



COMM 308: Critical Production for Critical Times

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Class meets in 556 Nugent on Fridays from 11:30 – 2:20 during the Spring Semester of 2008
Pre-requisites: WRIT 102; COMM 225, COMM 233 or COMM 302

Course Description:

This production course explores the social impact of print media, videos, web designs, performances/ actions, audio work, and animations that we create individually and collectively. It is about space, place and time. The space is simultaneously physical and virtual. The place is local and global. The time is now. Take action: collage, announce, perform, create, produce and distribute. As collaborative student and faculty interventionists we will tackle issues on our collective mind like pollution, immigration, war, surveillance, healthcare, privilege, etc. Sing praise to DADA, FLUXUS, Interventionists, Happenings, Body Art, etc. for paving the way for our creative experiments. Students will also engage in collaborative creative projects with community partners: Harlem Center for Education, Arab-American Family Support Center, Sauti Yetu Center for African Women, viBe Theater Experience, Network for Peace Through Dialogue, The College and Community Fellowship, Positive Health Project, Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children, and Why MES with HUMAN RIGHTS? Research Project.

Service Learning:

We have adopted service learning into the course as it is a progressive pedagogical tool that extends learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Students will work in teams, under the mentorship of faculty, with one of the community partners listed above on a mutually defined collaborative project. We anticipate this being a mutual learning experience between faculty, students and community partners. The work we will do in this course is real and will have a tangible effect in our community. We look forward to this adventure with all of you!

Learning Goals & Objectives:

By the end of this course students will:

- Obtain a greater understanding of the relationship between word and image.
- Develop a greater sense of civic responsibility to improve the society they live in.
- Develop a critical understanding of social issues through the theoretical frameworks presented in readings and discussed in class.
- Expand your appreciation for creative interventions.
- Hone blogging, research, editing, design and technical skills
- Develop a more sophisticated use of theory within creative practice (praxis)
- Understand that learning can be fun.

Required Course Materials:

Compassion, Empathy, Patience, Respect, Humor, Creativity, Energy and COMPLETED HOMEWORK!

Resources: Check out our website at <http://www.citizenmaker.com> for a complete guide to a variety of theoretical, creative, fun and strategic resources. Please be sure to share your knowledge of any resources not posted.

Professionalism:

Professionalism includes speaking, interacting and collaborating with classmates, community partners and faculty with **respect**. Your presence and **participation** in class is integral to this course: we will learn just as much from readings and creative work as we will from our shared experiences and perspectives.

Cell phones, text messaging, surfing and other **disruptive behaviors** are unacceptable and distracting to other students and will not be tolerated in class.

Attendance is expected and required. Coming late and/or unprepared to class or related meetings affects a whole community of individuals who all rely on each other – please show your **commitment** to the community, your classmates and your education by arriving prepared and on time. Two absences will result in your failure of the course.

Due to the intensity of the course and the commitment we have given our community partners, we can accept absolutely **no late work**.

Grading:

Grades will be composed of your accomplishments and growth in three categories: *Professionalism (15%)*, *Collaborative Community Project (50%)*, and *Homework and In-Class Projects (35%)*. Learning goals and objectives for assignments are provided within the syllabus, use these as a guide to how you will be specifically graded on each.

Professionalism: This includes your attendance, commitment, participation, etc. See above for further details. Professionalism is particularly important in this course because of the nature of creative community projects to the extent that your behavior and actions affect many individuals beyond you.

Collaborative Community Project: This course emphasizes being a “citizen maker,” your community project is the practice and execution of this lifestyle. Every contribution that you make in these collaborative projects will effect the community and the lives of a number of individuals (some projects more directly than others). Your commitment to bettering the community and your hard work and execution of a creative project deserves recognition, the support of your learning community, and the emphasis of your grade.

Homework & In-Class Projects: The theme of this course is collaboration, and your learning will be too! Readings, assigned studies, reflections and projects will compliment the experiences you will have working with a community partner. Each assignment is meant to focus and develop your skill sets whether that means learning to blog or analyze advertisements. The more effort you put into accomplishing (and practicing) the stated learning goals and objectives and reflecting on their connections to the “real world” the more you will learn and take away from this course.

Tips for Success on Collaborative Projects:

Plan your time. Collaborative projects can get out of hand if you do not make an effort to schedule and plan your time. Use the time management worksheet in your orientation packet to map out your time.... Don't forget to include time to eat, sleep, take a break, and have fun. Adequate time for all of those will make you more productive during work times.

Set aside a weekly chunk of time to meet with collaborators. Setting aside the time will guarantee you all have a time in common to meet. The best part is, when you don't need to use that time for collaboration you have scheduled free time. What a luxury!

Create agendas. Whenever you meet have a clear list of objectives (or questions or issues that need to be resolved, or topics that need to be brainstormed) that need to be accomplished during your meeting. Agendas may want to be agreed upon ahead of time so that all participants can come prepared.

Be respectful of time – yours and your collaborators. Select a start and finish time to meetings and stick to them. Using agendas will help you use that limited time more effectively.

Use the talents and interests of each collaborator strategically. If someone is very efficient at a task, encourage that individual to show others how to be just as efficient... (and know who is good at what for those instances when you are in a pinch). Don't assign a task to a collaborator who doesn't know how to do something without showing her/him how, or collectively figuring it out if no one knows.

Remember to always keep the audience in mind. It would be awfully sad to spend hours on something that doesn't speak to the audience.

Have a good humor and have fun. It never seems like work when there are smiles all around!

TENTATIVE Course Timeline

(we reserve the right to make adjustments to the timeline over the course of the semester).

Week 1: February 1 “**Introductions**”

- *Vote*: Vote on Breakfast Sign-up Sheet
- *Data Collection*: Skill set survey and Community Partner Survey
- *Discuss*: Service Learning, Time Management, Orientation Kit
- *Lecture*: DADA and culture jamming
- *In-Class Exercise*: Notebook Collage
 - Using the limited materials provided, create something provocative and intentional.
 - Use image and text thoughtfully, and with purpose.
 - “Recycle” mainstream media as a way to comment on it, i.e., “culture jam.”
 - Reflect on the slogan “the personal is political.”
 - Develop an appreciation for creative intervention.
 - Meet the members of the new community you have become a part of.
 - Reflect on the process and execution of the projects of your classmates.

HOMEWORK

Media Analysis

- Keep statistics/numbers on who is visualized in your media set. Use quantitative reasoning to back up your argument/reflections.
- Reflect at how the story is covered in relationship to the audience.
- Document the limitations of angle/story in mainstream media.
- Determine if and who the media set privileges.
- Determine if and which stereotypes or power systems are reinforced by the media set.
- Concentrate on Super Tuesday coverage from February 4-6
- Turn-in a 2 page analysis (double spaced, 1 inch margins, 10pt Arial; name in the header)

Read “Photoshop for Democracy” by Henry Jenkins

Week 2: February 8 “**Power of Word & Image**”

- *Watch*: Interview with John Stewart about who is responsible for the news/ truth
- *Discuss*: Media Analysis Assignment and Alternative Media Sources; Project Management & Collaboration Techniques
- *Assign*: Community Partners
- *Introduce*: Foucault & Power Structures
- *Demo*: The Blogosphere

HOMEWORK

Look up & Blog about Artist Artifact

- Engage with an artist/artwork that is new to you.
- Reflect on how the artist uses his/her creative work for social/environmental/political change.
- Reflect on how you may use similar strategies (or those that were inspired by the work) utilizing your own skill sets for social/political/environmental change.
- Become comfortable with the blog interface.

Read “Subject and Power” by Michel Foucault

Research Community Partner in preparation for Meet & Greet next week

- Familiarize yourself with your community partner by reviewing the print materials and thoroughly exploring the website.
- Generate a list of questions or clarifications to discuss with your community partner.
- Develop a list of why you may need the clarifications listed above (is it a topic you aren't familiar with? Does the organization help people of a culture you are not familiar with? Is the text unclear? Is the website hard to navigate? Are there visual references to visualize the text or statistics?)
- Research the larger context of the mission/goals of the community organization.

Week 3: February 15 **“Mapping” & “Meeting”**

- *Discuss:* Mapping & Visualizing in Space
- *In-Class Exercise:* Map campus recycling and trash bins
 - Explore how mapping can help to visualize/realize data.
 - Develop a slogan about Marymount’s trash habits based on data collection.
 - Collaboratively create a functional recycling locator tool for the Marymount community.
 - Problem-solve glitches in the process as they arise and communicate the solutions to the rest of the team.
 - Learn how working collaboratively can reduce the workload and realize results quickly by doing just that.
 - Share the map created with administrators, faculty and students.
- *Guest:* Community Partners

HOMEWORK

State of NYC assignment

- Develop an awareness of the many neighborhoods/communities of the city you live and work in.
- Visit and document (through pictures and text) a NYC neighborhood.
- Compare neighborhood statistics with your experience and observations of the neighborhood.
- Investigate the “borders” and “boundaries” of the community including physical, political and social by interviewing a community member on the street.
- Create a “big notebook” page documenting your experience, reflections and observations.
- Use pushpins and string to “map” your visited neighborhood on our classroom map.
- Be prepared to discuss findings in class

Week 4: February 22 **“Recombinant Messages”**

- *Discuss:* State of NY
- *In-Class Exercise:* Not Your Everyday Video
 - Develop/practice editing skills.
 - Learn to work efficiently by using each group member’s skills and talents.
 - Promote change by effectively telling a unique story within the parameters provided.
 - Use creative problem solving to develop an announcement using limited resources (including limited footage and limited work time).
 - Distribute via the Internet.
 - Analyze how recombinations affect intent, audience and effectiveness.

HOMEWORK

Read: “Ideology in Public Service Advertisements” by Chemi Montes-Armenteros

Meet with Community Partner and do “Needs Assessment”

- Discuss how the community partner can help you become familiar with their mission and the population/environment they work with.
- Discuss current initiatives of the community partner.
- Brainstorm project ideas (not necessarily the solution) that match your skill sets and interests *and* meet the goals of the organization (i.e. a project that is mutually beneficial).
- Share contact information.
- Write one page summary of your meeting (1 page, double spaced, 10pt Arial, 1 inch margins)

Week 5: February 29 **“Invisible Power Structures”**

- *Present & Brainstorm:* community partner projects/meetings
- *Discuss & Watch:* PSAs
- *Guest:* Sean Hovendick

HOMEWORK

Read: “Building Blocks: “Commons” and “Layers” by Lawrence Lessig

Develop project proposal & timeline then meet with Community Partner (Due March 14)

- Clarify the extent (could be a smaller part of a larger project) of the project (keep in mind your limited time frame) and the expectations of both you and your community partner (remember to include who must make approvals and whether they require a signature, an email, etc.)
- Collaboratively write and sign a document detailing the project and the roles of all involved.
- Schedule meetings with your community partner well in advance... remember to include an extra meeting here or there simply to check in with each other.
- Establish deadlines for each component of your project, no matter how small (this includes deadlines for both the student partner and community partner).
- Schedule any technical help sessions you may need (With the tech staff or with your instructors).

Week 6: March 7 **“Citizen Maker”**

- *Visiting Lecture:* Introduce social change theory (Anthony Naeke)
- *Discuss:* Grassroots Media Conference
- *Discuss:* What does it mean to be a citizen? What are your responsibilities? What are your rights as a citizen? What are your rights as a citizen maker?
- *Discuss:* social change strategies
- In Class Work time

HOMEWORK

Read: “Trespassing Relevance” by Nato Thompson (Interventionist Exhibition at MassMOCA)

Develop project proposal & timeline then meet with Community Partner (Due March 14)

Week 7: March 14 **“Project Meetings”**

- *Visitor:* Elise Gardella
- *Meet:* Project Proposals
- Work on Projects

HOMEWORK

Read: “The Work of Artists in a Databased Society” by Ricardo Miranda Zuniga

Surveillance Journaling

- Develop an awareness of the boundaries of public and private space.
- Develop an awareness of when and where you are being filmed.
- Actively look for surveillance cameras in every aspect of your life.
- Reflect on where/when you are not under surveillance.
- Reflect on how this exercise affects how you enter, use and act in a variety of spaces/locations.
- Create a map or detailed list of the surveillance cameras you encounter.
- Publish your findings and reflections in the “big book.”

SPRING BREAK

Week 8: March 28 **“Surveillance”**

- *View*: Surveillance Art
- *Discuss*: Your experience of Surveillance
- *In Class*: Work Time

HOMEWORK

Work on Rough Draft & Check in with Community Partner

Read: “The Radicalization of Zeke Spier: How the Internet Contributes to Civic Engagement and New forms of Social Capital” by Larry Elin.

Week 9: April 4 **“Public & Private Space Revisited”**

Discuss: Reading

View & Discuss: Artists & Artworks

In Class Work Time

HOMEWORK

Work on Rough Drafts (Due NEXT week)

- Discuss with community partner and classroom community the clarity of the message, the craftsmanship/quality, the tone, the design and how you can improve.
- Reflect on what works well and what doesn't work as well on other projects in the course—reflect on what you can learn from others' experiences.

Week 10: April 11 **“Work In-Progress Show & Tell”**

View & Discuss: Collaborative Community Project Rough Drafts

Week 11: April 18 **“Revisions”**

In Class Work Day

HOMEWORK

Finish Final Projects (Due Next Class!)

Week 12: April 25 **“Project Critiques”**

In Class Show and Tell and Feedback on Final Projects

HOMEWORK

Final Touchups and Final Exhibit Installation

- Project must be completed on time and to the best of the ability of all involved.
- Provide the community partner, the student partner and the instructors each a copy of the final project and supporting work files.
- The project should be evidence of the collaboration of the community partner, the growth of the student over the semester, and the realization of many of the skills and frameworks developed over the course of the semester.

Attend Exhibition (Details TBA)

Week 13: May 2 **“Political Performance”**

TBA

Week 14: May 9 **“Reflect & Celebrate”**

- Reflect & celebrate

HOMEWORK

Enjoy summer, you earned it!