

FA-636FP-01

RESEARCH AS PRACTICE (I)

Wednesdays, 5 – 7:50 pm

East Hall, Room 107

Instructor: Mariam Ghani

Restrictions: graduate-level, max enrollment 12; prerequisites: none; credits: 3

*Please note that this is the first semester of a two-semester course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Bulletin description:

In this course, students will develop skills to pursue research-based projects, from conceiving of the initial ideas, to strategizing processes of research and synthesizing a final project. The course should be viewed as extending from and complementing the rigors of studio practice through the introduction of information gathering, the utilization of multiple platforms of knowledge, interdisciplinary approaches, and long-term single project inquiry.

Detailed description:

Increasingly, artists are choosing to define their practices as ‘research-based,’ or are finding their practices described as ‘research-based’ by the critical establishment. One of the first tasks of this course is to interrogate what exactly ‘research’ does or can mean in the context of artistic practice, and how this may or may not differ from what ‘research’ means in other contexts. In the simplest sense, a research-based practice is built on a framework of projects, each of which takes from months to years to develop, and each of which begins with a process of investigation, an inquiry into a specific topic that can proceed along scholarly, anthropological, scientific, experiential, collaborative, and/or creative (among other) lines. Often the form of a project, like the interface of a database, is determined by the content accumulated during the research process. In practice, this means that research-based projects can take many different final forms. Indeed the dominant imaginary of research-based projects – the artist’s archive, artist’s books, text-based installations, or other works operating primarily in the discursive mode – is still commonly deployed, but these are by no means the only forms into which artistic research is commuted. In this course we will look at (and listen to) examples of research-based practices in painting, sculpture, performance, design, film/video, and more. We will trace possible genealogies for research-based practice in earlier art histories, we will visit exhibitions and studios where we will see current research-based projects in various stages of completion, we will hear from practitioners in several fields, and we will discuss research techniques.

Over the course of the fall semester, students will be expected to develop several possible ideas for long-term research-based projects. These ideas will be presented and critiqued in class, and one idea will be developed for further research, which will ultimately (in the spring semester) take form as a final project. Along the way, students will be required to present intermediate stages of research in several different formats. Among the questions we will consider, as we move from thinking about research as practice to developing ideas for research-based projects, are the following. What does it mean to give your attention to one strand of inquiry over a sustained period of time? How does it change your practice to follow that strand as far as it can take you, rather than running off on every interesting tangent you see? (Although some tangents are very

productive, and suppressing your instincts can be destructive.) What can you learn from the methods of other disciplines, and what kinds of knowledge can the particular methods of art produce? What happens when you collaborate with someone who was trained as a scientist, or an actor, or a librarian, or a designer? What do you find when you slow down, read the notes in the margins, cross-reference the footnotes, seek out the people who wrote the books and ask them what they know but didn't publish? How can you productively present and critique work-in-progress? Is it possible for a work to find several final forms, at several different stages of completion?

Perhaps the very elasticity or ambiguity of the term 'research-based' is at the root of its current popularity, given that an elastically or ambiguously defined practice is free to roam across the borders of discipline, genre and form at will. I have always thought so, at least, because that freedom is what I most enjoy about having a 'research-based' practice. I hope you will take advantage of that same freedom to explore new territories, to play with new ideas, to try new forms, to acquire or create new bodies of knowledge, to learn new methods and techniques, and very probably to fail a few times before you succeed. Don't worry, it's all part of the research process.

Course goals:

To critically inquire into the theoretical bases and historical precedents of current research-based practices;

To demonstrate that research and studio practices are complementary;

To provide students with the opportunity and forum to develop long-term, interdisciplinary, and possibly collaborative projects;

To encourage deeper reflection on the ethics, aesthetics, and poetics of research used in and as art.

Student learning objectives:

Students will learn effective research techniques, and be able to integrate them into their existing studio practices. Students who may already work with research will be encouraged to reflect on why and how they choose to deploy it, and what specific purposes it may serve within the larger system of/around their practices.

Students will gain an understanding of some theoretical bases and historical precedents for research-based practices, and be able to use this understanding as a ground for their own explorations in research as practice. They will develop concepts, research plans and initial research presentations as part of their work on year-long, intensive research-based projects.

Students will demonstrate their comprehension and critical analysis by both leading and participating in critical discussions of assigned reading; and they will apply their accumulated knowledge in intensive, focused, generous peer critiques of each other's concepts and works-in-progress.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading & discussion

Required reading will be distributed in class and/or available on the LMS online learning system each week. Recommended reading will be available at the library reserve desk, or online via e-reserves. Please see the supplementary bibliography and/or course schedule for the list of required and recommended reading. PLEASE NOTE: if the required reading for the week is freely available online, the URL will be in the syllabus. If the required reading is distributed on paper, and you are not in class, it is your responsibility to obtain a copy.

Students are expected to arrive prepared to discuss the readings assigned each week. Each student will also be assigned to lead the discussion of at least one reading. Discussion leaders should prepare a more detailed analysis of the text and its larger context (historical, art-historical, biographical, social, political, cultural). A simple summary of what you read is not sufficient. Find something generative in the text, unpack its meaning, and examine it critically. Discussion leaders may also choose to distribute additional recommended readings or present a/v materials to supplement their discussions.

Students are also expected to read the news on a regular basis and keep a file of texts and images that resonate with course themes or strike you as particularly provocative. Bring one item from this ongoing file into class each week and be prepared to initiate a discussion around it. There are several simple and painless ways to keep up with the news as part of your daily routine, and to configure your news consumption to deliver stories tailored to your particular interests or practice, including Twitter, Facebook, Google News and newsreaders like Feedly.

Occasionally, I may change the schedule of assigned readings to reflect the flow of discussion in the classroom. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if such a change was made.

Projects/papers/assignments

Brief (1-2 paragraph) critical responses to reading assignments, guest lectures, or shows will be periodically assigned. Please see course schedule.

Students are also expected to complete and present the following work, all of which goes towards one long-term project to be completed in final form in the spring semester:

Outlines for 3-5 possible project ideas

Extended proposal for 1-2 ideas

Initial research presentation (raw research materials and explanatory text)

End of semester presentation (in form to be discussed with instructor)

Final portfolio, including some version of the end of semester presentation, a reflection (a 1-2 page assessment of the research process so far, evaluating progress, flaws, discoveries, decisions, etc, as candid and thorough as possible) and a plan (detailed timeline for work through break and spring semester)

Assessment and grading

Research	30%
Final portfolio	30%
Reading responses	10%
Attendance & participation	30%

I assess writing assignments based on clarity of ideas and effective use of language. I grade syntax and structure according to the classic Strunk and White rules. Formal papers should follow MLA style for citation, but citation is not required for reading responses.

I assess work on projects based on quality of ideas, artistic integrity of work, commitment to research, consistency of focus, and success of execution.

I assess participation based on your attendance, first of all (you can't participate in critique if you don't show up; always show up, even if your own work isn't finished). Second, your preparation for and participation in class discussions, and your effective balance of generosity of spirit, critical inquiry, and creative problem-solving in critiques.

PLEASE NOTE that students are expected to attend all classes. Unexcused absences, latenesses, early departures or cuts will directly affect your grade. Three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

Also please note that **I will not change any grades** unless you hand in a substantially revised paper or project. I am happy to meet with you to suggest revisions, but I will not, under any circumstances, argue with you about your grade.

Assignments handed in late without an official excuse (i.e. note from the doctor or administration) will automatically be docked from A to A- after three days, A- to B+ after five days, B+ to B after a week, and so on.

If you have to take an Incomplete in the course for medical or family reasons, please email or call me to work out a schedule for meetings and assignment submission in the winter/spring; I will be traveling quite a lot so it would be best to schedule in advance.

MFA grading scale

- A = 4.0 Student has demonstrated consistent **outstanding** performance in all course requirements—above and beyond expectations.
- A- = 3.7 Consistently **outstanding** performance but slight room for improvement in one aspect of the course (class participation, being on time).
- B+ = 3.3 Consistently **above average** performance in all course requirements.
- B = 3.0 Consistent **satisfactory** performance at the expected level in all course requirements. Baseline “good grade” for graduate students.
- B- = 2.7 **Satisfactory** performance in all but one of the course requirements (absence or chronic tardiness, insufficient productivity). The justification for the grade needs to be clearly communicated to the student when the grade is given.
- C+ = 2.3 **Warning** grade. As a midterm grade, this indicates that the student needs to improve performance significantly or is in danger of failing the class. Professors should be clear with the student about what needs to be done to improve performance.
- C = 2.0 **Lowest passing grade** for graduate students. A midterm warning should have been given. Professors should be clear with the student about the reason for this grade. There is no C minus.
- F = 0 **Failure.** The student has failed to meet the minimum standards for the course.
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COURSE POLICIES

All students must adhere to Institute-wide policies listed in the student handbook and Institute Bulletin under “Community Standards.” These include policies on attendance, academic integrity, plagiarism, computer, and network use.

A note about Academic Integrity: please remember that all work must be your own. If it is not, the source should be cited and documented appropriately. We will discuss fair use, appropriation, and the role/presentation of sources in research-based practices as part of our coursework.

All students are expected to adhere to the specific Health & Safety and Environmental Protection Guidelines of Pratt Institute. The EPA requires that their guidelines be followed regarding recycling and the use and disposal of all material which may be deemed hazardous. Information on these procedures in Fine Arts will be provided at the beginning of the semester and will be available throughout the course of study.

Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must register with the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. They should contact the Disability Services Director, first floor Willoughby Hall, adjacent to Health and Counseling Services: 718-636-3711.

During the course of this semester you may be shown artworks that include nudity, expressions of sexuality, strong language, religious imagery, or other material that you may find personally difficult or offensive. If you anticipate that any particular material will present a problem for you, please let me know at the beginning of the semester, and I will try to notify you before such material is shown.

Education is cooperation. In this classroom we are all responsible for each other. At the same time, this is a course where you will have the scope to pursue independent research and develop your ideas over time. You can request additional feedback from me or from your peers at any stage in the process, or you can bring ideas and/or work in for critique only at pre-scheduled moments. Essentially you are being asked to take a high degree of responsibility for shaping your own process and product – in a situation somewhat more like post-graduate life than graduate work – and you will need to be disciplined and committed enough to see that process through both semesters of the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Please remember that the course schedule is subject to ongoing revision. If it is revised, a new version will be distributed in class or by email/link to LMS. If you are not in class, it is your responsibility to make sure that you have the latest version of the schedule.

Week 1 – 8/28 – Introductions & expectations; assigning discussion leaders; defining the terms, discerning the methods; framing questions

Week 2 – 9/4 – Genealogies and mythologies: atlases, history painting, murals, “neue sachlichkeit” photography, direct cinema, conceptual art, discursive practices, social sculpture, feminist art, institutional critique, new genre public practices; the growing importance of research in the academy, design, & architecture; the rise of the practice-based PhD; the shifting roles of artist, curator, critic, and scholar

Look at key moments & models: Duchamp’s *boîte-en-valise*, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Marcel Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, Lucy Lippard’s *Six Years*, Hans Haacke’s work 1970-75, Mary Kelly’s *Post-partum Document*, Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*, Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas*, Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum*, Group Material’s *Democracy*, Mary Jane Jacob’s *Culture in Action*, *Deep Storage*, Mark Lombardi, *Making Things Public*, *Documenta 10, 11, 13*

Reading & response due: Haacke, Beuys

Recommended reading: Demos, Lippard

Week 3 – 9/11 – field trip with Ann Messner’s seminar to Thomas Hirschhorn’s Gramsci Monument (gramsci-monument.com) - *Mariam out of town*

Reading due: Hirschhorn

Field trip response due by email on 9/12

Recommended reading: Ault, Verwoert

***Leave Pratt campus in group at 4 pm, or meet at monument in Bronx at 5 pm*

Recommended external event: 9/18, 10-2:30, 9/19, 10-1: *Theaster Gates: A Way of Working* forum at the New School; exhibition open till 10/5, 10-6 daily

Week 4 – 9/18 – Image, text, metatext and hypertext

Look: Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Brecht’s *War Primer*, Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk*, André Malraux’s *Museum Without Walls*, Ed Ruscha, Daniele Spoerri, W.G. Sebald, Vivian Sundaram, Glenn Ligon, Idris Khan, Pradeep Dalal, Akraam Zaatari, Lorna Simpson, Zoe Leonard, Andrea Geyer, Oda Projesi, Christina McPhee, Shu Lea Chang, Mendi & Keith Obadike, *Archive Fever* (Okwui Enwezor ICP exhibition)

Reading & response due: Sekula 1, Debord, Kruger

Recommended reading: Brecht, Sekula 2

Week 5 - 9/25 – A visit to the library – guest lecture: Cheryl Costello & Paul Schlotthauer
Research methods and resources; archival practices

****Meet in instruction room, lower level, library building*

Reading & response due: Foster, pad.ma

Recommended reading: Foucault, Derrida et al in *The Archive*

Week 6 – 10/2 – **Due in writing and presented in class: project ideas – 3-5 quick pitches;** formation of affinity clusters for smaller peer critiques

Required external event - 10/7 Fine Arts VALS Lecture – Aura Satz

Week 7 – 10/9 – Epistemology, excavations, bricolage & the affective archive (or, histories, fictions and speculations)

Look: *Battle of Algiers*, Nancy Spero, Keith Piper, Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Sophie Calle, Ilya Kabakov, Group Material, Fred Wilson, Pepon Osorio, Khalil Rabah, Alfredo Jaar, Mark Dion, Renée Green, Mike Nelson, Walid Raad/The Atlas Group, Emily Jacir, Michael Rakowitz, Theaster Gates, Goshka Macuga, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Aura

Satz, Matthew Buckingham, William Cordova & Leslie Hewitt, Marisa Lendowska & Neil Cummings, Johan Grimonprez, Henrik Olesen, Chitra Ganesh, Carla Herrera-Prats, Rayyane Tabet, inSite 05/07, SBX, d13

Reading & response due: Benjamin, Spivak, Godfrey

Recommended reading: Bishop, Gonzalez, Kwon

Week 8 – 10/16 – Performance as research and/or enacting the archive; archive vs. repertoire

Look: Yvonne Rainer, Komar & Melamid, Suzanne Lacy, Juan Downey, Isaac Julien, Black Audio Film Collective, Marlon Riggs, Otolith Group, Jeremy Blake, The Speculative Archive, 9 Scripts from a Nation at War, Taryn Simon, Miika Taniila, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, Jeremy Deller, Steve McQueen, Tacita Dean, Fiona Tan, Omer Fast, Sharon Hayes, Jennifer Monson, Anri Sala, Zarina Bhimji, Mark Tribe, Lin + Lam, Naeem Mohaiemen, Hito Steyerl

Reading & response due: Kershaw, Taylor 1

Recommended reading: Munoz, Taylor 2 & 3

Week 9 – 10/23 – Cross-disciplinary collaborations, transdisciplinary practices

Look: the Art Placement Group, the Harrisons, Alan Sonfist, Simon Starling, Mel Chin, Nomedas & Gediminas Urbonas, Thomas Hirschhorn, Sam Durant, Aleksandra Mir, Pierre Huyghe & Phillipe Parreno, Critical Art Ensemble, CAMP, HomeShop, Slavs & Tatars, Ayse Erkmen, Natascha Sadr Haghigian, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Sierra Brown, Trevor Paglen, *An Atlas of Radical Cartography, Experimental Geography*

Reading & response due: Paglen

Week 10 – 10/30 – Initial research presentations (I)

Week 11 – 11/6 – Initial research presentations (II)

Week 12 – 11/13 – Individual instructor meetings

Week 13 – 11/20 – Studio/exhibition visits TBD

11/27 – NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving!

12/4 – NO CLASS – Second-year crits

Week 14 - 12/11 - Final presentations, final portfolios due

REQUIRED READING

Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1955). *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. Random House, 1968. On LMS.

Beuys, Joseph. "Not just a few are called, but everyone." *Studio International*, vol. 184, no. 950, 1972. On LMS.

Debord, Guy and Gil J. Wolman. "A User's Guide to Détournement." *Les Lèvres Nues #8* (May 1956). Translated by Ken Knabb. Online at: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/usersguide.html>

Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse." *October* vol. 110, autumn 2004. On LMS.

Godfrey, Mark. "The Artist as Historian." *October* vol. 120, spring 2007. On e-reserve or LMS.

Haacke, Hans. Pages 1-94 from *Framing and Being Framed: 7 Works 1970-75*. NYU Press, 1975. On reserve / LMS.

Hirschhorn, Thomas. *Texts and Fieldwork for Gramsci Monument* (2012-13), available online at <http://gramsci-monument.com/page47.html> and <http://gramsci-monument.com/page50.html>

Kershaw, Baz. "Performance as research: live events and documents." *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis. Cambridge, 2008. On LMS.

Kruger, Barbara. "'Taking' Pictures." *Screen* vol. 23, no. 2, 1982. On LMS.

Pad.ma, "10 Theses on the Archive" (2010). Online at https://texts.pad.ma/10_Theses_on_the_Archive.html

Paglen, Trevor. "Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space." Online at: <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2009/03/express/experimental-geography-from-cultural-production-to-the-production-of-space>

Sekula, Alan. "Reading an archive: photography between labour and capital." *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells. Routledge, 2003. On LMS.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Who Claims Alterity?" *Remaking History*, eds. Barbara Kruger & Phil Mariani. DIA, 1989. On LMS.

Taylor, Diana. "Performance and/as History." *TDR* vol. 50, no. 1. MIT, 2006. On e-reserve or LMS.

RECOMMENDED READING

*If followed by a call number, is a book and can be found in the Brooklyn Library.

REFERENCE/READERS

Evans, David, ed. **Appropriation** (Series: Documents of Contemporary Art). Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2009. Includes texts on / by Grimonprez, Khan, Kruger, Piper, Levine, Lippard, Sherman. 709.04 A652

Merewether, Charles, ed. **The Archive** (Series: Documents of Contemporary Art). Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2006. Includes excerpts from Agamben, Derrida, Foucault. 027.A673 copy 2

Bishop, Claire, ed. **Participation**. (Series: Documents of Contemporary Art). Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2006. Includes Umberto Eco essay "The Poetics of the Open Work." 709.04074 P273 copy 2

Camnitzer, Luis and Jane Farver, eds. **Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin**. Queens Museum of Art, 1999. 709.04075 G562

Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. 709.0407 B622

THEORY

Ault, Julie. *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*. 709.0407 G882S
"Exhibition: Entertainment, Practice, Platform." A talk at the Photography Institute, 1998. On LMS.

Busch, Kathrin. "Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge." *Art & Research* vol. 2, no. 2, spring 2009. Online at <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/busch.html>

Brecht, Bertolt. *War Primer* (1947, excerpts), trans. John Willett. London: Libris. On LMS.

Demos, T.J. "Duchamp's Boîte-en-valise: Between Institutional Acculturation and Geopolitical Displacement." *Grey Room*, No. 8, Summer 2002. On LMS / e-reserves.

Derrida, Jacques. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression." *Diacritics* vol. 25, no. 2, Summer 1995. On LMS / e-reserves.

Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse on Language." *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. Pantheon, 1972. On LMS. Full book in library. But if you want to read an entire Foucault book, I highly recommend *The Order of Things*.

Gonzalez, Jennifer. *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art*. 709.0407 G643

Holert, Tom. "Art in the Knowledge-based Polis." e-flux journal #3, February 2009. Online at <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>

Kwon, Miwon. "One Site After Another: Notes on Site-Specificity." *October* vol. 80, spring 1997. On LMS / e-reserves.

Lippard, Lucy. *Six Years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*. UC, 1973. AR 709.04075 L7655

Materializing Six Years: Lucy Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual

Art. Brooklyn Museum, 2013. 709.04075 L765M

Munoz, José Esteban. "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts". *Women in Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* vol. 8, no. 2, 1996. On LMS.

Sekula, Alan. "The Body and the Archive." *October*, vol. 39, Winter 1986. On LMS.

Sheikh, Simon. "Objects of Study or Commodification of Knowledge? Remarks on Artistic Research." *Art & Research* vol. 2, no. 2, spring 2009.
<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/sheikh.html>

Steyerl, Hito. "Politics of the Archive: Translations in Film" (2008). Online at:
<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0608/steyerl/en/print>

Taylor, Diana. "Translating Performance." *Profession*. MLA, 2002.
"You Are Here: The DNA of Performance." *TDR* vol. 46, no. 1, 2002.

Verwoert, Jan. "Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it's a good idea." *Afterall* vol. 12, autumn/winter 2005. Online at
<http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.12/why.are.conceptual.artists.painting.again.because>.

CATALOGUES

Enwezor, Okwui, ed. **Archive Fever**. ICP, 2007. 070.49 E61

Schaffner, Ingrid, ed. **Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art**. PS1/Prestel, 1998. Includes Buchloh essay on the "Atlas," Susan Buck-Morss on the "Passagen-werk," Susan Stewart on the "Wunderkammer." AR709.0407 D311

dOCUMENTA (13): The Guidebook. Hatje Cantz, 2012. 709.05 D637 v.3

dOCUMENTA (13): The Book of Books. Hatje Cantz, 2012. 709.05 D637 v.1

Nato Thompson, ed. **Experimental Geography**. ICI, 2009. 709.0407 T474E

inSite94. 709.0407 IS9

The Ungovernables. New Museum, 2012. 709.05 N532U

Vitamin 3D: New Perspectives in Sculpture and Installation. Includes profiles of Matti Braun, Christoph Büchl, Thea Djordjadze, Latifa Echakch, Chris Evans, Geoffrey Farmer, Loris Gréaud, Robert Kosminski, Lisa Lapinski, Goshka Macuga, Mike Nelson, Michael Queensland, Michael Rakowitz, Lisi Raskin, Simon Starling, Oscar Tuazon, Phoebe Washburn and Haegue Yang. 709.0407 V837

ARTIST MONOGRAPHS

*All in library, shelf 709.0407

Joseph Beuys

Jeremy Blake: Winchester

Marcel Broodthaers

Chris Burden

Sophie Calle: *M'as tu vue?*

Judy Chicago: *The Dinner Party*

Mark Dion

Juan Downey

David Hammons: *In the Hood*

Hans Haacke

Rebecca Horn
Roni Horn: *Making Being Here Enough*
Alfredo Jaar: *The Fire This Time*
Mike Kelley
Mary Kelly: *Post-partum Document*
Suzanne Lacy: *Leaving Art*
Annette Messager
Gustav Metzger
Philippe Parreno: *Alien Affection*
Martha Rosler: *Service – A Trilogy on Colonization*
Nancy Spero: *The Work*
Daniele Spierri: *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*

Additional material on artists (reviews, interviews, images) will be made available via LMS or e-reserves as requested. I also recommend visiting the artists' book collection at some point in the semester.