA/MA research, and that may be supplemented through additional practice-based modes of knowledge production (e.g., performance, visual documentation, installation, etc.). When appropriate, and time permitting, we will also apply our seminar discussions to a range of artistic works/movements in theatre/performance, dance, film, music, and visual/media art.

Course Readings:

PDF documents of each of the readings listed below have been posted to a common course Canvas site. Log into Canvas (<http://canvas.sfu.ca>) with your SFU computing id and password, click on CA 811, 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. 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 not just on a week-by-week basis, but over the course of the entire semester. 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.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and active participation 15%

- 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 on the readings that week); and to listen and respond to your peers and me.

Reading/field notebook 15%

- Either electronically or in print, I am asking you to keep a weekly journal in which you record your responses to the readings, to our weekly discussions, to the progress of your own research (inside and outside of this particular class), and to prompts for additional field study that I may give to you in class. These responses do not always or purely have to be in written form. You are free to include drawings (see Michael Taussig's *I Swear I Saw This*, excerpts of which you will be discussing at your orientation meeting, and again at our first class), other created or found images/assemblages, performance scores, etc. You just need to indicate to me in some way each entry's connection to the readings/our discussions/my prompts/your research. At the end of the course, you will make the notebooks available to me, flagging a minimum of two and a maximum of four entries that you wish for me to review more closely, and which will serve as the basis of my assessment of this particular assignment.

Seminar reading response and discussion facilitation 20%

- This should be a simple ten-minute opening salvo to animate discussion on one of the weekly readings. Given that most weeks there will be two responses per class, I encourage conversation and consultation between presenters. 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 the article with which it has been paired? Following the seminar and your reflections on the discussion, send me a one-page write-up by email with additional thoughts/points. **Presentation assignments will be made at the first class and to facilitate this process, please bring along a ranked order of your first, second, and third choices.**

Paper/project proposal and bibliography 10%

- This 1-2 page proposal should outline a "research question" you will explore in your final paper/project (see below), as well as a list of critical and other sources you anticipate consulting in completing the paper. Even if, at this stage, you don't have an "answer" to your question (in terms of the specific issues you will address or arguments you will make), what concept(s) from the readings/course are you most interested in exploring further? How might these concepts be applied to other artists/theorists/works? How are these concepts interesting/generative/instructive for your own practice? **Proposals are due by email as Word documents by noon on October 30th.**

Final paper/project

40%

- Your paper is to be no longer than 3000 words and should be doubled-spaced and formatted according to accepted scholarly conventions (e.g., MLA or Chicago style with respect to citations, etc.). It should be structured around the central question articulated in your proposal (or a version thereof), and should be primarily analytical, though there is room for experimentation in form (see our last set of readings on “Performing Writing”). Additionally, the paper can be supplemented with other, more practice-based modes of knowledge production (a photo essay, an installation, a sound or video work, a short performance, etc.)—so long as these materials directly relate to the subject of your paper. We will devote the final class (Nov 27) to a presentation of these additional research materials (or a portion thereof depending on time constraints; additional documentation can always be submitted along with your paper). **The paper itself is due by email as a Word attachment by noon on Dec 1st.**

Weekly Syllabus

Aug 27	Orientation Meeting: Drawing Seeing: On Open and Closed Interpretations <u>Reading:</u> Chapter 1 from Michael Taussig, <i>I Swear I Saw This</i> (2011)
Sept 4	Formal Introduction to the Course: Drawing Seeing, continued <u>Readings:</u> Chapters 2 and 3 from Michael Taussig, <i>I Swear I Saw This</i> (2011)
Sept 11	Thinking Feeling: On Conceiving Theory as Practice (and vice-versa) <u>Readings:</u> Erin Manning, “Propositions for Thought in Motion” (2009); Dian Million, “Felt Theory” (2009)
Sept 18	Sensing Feeling: On Moving with and Being Moved by the Weather <u>Readings:</u> Tim Ingold, “Footprints Through the Weather-World” (2010); Martin Welton, “Bringing the Weather Indoors” (2012)
Sept 25	Practicing Knowing: On Techniques of the Body <u>Readings:</u> Ben Spatz, from <i>What a Body Can Do</i> (2015); Carrie Noland, from <i>Agency and Embodiment</i> (2009)
Oct 2	Enacting Assembling: On the Politics of Human and Non-Human Alliances <u>Readings:</u> Judith Butler, from <i>Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly</i> (2015); Jane Bennett, from <i>Vibrant Matter</i> (2010)

- Oct 9 Delegating Participating: On the Distributed Labour of Contemporary Art-Making
Readings: Claire Bishop, from *Artificial Hells* (2012); Jen Harvie, from *Fair Play* (2013)
- Oct 16 Supporting Diverging: On the Attachments and Antagonisms of Collaborating in Public
Readings: Shannon Jackson, from *Social Works* (2011); Rustom Bharucha, "The Limits of the Beyond" (2007)
- Oct 23 Curating Living: On Material Histories and Dematerialized Art in the Gallery/Museum
Readings: Rebecca Schneider, "Dead Hare, Live" (2010); Roger Simon, from *Curating Difficult Knowledge* (2011)
- Oct 30 **CLASS CANCELLED**
Final paper proposals and annotated bibliographies due
- Nov 6 Understanding Failing: On the (Queer) Paradoxes of Animated Films and Video Games
Readings: Jack Halberstam, from *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011); Jesper Juul, from *The Art of Failure* (2013)
- Nov 13 Voicing Listening: On Multiplying Ways to Hear and Be Heard
Readings: Adriana Cavarero, "Multiple Voices" (2012); Dylan Robinson, "Enchantment's Irreconcilable Connection" (2017)
- Nov 20 Performing Writing: On Saying as Doing
Readings: Della Pollock, "Performing Writing" (1998); John Hall, "Performed through" (1997)
- Nov 27 **Presentation of supplementary final research paper materials**
- Dec 1 **Final papers due**