School of Art
Fall 2020 Course Updates

Note: Descriptions for established courses are available on the Course Listings page of the website.

Electives

Contemporary Art Issues: Critical Visions of the Self
Coco Fusco
https://cooper.edu/academics/people/coco-fusco
SE 401A
Monday, 9-11:50

Critical Visions of the Self: Theories of the Subject
Critical Theory is a school of thought that emerged in the 1930s that interprets society and culture through the lens of philosophy, sociology, psychology and linguistics. It does not offer a theory of art or aesthetics, but its proponents do engage in critique of cultural texts and focus frequently on the workings of visual culture. In this seminar, we will review some of the foundational texts of critical theory and consider multiple theories of the subject. We will read texts by Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall and Judith Butler, among others. We will concentrate on the relationship between Critical Theory, aesthetic experience and artistic production. We will also study foundational texts for theoretical analysis of images. The goal of these discussions is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of who we are and how we see when we imagine, when we create and when we interact with art.

Science: Evolution
Michael Tessler
http://www.michaeltessler.net/
RS 201N
Wednesday, 6-8:50

Evolution is one of the most fundamental concepts for understanding life on Earth. The field of evolution allows us to ask important questions like: How are humans related to fish or bacteria? Why are some animals brightly colored while others are drab? How can something complex like flight evolve separately in birds, bats, and insects? In this class we will learn to answer questions like these, and many others. We will examine tools used to understand evolution in deep time and take field trips to see the organisms that live around us, while learning about evolution in the city.
Techniques in Photoshop: Digital Workflow
Claudia Sohrens
http://www.claudiasohrens.com/
TE 303
Friday, 10-1:50

This course explores techniques and projects in Photoshop. Students will complete projects that develop their skills and understanding of digital image creation. Students will both apply and experiment with the software relative to projects that they are engaged in or planning. A structured series of workshops will be presented to help students experience various tools, methods and models relative to image construction, manipulation and rendering. No Prerequisite. 2 credits, 4 contact hours.

Audiovisual

AV: X the Unknown
Lucy Raven
https://cooper.edu/art/people/lucy-raven
FA 385A
Monday, 10-12:50

Borrowing its title from a 1956 horror sci-fi film of the same name, this course will examine questions around unknowable, ambivalent threat made material in the form of monsters, natural disasters, and unexpected turns of event. Focusing on subjects in cult sci-fi and horror films, artist videos, mainstream and “reality” TV, and the news, we will examine larger collective fears and anxieties—both contemporary and historic—given form by these figures. With a particular focus on those “monsters” that resist easy description in language, or are otherwise unknowable, we will explore the powerful, uneasy potential of animate form devoid of rational motivation.

Readings, screenings, and class discussion will take off from this shared line of inquiry, but student may work on individually chosen projects.

AV: Attention & Moving Image
John Menick
http://johnmenick.com/
FA 387A
Tuesday, 2-4:50

Can I Have Your Attention, Please? – Attention, Distraction, Boredom, and the Moving Image

From social media to smartphones, multiplexes to museums, our attention is in constant demand. Under advanced capitalism, attention has become a kind of currency: limited, exchangeable, unable to be subdivided too minutely or given out too freely. For many,
limited attention is coupled with a nearly constant sense of anxiety and loss. Our attention is always deferred from things we feel are important: loved ones, family, work, reading, or simply doing nothing. Some, meanwhile, embrace the pleasures of distraction and consciously volunteer for a lifestyle of highspeed multitasking. We all, however, operate under a single economic and cultural regime, one that keeps consumers active, entertained, engaged, and all the time free from capitalism’s longtime bugbear: unproductive boredom.

This course argues that artists working in the moving image have always been concerned with the problems of attention, distraction, and boredom. The so-called “slow cinema” movement, seemingly uninterested in entertaining its audiences, has turned to a moviemaking made up of long takes and a lack of spectacular action. Video artists and film essayists have deconstructed how capital uses sexuality, women's bodies, violence, and fear as techniques to capture and commercialize our gaze. Some composers have attempted to deflect audience attention entirely, releasing music that happily exists as background accompaniment in airports and other liminal spaces. Accelerationist practices have Conversely worked to mimic the rapid-fire commercial imagery that saturate our media landscape.

Through screenings, discussions, and readings, we will consider as many approaches to the problems of attention. Screenings will include works by Michael Snow, Marguerite Duras, João César Monteiro, Gretchen Bender, Otolith Group, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Adam Curtis, Józef Robakowski, Chantal Akerman, Mika Rottenberg, and others.

Please note that students are not required to make work on the subject of attention and may work on any projects they please.

AV: Talk Show
Thomas Beard
FA 389A
Wednesday, 2-4:50

The primary task at hand for this advanced audiovisual studio course is straightforward: to produce a talk show, collectively, as a class. Our work on such a project will then lead us down numerous paths of historical and theoretical inquiry as we examine every aspect of the talk show—its functions as a social environment as well as a cultural idiom. These efforts will occasion us to study linguistics and nonverbal communication in granular detail, to better understand the mechanics of speech and the expressive vocabulary of the body. We will also consider the shifting conceptions of conversation across eras, with readings ranging from Cicero's On Duties to Jonathan Swift's "Hints towards an Essay on Conversation" to Sherry Turkle on "the power of talk in the digital age." Finally, we will approach the talk show as a televisual genre, tracing its evolution, with special attention to both its stylistic character and its role in shaping the public sphere.
What can an image do? How does the image represent? How are images used to convey an idea, thesis, or narrative? How can the moving image propose alternative visions and critical thinking? This course will focus on viewing, producing and discussing moving image works that reflect on the political. The works presented in class will provide a broad view of artistic political moving image-making, considering experimental approaches to production, the performance and retelling of histories, the personal perspective, witnessing, the forensic, postcolonialism, post-ethnography, among other topics. We will primarily engage with and produce work that endeavors to enact its politics through form.

Graphic Design

Advanced Design: Archives
Sasha Tochilovsky
https://cooper.edu/academics/people/alexander-tochilovsky-1
FA 315A
Wednesday, 10-12:40

The aim of this class is to explore the relationship between history and the cultural weight of graphic design's past. It will be a studio-based course, looking to unpack the complex legacy and influence that design movements have had in shaping today's design. The goal will be to also expand the conversation beyond the established canon of design to find alternative histories and to make personal connections. Close reading of these histories, individuals, and their work could inform what we do today, and why. During this semester we will look at archives as a repository of information and as a jumping-off point to explore histories. We will question what defines an archive, or how it might function. The students will research and curate collections of content that will in-turn shape their designed, independent project at the end of this course.

Advanced Design: Type Design
Hannes Famira
http://famira.com/
FA 315A, Section II
Friday, 10-12:50

The principles of interaction design are introduced through presentations and weekly studio projects that explore the design of user interfaces for web sites. Projects will address ideas in responsive web design, accessibility, and effective online communication. Prerequisites: Graphic Design II. Pre- or co-requisite: Typography I; or permission of the instructor. TE 305 recommended.
How does an artist find their voice and sustain it over a lifetime? One answer is to understand art as a process that arises from both the heart and the brain, a kind of machine where these two areas work dynamically together. The aim of this class is to help advanced students achieve a more nimble and trusting artmaking process and a greater degree of critical intelligence. We will try to align production and conversation, bringing language to what you already do instinctually, and meanwhile developing the guts and rigor to investigate other work and ideas that you are not already aligned with, or that may seem outside your area. The goal is the expanded field: to widen, question, cross-fertilize, and push your work individually and collectively. The class will include individual studio visits, class critiques, visiting exhibitions, reading and discussing texts by artists writing about their processes.

In this course, students develop their individual studio work through experimentation, risk taking and rigorous evaluation of how to explore questions of content in their work. Students are encouraged to work through their ideas and relationship to painting to find their own distinct voice and ways of working. The course is centered around individual meetings, with scheduled group critiques for group evaluation and discussion. Supplemental readings, image presentations, discussions, and gallery/museum visits expand the knowledge of the open field of painting today and it’s potential for invention and the production of meaning.

This course is for students who have made a strong commitment to painting. Students are expected to work independently in their studios on a series of paintings that will develop during the semester in response to a dialogue with the different guest artists. 3 credits. One-semester course.
Photography

Wardell Milan (Wolf Chair)
https://www.wardellmilan.com
FA 364A
Monday, 10-12:50

Photography: Extended Projects
Leslie Hewitt
https://cooper.edu/art/people/leslie-hewitt
FA 365A
Tuesday, 2-4:50

This class will explore photography as an open-ended way of working and thinking. The class is designed to expose students to the practice of photography (constructing images) in our contemporary context. Though this is primarily a studio and post studio course, class critiques of student work are augmented by a selection of readings, film screenings and guest visits. Throughout the semester, students will discuss their work one-on-one with the instructor and as a group. We will investigate photography as a practice involving diverse forms, ideas and methods.

Lens/Screen/Print I
Liz Deschenes
https://cooper.edu/art/people/liz-deschenes
FA 206
Wednesday, 9-12:50

LSP I Lens/Screen/Print I is the first section of a two-semester trajectory. This is an immersive foundation course in the practice of photography focusing on a critical engagement with lens technology, color theory/management and combined analog/digital workflows. Topics include: exploratory and technical knowledge of 35mm and medium-format analog cameras, DSLR cameras, lenses and lighting conditions, fluid movement through digital black-and-white and color processes, such as digital imaging editing software, scanning analog color, and digital printing in black-and-white and color. Exposure to critical theory and major philosophical arguments central to lens, screen and print based practices will be explored. This is an assignment driven class. 3 credits, 4 contact hours.
Photography / Sculpture

Photography/Sculpture: Art and Ecology
Fia Backström
https://cooper.edu/academics/people/fia-backstrom
FA 361A/392A
Wednesday, 2-4:50

This studio class will approach questions around making art with respect to ecological thinking. Ecology will be interpreted as interdependent systems operating on different scales such as the micro, the social, and the cosmic scale, including mental states, human and non-human exchanges, material histories, and global information flows. Through critiques and discussion, the class will explore aesthetics and language to be developed for catastrophic times.

Studio Electives

Teaching as Collaborative Social Practice
TBA
FA 301
Wednesday, 6-8:50

The Saturday Program Practicum: Teaching as Collaborative Social Practice

As a practicum, this course invites students to actively explore the evolving role of the artist engaged in teaching as an art practice. The aim is to help the undergraduate who is currently teaching or who has interest in teaching in The Saturday Program. Through the course students will begin to frame pointed questions, such as: What is art? What is architecture? What constitutes community? What kind of societal questions can art/architecture raise while still being art/architecture? How can human interaction be seen and understood as a work of art or as architecture? Introductions to artists, art collectives and institutions that hold varied approaches to the notion of community, education, social discourse and positionality will also be essential to the learning environment.