Art Worlds of New York: 
Critical Thinking in Contemporary Art

New York is made up of many art worlds—both independent and symbiotic. Some of these are formed by identification with a particular medium, others by the rejection or celebration of activism, theory, or popular culture, and still others through affiliation with an art institution like the Whitney ISP, Skowhegan, the MacDowell Colony or a particular graduate program. At one time the divisions among exhibition spaces (for profit, non-profit, and “alternative”) might have provided an overview of how these various worlds interacted. But now the relationships both among the various art worlds and between artists and institutions are much more fluid and complex. Unlike many other professions, there is not one dominant path in art making. In fact, one of the beauties of being an artist is that, to some degree, one can construct one’s own path. This freedom is also what can be most terrifying to artists.

In this seminar we will consider case studies of how artists have constructed their art lives, both in the recent past and now—their communities and networks, and how these relate to the existing institutions of the art world(s). This semester we will do this by visiting a selected group of museum exhibitions that speak to collaboration, deviance and alternative group formations to understand trans-historical and broader context. We will also visit Chelsea and the Lower East Side contemporary galleries—and compare their dominant characterizations with the concrete experiences of artists who exhibit there. Students will be expected to keep a journal, documenting and analyzing their experience of our visits. Course work will involve trans-historical readings that reference artist communities, collaboration, and correspondence. Students will begin forming a critical and conceptual foundation for their own studio/creative and writing practice. We will do this by:

- completing required reading
- attending exhibitions
- meeting artists, curators and critics

Learning Objectives:
1. To form a critical and conceptual foundation for students’ own studio practice and/or art historical area of focus (for art history students)
2. To understand New York City’s recent (20th and 21st century) contemporary art institutions and their relationship to communities and art historical shifts
3. To gain a comprehensive knowledge of how artworlds intersect and the roles of individuals within them

Outcomes:
Students Will
1. Develop an awareness of how artists construct their paths and build communities
2. Develop a knowledge of professional practice and of models for creating a sustainable career in the visual art world
3. Begin to develop the ability to speak and write critically in relationship to one’s own practice and to situate it in the context of recent contemporary art history
4. Form an understanding of the complexity of the intersections of individual artists, critics=historians, administrators and power brokers within the art world

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm
Assessment:

- Individual meetings
- Seminar and program event participation
- Final group critique and presentation of independent projects
- Attendance and punctuality
- Independent Visits
- Complexity and evidence of commitment to journal keeping
- Evidence of individual urban exploration within the cultural area that you are focused in
- Individual progress with critical thinking, from beginning to end

Please note that NYAP Seminars have a non-traditional structure. Course credit and assessment are dependent on:

- Seminar attendance (8 two-hour sessions)
- Program Event attendance (5 two-hour events)
- One-on-one meetings (4 minimum)
- Writing Workshop (3 hours)
- Midterm Review
- Final Review
- Independent NYC Visits* (2 minimum, per week)

*Independent visits can include a performance, lecture, artist talk, museum exhibit, reading

Grading for NYAP

NYAP 495 INTERNSHIP (3.25 credits) Grade*:
-- based on your evaluation and faculty contact with your sponsor
NYAP 499: SEMINAR (1.00 credit) Grade*:
-- based on your attendance, meaningful participation, and work ethic for seminar assignments
NYAP 490: JOURNAL/INDEPENDENT STUDY (0.25 credits) Grade*:
-- based on the quality and frequency of journal entries, and the breadth and quality of your final project

Reading

Students are required to purchase: *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, A Sourcebook of Artists Writings* (P. Selz, K. Stiles, eds.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. BE SURE TO GET THE NEW EDITION. Each student will also be assigned reading according to his or her independent project

Independent Project

Individual tutorials occupy the second half of the semester when you will pursue a clearly defined independent study project designed in conjunction with and supervised by me. We will agree on a six-week schedule of one-on-one meetings to discuss progress and identify goals tailored to your specific needs. Students will be required to submit a bibliography for their project.

Journal

You will be asked to visit exhibitions independently and keep a journal of your responses. The journal should be a record of intellectual and creative experiences and growth. It should reflect your own style and personality but it must first and foremost reflect an investigation, and not just serve as an account. The journal must reflect your intellectual maturity and ability as a liberal arts college student. It should show independent thinking and investigation. It is not a diary or scrapbook. Think about who your reader is in the long term. Do not just write whether you liked or didn’t like something, but why or why not. Use the journal as a memory tool to write down information you are learning in your internship, names of artists, designers, information about materials, contacts etc.

Policy

The work for this semester will happen in at least five ways: on your own time, in your internships, in seminars, in program events and in one-on-one meetings. It is absolutely essential that you attend all seminars, that you are on time, and that you work on Wednesdays when we are not meeting. There are no cell phones or other devises to be used in my seminar. Please have them turned off and put away. Cell phones should also be turned off during your internships. Calls/texting etc should only be made during pre-agreed upon breaks.
Below is an extensive bibliography that relates to many areas of focus with in the visual art world. It is meant for your reference. If you find yourself curious about a period of work, an artist, a kind of making, a movement, books on this list are a good place to start your research.

**Drawing and Painting**
(This is just a brief listing of artists working in drawing and painting. If you are working in this area, we will expand the list depending on your interest.)


**Sculpture, Installation and Performance**


**Gender/Race/Politics**


Poetics and Urbanism
Ginsberg, Allen. Howl and Other Poems (1956)
----. Reality Sandwiches (1963)
----. Planet News (1968)

Film and Photography

Contemporary Art Theory
-----. The Order of Things
Judd, Donald. The Complete Writings, 1959-1976

Collaboration and Image/Text

**Natural History/Animal Studies**


