

Foundations in Digital Art

ArtCR 360.33 sec. 001 code: 4848 — Spring 2010 – Mon & Thurs 9:10 AM – 11:50 AM

Meeting Place: 11005 HN - Art Department StudioLab

Prof. Síocháin Hughes — shughes@hunter.cuny.edu alternate email: shoes@siochain.com

Office Hours: after class from 11:50 – 12:50 or by Internet meeting

Lab Instructor: Prof. Sean Fader — seanfader@mac.com

”The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film. Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised. Soon the film theoreticians asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional aesthetics were mere child’s play as compared to those raised by the film.....”

— *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin (1936)

With so much of our lives mediated by new technologies, in just over 2 decades everything in our world is different. In an incredibly short time the digital era has effectively reshaped how we think, how we learn, and how we interact and socialize. The computer and Internet are a watershed transformation of our world, the deeper implications of which as a society, we have still to truly comprehend. Some creative fields made the shift to digital modes of production early on, such as graphic design, which went from hand-made “paste-up mechanicals” to computer-based layout in the 80s, while others such as photography, have only recently gone digital with the improved quality and ever lowering cost of equipment. However, artistic practices that seem to have nothing to do with digital have also changed—because just as subtle alterations of our lifestyles have affected how we think—the thinking process that surrounds art and artists are irreversibly transformed.

While acknowledging all the above, the goals of this course are to help you develop your own creative direction and voice, expand your understanding of art and to introduce you to programs and techniques for making art with the computer. We will explore contemporary art and its relationship to current practices in digital through discussions, presentations and reading assignments, augmented by guest artists and visits to open-studio dates and exhibitions. Building upon your already established art-making background, this course will add technology to your creative skill-set. Projects will explore art-making practices with a full range of technology including photography, video, sound and website development, concluding with a combined media project based on your own evolving creative concept throughout the semester.

A thematic focus of this class will be Challenging the Authority of.... This doesn’t necessarily refer to challenging traditional authorities such as police or security, but rather to engaging the natural dialog in an artwork that develops over time through the process of personal inquiry. This theme will reach into every project in this class as you delve into the questions at the heart of an artwork, those of an established artist, your classmates’, or your own.

Course Objectives

- Integrate creative ideas and theoretical concepts, while producing artwork that reveals a developing individual awareness of the one's own aesthetic sense
- Gain a thorough overview of contemporary practices in digital arts by presenting the work of a contemporary digital artist or topic in current digital technology to peers, and by meeting guest artists who present their work and creative practices to the class
- Establish a working familiarity with theoretical perspectives such as postmodernism and conceptual practices that have been highly influential on evolving forms of art
- Expand post-literate era research and presentation skills
- Foster a lifelong learning approach to digital technology skill maintenance and development
- Create a web portfolio and explore the vital aspects of developing a sustainable art career

Technical Objectives

- Acquire technical skills with a variety of computer programs and peripherals including digital cameras, scanners and printers
- Explore digital image capture, editing and collage
- Learn the basics of color management and printed output
- Understand the complexities of file formats, file sizes and cross-compatibility issues
- Maintain data backups and practice non-destructive program usage techniques
- Utilize visual web development programs and modify web code to customize results
- Develop websites that are artworks in-and-of-themselves
- Integrate sound and video concepts in the production of time-based media

Method of instruction

This class meets twice a week for 15 weeks and concludes with a final critique based on an independent combined media creative project. Monday's class includes lectures, presentations, readings, critiques, class discussions and guest artist presentations, while Thursday's lab section covers most of the technical aspects of the course. Additional studio time outside of class and lab may be necessary.

Lynda.com offers cutting-edge on-line video training in numerous creative applications, a critical resource for keeping up with and learning new technology, and is a requirement of the course. Once we begin the Lynda.com enrollment period, Lynda.com notes are due on Mondays in print, no make-ups accepted. Each week notes for 10 video segments are due. The notes for each segment should include the name of the training video and related segment, and briefly highlight what you learned in each segment. All 10 segments' notes are limited to one typed page or two hand written.

Attendance Policies

Attendance is required and absence is not an excuse to turn in work late. Notify your instructor in advance via email if you are going to be absent. Absences require official documentation of illness or other unscheduled situation. Provide a hard copy of the documentation when you return to class. Documented absences will result in appropriate changes to deadlines and no reduction of grade. Each unexcused absence will result in a 2-point deduction from your final grade. Four absences in a combination of class or lab mean you fail the class no matter how good your work. Lateness beyond 15 minutes will count as an absence from the class.

Assignment Policies

Late assignments will lose 10 points. If you must be absent, display your project on your website or Blackboard before the critique and email the instructor the night before at the latest. If you are printing or working on projects as a critique begins, it will be counted as late.

Required Materials and Fees

Storage - You must store your work on portable media and backup to a home computer

- 2 Flash drives — for turning in assignments
- Portable hard drive strongly recommended

Digital printing media

- Collaborate on the purchase of digital printing media—or print at a service bureau

Camera, video camera, owned or loaned! – do not buy one

- Digital Camera or film! Work in Camera RAW if possible. Have film processed to a CD

Lab Fee - \$55. Due 2nd by week of class. Covers lab maintenance, Lynda.com and web hosting

- Lynda.com - 90 days worth of Lynda.com video training for 5 titles of their library
- Web Hosting - your own account with control panel, renewable with the instructor
Domains can be linked with this hosting account. Available for additional \$10/year

Grading

Artwork	40%
Lab	30%
Digital Artist Presentation	10%
Written Assignments	5%
Lynda.com notes – 10 sets	5%
Verbal Contribution	5%
Blackboard and non-graded assignments	5%

Your grade depends on time and energy spent developing your work, your effort to push your learning, your productivity and level of artistic “risk” — not on how “good” or “bad” your work is. When in doubt make lots of artwork. You don’t have to be a great artist to succeed in this class, but you must put in time and effort.

Lack of participation and incomplete assignments are what bring down a grade. You are responsible for maintaining awareness of your performance, grades and attendance. Your instructor may not warn you in advance of your possible failure in the class.

What grades mean in this class:

98 + (A+)	Outstanding	Outstanding effort, original thinking and creative production well beyond the requirements of the assignment. Maintains healthy self-criticism. Innovative, thoughtful contribution to discussion and critique.
90 – 97 (A)	Excellent	Superb effort and original thinking. Ideas and execution are clear and well thought-out. Maintains healthy self-criticism. Actively engaged in critique & discussion.
80-89 (B)	Above Average	Good work that meets the criteria of the assignment. The work could be pushed further on creative and technical levels. Participates in

		critique & discussion.
70-79 (C)	Average	Meets most requirements of the assignment as an exercise, yet there remain technical issues in the work. Contributes minimally to discussion and critique.
65-69 (D)	Marginal	The work is of poor quality and falls below expectations in most areas. There is a serious lack of effort. Does not contribute significantly to discussion or is silent.
0-64 (F)	Unsatisfactory	Does not meet the requirements of the assignment and it may also be late. Does not contribute significantly to discussion or is silent.

General Performance Recommendations

Follow through on development of projects. Present a considerable amount of work at each critique—effort, quality and quantity are evaluated individually. Contribute generously to critique and discussion, offer constructive comments on the work of peers. Participate in Blackboard blogs and discussions. Find inspiration and ideas everywhere. Go to art exhibitions even when there is no assignment to do so. Follow course policies.

General Policies

1. No eating or drinking in the computer or the critique studios.
2. Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures
3. All work created for this class must be done by the student enrolled in the course and should not fulfill the requirements of another prior or concurrent class unless pre-approved by the instructor
4. Send Prof. Hughes an email to establish communication:
 - I am not responsible if we can't correspond electronically, provide your best email address
 - Check Blackboard daily and contact me via email with questions.
 - Allow me 2 days to get back to you - write again if you don't hear from me within that time in case there was an email glitch

Primary Assignment Descriptions — *Please note, assignments and schedule are subject to change*

Overall Theme/Final Combined Media Project:

“Challenging the Authority of...” Abbreviated as CtAo (13 pts)

The phrase “rules are made to be broken” is often applied to art, but which rules are being broken? Most artworks have at least one central question. Many artists’ works engage a dialogue with the work of preceding generation of art and artists—to see if this is true refer to art history. Don’t be thrown off by the title to this assignment, it is a thinly disguised way to engage you in a personal quest to create art that is important to you—what stimulates the development of your art and motivates your need to create? There is no right answer, but there is a goal—to help you develop an open-minded approach and be at ease with the discomfort of “seeking” while “not knowing.” If you challenge yourself with healthy curiosity, you’ll find deep creative and personal rewards as you refine what matters to you through your art. As well as providing the central theme of the course, your thinking on this will culminate in several works for a combined media project at the final critique.

Contemporary Digital Presentation (CDP) (10 pts)

For this assignment you will present a contemporary digital artist, or current topic in digital art or digital life. The assignment takes place in three parts: research and approval process, research and presentation development, and the presentation itself. Over the initial weeks of the semester, you will utilize web and library resources to select a suitable contemporary digital artist or current topic related to technology. This theme must be approved and scheduled with the instructor before continuing the research for the presentation. The presentation will take 10-15 minutes, concluding with a question and answer period. A presentation about an artist briefly covers the artist's background and focuses on the important artworks and central ideas in the artist's work. Examples of artists include Mark Napier, Loretta Lux, Ben Fry... Acceptable current topics in digital might include the "Evolution of Digital Millennium Copyright Act;" "Virtual Reality, Yesterday and Today" "Play Money, Virtual Economy;" "Art in the Synthetic World." To build on course reference materials, You will post information about your artist or topic in your own words, images and additionally, your slide show if you use one, to the CDP Wiki in Blackboard.

Writing assignments (5 pts)

Exhibition Worksheets

What is the criteria at work behind your judgment of art? How does it help or hinder the production of your own creative work? For Exhibition Worksheets, you will visit several exhibitions of contemporary art while paying close attention to the process of your personal reactions to the art. By choosing a work you "have a strong negative reaction to," a work you "feel inspired by," and a work that you "find disturbing, yet interesting," the assignment asks you to look at how you arrive at these opinions. Through examination of the feelings, physical sensations and thinking behind your evaluation of art, perhaps you will identify some of the preconceptions that may act as impediments to your own creativity.

Open Studio Visit

For this assignment, you will utilize the opportunity of Open Studios to examine art and ideas in progress at the artist's studio and engage a dialog with the artist. As well as strengthening your ability to discuss artwork, this assignment expands the possibilities of how you can become the practicing artist you would like to be. Please note the dates for Open Studio will be announced.

Appropriation (9 pts)

Appropriation is a popular technique in contemporary art practice, where an artist uses work they did not make and transforms it into a commentary. Perhaps you are asking, isn't that an infringement of copyright? What makes this legal? We will explore these and other questions related to copyright and the new millennium as you develop strategies of appropriation that "Challenge the Authority of..." as you make what you appropriate your own.

Atmosphere & Question (9 pts)

Keep it simple, 2-10 minutes in length. Working with moving image and sound, build an atmosphere with an inherent question, or challenge an atmosphere that you create by contrasting it with another. Be aware of how the viewer/listener's attention is moved through the piece.

Portfolio Website (9 pts)

How do you represent your creative vision and develop an artistic presence on the web? For this project, you will digitize recent artwork, develop a resume, bio and artist's statement and consider the aspects of your content and presentation that reveal your creative vision. For the website, you will select and modify a simple template from which your web-based portfolio will evolve.

Wk	Mon Date	Mon. Class	What is Due	Thurs. Lab	Thur
1	2/1	Intro CDP — assignment start Appropriation — assignment start Readings: All the Web's a Stage; Digital Art		iPhoto Photoshop	1/28
2	2/8	CDP — Presentation selection – private blogging Readings: Discussion + research Approp — Presentation /discussion Lynda.com selections / start by next class		iPhoto Photoshop	2/4
3	Thur. 2/18 (no classes 2/15)	CDP — final decision / scheduling Approp — 9 contact sheet +3 prints Exhibition Worksheets — assignment details	CDP final deadline	iPhoto Photoshop	2/11
4	2/22	CDP — Presentation coaching meetings this week Appropriation — Critique Atmosphere & Question — assignment start Zen shooting concept	Appropriation due	iPhoto Photoshop iMovie	2/25 (2/18 Mon. Schd)
5	3/1	CDP — wiki page with info in your own words and images A & Q — presentation/discussion	CDP private presentations & Wiki Page	iMovie Final Cut Garage Band	3/4
6	3/8	A & Q — studio Tentative: Guest Artist Presentation Tentative: CDP — group I	CDP private presentations & Wiki Page	iMovie Final Cut Garage Band	3/11
7	3/15	A & Q — critique Portfolio Website — assignment start Preparation: 2 printed copies of resume; Digitize art work; menu including “sandbox”	A&Q due EWS due	iMovie Final Cut Garage Band	3/18
8	3/22 (3/25 = last day for “W”)	MFA studio visit assignment TBA PortWeb — presentation of artist websites Preparation: artist's bio on private blog; studio production Alternate: CDP — group I	3 copies of Resume Printed	Final Cut Garage Band iWeb	3/25
9	4/12 (3/29 – 4/5 spring break)	PortWeb — artist statement; studio production CtAo — assignment start Private Blog: “What engages you?” CDP — group II	Artist Statement & Bio due on blog	iWeb / Dreamweaver	4/8
10	4/19	PortWeb — critique / discussion CtAo — Private Blog; “3 artists who's work relates to my idea” CDP — group III	Portfolio Website due. What Engages Blog	iWeb / Dreamweaver	4/15
11	4/26	CtAo — Private meetings CDP — group IV	MFA Paper 3 artists blog	iWeb / Dreamweaver site customizing	4/22
12	5/3	CtAo — Private meetings CDP — alternate for last presentations	Web Portfolio	iWeb / Dreamweaver site customizing	4/29
13	5/10	CtAo — Studio	Artist's statement	iWeb / Dreamweaver site customizing	5/6
14	5/17	CtAo — Studio		Studio work	5/13
final	5/24	Final Critique 8am – 1pm			

Schedule Foundations of digital art Spring 2010 *Please note, assignments and schedule are subject to change*

Projects and Process for Foundations in Digital Art

Central Theme: Challenging the Authority of...

CDP — how do artists and new technology challenge the authority of?

Clarify assignment details

Presentation selection – private blogging / private meetings

Presentation coaching meetings

Development of wiki page with info in your own words and images

Actual presentation

Appropriation — can you borrow from culture or use other people's work to challenge the authority of?

Clarify assignment details

Presentation show/discussion

Studio production over 3 weeks = 9 images on contact sheet +3 prints

Critique

Exhibition Worksheets — how do other artist's challenge you?

Atmosphere & Question — an integrated challenge to the authority of

Clarify assignment details = no less than 1 minute, no more than 10

Zen shooting concept

Presentation show/discussion

Studio production

Critique

MFA studio visit — what's it like to be an artist? Learn from the Hunter MFA students.

Portfolio Website — challenge the authority of your own self-concept!

Clarify assignment details

Menu must include "Sandbox" for project developments in this class:

Appropriation and Atmosphere & Question

Review of examples of artist websites

Photograph/scan recent artwork

Develop your resume – two copies printed

Develop a list of art achievements you would like to accomplish / Projected resume, when I'm 38

Develop an artist's statement

Studio production of your website

Blackboard critique

Presentation / feedback

Challenging the Authority of... the subject of your choice...

Clarification of theme for course originally, then clarification of assignment details later in the semester

One elaborate combined media project or several small related ones, preferably both! Ideas can include installations, performance, conceptual, process... it's all up to you and what feels "right" as your important challenge.

Private Blog: "What engages you?" or holds your sense of intrigue and mystery?

Private Blog: "3 artists whos work relates to my idea"

Private meetings

Studio production

Final critique

Readings

All the Web's A Stage

Digital Art (book intro)