INTERDISCIPLINARY SOPHMORE SEMINAR  
SOPHSEM 2900-008 - SPRING 2020

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
Wednesday 9AM - 12PM  
CO 032

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Peer Mentor: TBD  
Writing Fellow: TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What are the concerns that drive your creative practice? How do you set the terms for your future development? This course offers intensive faculty mentoring as well as interdisciplinary strategies for the evaluation and communication of students' individual practice as artists, designers, and scholars. Through essential readings, studio projects, and writing, students will generate narratives about how and why they make art.

Sophomore Studio Seminar is focused on mentoring by SAIC core faculty, student portfolio development, visualizing a future curricular pathway, and expanding critique skills. The overall goal of sophomore seminar is to provide intensive faculty mentoring for designing unique curricular plans for each student, foregrounding immediate creative goals and long-term career aspirations. Peer mentoring is actively employed to increase the quality and originality of each student's personal portfolio work.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

At the conclusion of the Sophomore Seminar course, students will be able to:

1. Present self-motivated work of an iterative nature that demonstrates conceptual focus and technical ability as well as the beginning of a personal direction.
2. Communicate a rationale for a self-designed curricular pathway for the third and fourth year at SAIC as well as a post-graduation goal.
3. Participate in a rigorous critique process in the art and design context that integrates peer-to-peer analysis as well as faculty to student feedback.
4. Demonstrate the ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively - especially in regards to the developing body of creative work.
5. Display an empathetic capacity to respect, understand, and evaluate work made by a wide variety of artists pursuing creative expression in a broad array of disciplines.
SEMESTER PROJECTS

MARGINAL NOTATIONS PRESENTATION
We will begin this semester by identifying the artists, writers, and thinkers, that fundamentally inform your practice. Working with the online platform are.na, you will gather together a personal archive of images (your own and others), texts, links, etc. and present this collection to the class and the instructor multiple times over the course of the semester, as the collection grows. The goal of this exercise is help identify lines of thought, stable and unstable vocabulary, and potential futures (materials, language, opportunities, etc.)

ARE.NA ARCHIVES
Students will use the online platform are.na to collect research about local (and for some, less local) opportunities, events, collectives, galleries, etc. In short, you are to collect organizations, spaces and jobs that align with your practice and organize this information with a useful and productive methodology.

Additionally, will be required to attend at least 2 artist lectures, performances or screenings in which the artist is present, and add these encounters to their are.na profile. There are ample opportunities for such engagements on the SAIC campus as well as other educational and creative institutions in Chicago. An easy place to start: http://www.saic.edu/visiting-artists-program

CRITIQUE
There will be three critiques during the semester. Each critique will explore a different format. The work presented for critiques may be from other studio classes you are taking now, but must satisfy the criteria established for each crit.

CRITIQUE ONE / REWORK
In this critique, you will revisit work that you have already exhibited or critiqued, and taking into consideration all the feedback you received, regrets and brainwaves and inspirations that occurred during or after the original production of this work, you will remake this work, either in part or in entirety.

CRITIQUE TWO / IN-PROGRESS
Just what it says it is – this is an in-progress critique for work that closely relates to your research and interests. We will be working in small groups to allow time for lengthy discussion.

CRITIQUE THREE / RETHINKING DISPLAY AND PRESENTATION
We will use this final critique to rethink how we display and present our work, to explore what the professionalized norms are and to questions how those norms came into prominence, and maybe, just maybe, to think about how we can present our work in ways that are more closely aligned with the meaning of the work itself. This will be linked to our Documentation of Practice project, including documentation demos. Note: we won’t be critiquing the work itself, but its presentation.
GENERATIVE WRITING PRACTICE
In-class generative writing assignments will include the development of a PRAXIS DICTIONARY, a list of keywords with personal definitions that relate to students creative labor; a MANIFESTO, in which students will practice taking a stand for something; and, finally, an ANONYMOUS ARTIST STATEMENT, in which students will anonymously & collectively write artist statements for each other.

PAPER ONE/ DIY FUTURES
Write an essay that describes who you are as a creative practitioner, where you imagine your practice might take you, and how you plan to utilize the time, space, and resources during your remaining time at SAIC. In order to design your own curricular map, you will need to research specific SAIC classes, summer work, and/or co-curricular experiences. Examples and resources will be shared in class and on Canvas.

PAPER TWO/ SELF REFLECTIVE ESSAY
While reflecting on your experience in Sophomore Seminar, write a narrative reaction to your self-identified strengths and areas of possible growth. Students will also articulate an assessment of the tools, time, and space needed to best support the development of their individual creative practices.

DOCUMENTATION OF PRACTICE/ PRACTICING OUR PRACTICE
As artists, designers, writers, and scholars, we are informed by research, experimentation, critical feedback, and reflection. In this end-of-the-term assignment, students will document the development of their work and demonstrate how the interplay of ideas, technical skills, and formal/material concerns are developed over time through iteration, experimentation and revision.

TEXTS
All texts will be made available on Canvas under the class folder ‘Files’. There is an additional folder under Files, titled ‘More Files’ where you will find other texts I have found to be illuminating or challenging, but do not fit within our calendar or interests. Any changes or additions will be noted on Canvas. Students will be required to have read the texts and compiled a list of questions and research terms to bring to the next class to aid group discussion. These notes are for personal use, though they will be turned in for credit.

- A selection of artist statements and manifestos, including Agnes Denes, Louise Bourgeois, and from the website https://artiststatements.wordpress.com
- Symes, Martine, BOONS, artist book