

Master's Thesis Seminar

Course Description

This course is intended to equip students of the arts with the skills and tools necessary to write a successful Master's thesis. Their thesis will be completed by the end of this course.

Prerequisites

Graduate standing in an arts-related field such as art and design, music, theatre and dance.
Previous completion of Research Methodologies Seminar is recommended.

Overview of Course

The purpose of this course is to facilitate MFA students' completion of a well-written Master's thesis encompassing the historical, theoretical, and philosophical basis for their personal creative practice. Over the duration of the course they will engage in a step by step process of investigation, reflection, research and writing, culminating in a final presentation to the class. The completed thesis will be formatted as a manuscript appropriate for publication in a professional journal.

Required Texts:

Butler, Linda (2007). *Fundamentals of Academic Writing*. Pearson Longman.

Schwartz, B; Landrum, R; Gurung, R (2012). *An Easy Guide to APA Style*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Course Outcomes, Objectives, and Assessments

Course Outcome	Course Objective	Assessment	Weight
Develop a theoretical basis for art and design practice	Read, write, and understand materials pertaining to academic writing and the arts.	Weekly journal entries.	25%
Develop a practical basis for art and design practice	Gain an understanding of the importance of clear, concise, and scholarly communication in, to, and through the arts.	Presentations	25%
Develop an intellectual community	Establish creative and productive rapport with peers, instructors, and others involved in the creation of a Master's thesis.	Class participation	25%

Prepare for professional research, development, and distribution	Create a well-written, well-researched Master's thesis that successfully communicates the student's historical, theoretical, and philosophical basis for creative practice. Gain an operational understanding of writing and presentation techniques, strategies, and processes that will equip the student to participate in the communities of scholars, artists, and other professionals in the arts.	Master's thesis	25%
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Assessment and Grading Criteria

A = Excellent (100-90%)

B = Above Average (89-80%)

C = Average (79-70%)

D = Inferior (69-60%)

F = Failure (59% or below)

Lesson Schedule

Week--Topic	Lesson	Assignment
1. What is a Master's thesis? Why you should write about creative practice in addition to creating products of the arts.	The weekly format of the course will be divided between a lecture by the instructor or guest speaker and a Writers' Workshop in which students will meet in small groups to share and discuss their ideas, concerns, and the progress of their theses. The Writers' Workshop format will be introduced, as will the weekly Journal Entries.	Introduce course project. Students begin a reflective journal in which they will generate ideas and write reflections on their ongoing progress towards the completion of their thesis. Journal Entry 1: Students will prepare three ideas for the topical focus of their thesis.
2. The role of theory and philosophy in artistic practice.	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 2: Students will generate possible links between theory and philosophy and their own creative practice, attempting to discover connections.

3. Connecting present-day artistic practice with historical precedents	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 3: Students will address historical precedents for their current creative practice. They will also select one relevant artist or artistic movement from the past that informs or drives their work today.
4. Writing Basics: making a plan.	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 4: Students will finalize their choice of thesis topics and will prepare a proposal and rough plan for presentation to the class. Journal entry should address the student's decision making process in selecting a final topic for their thesis.
5. Presentation of thesis proposals and plans	As students make their presentations, peers fill out an evaluation and feedback form. These are given directly to the student following each presentation	Journal Entry 5: students reflect on the feedback received in class and revise their proposals to incorporate constructive criticism. Continue work on thesis.
6. The Library—using resources other than Google	Presentation by library faculty member—focus on databases specific to the arts. Students begin to investigate online library resources while the library faculty member is present to guide, direct, and answer questions.	Journal Entry 6: students will generate a list of at least ten sources located through the Library, either texts, print journals, or using specific online databases for use in their thesis composition. Continue work on thesis.
7. Writing Basics: how to quote, paraphrase, and cite sources.	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 7: Students address the progress of their search for background information (history, theory, and philosophy) Continue work on thesis.
8. Writing to communicate with people who are not artists.	Lecture: Instructor presents examples of good and bad writing by artists Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 8: reflect on the information presented in class, particularly thinking about the importance of clear, rather than enigmatic, communication by artists. Continue work on thesis.

9. Writing Basics: pacing, flow, and transitions in your text	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 9: reflective evaluation of current draft of thesis with regard to the pacing, flow, and transitions in the text. Continue work on thesis.
10. Presentation of research paper drafts (general outline or overview)	As students make their presentations, peers fill out an evaluation and feedback form. These are given directly to the student following each presentation	Journal Entry 10: students reflect on the feedback received in class and revise their proposals to incorporate constructive criticism. Continue work on thesis
11. Writing Basics: the reference list and appendices	Lecture Writer's workshop	Journal Entry 11: status update—how is the paper progressing?
12. Work day	No lecture this week. Instructor is available for consultation with individual students while others meet in their Writer's workshop groups.	Journal Entry 12: status update—how is the paper progressing? What challenges are you facing as the draft deadline approaches? Continue work on thesis.
13. Formatting, refining, and preparing your paper for publication	Guest speaker from English department or writing center. Emphasis on formatting required by relevant professional journals.	Journal Entry 13: What changes will need to be made to the draft to prepare it for presentation in class and publication in a journal? Continue to refine and edit draft of paper.
14. One-on-one meetings with the instructor to review and refine thesis drafts	While instructor meets with individual students, others work in Writers' Workshop groups	Journal Entry 14: brief reflection on the progress of the paper and any concerns that may still exist. Continue and finalize draft, preparing it for possible publication. Prepare PowerPoint presentation of paper's contents for presentation to classmates.
15. Presentation of final research papers (2 weeks)	As students make their presentations, peers fill out an evaluation and feedback form. These are given to the instructor, who will evaluate them before giving them to the student.	Journal Entry 15: reflection on how the things you learned in this course will be of benefit to you in your future studies and career.

Policies and Procedures

Late Work Policy

Work must be submitted on the stated due date. Assignments may be subject to a 10% reduction in grade per day the assignment is turned in after the day it is due. It is therefore in your best interests to turn in your work on time. If you know that your work will be delayed due to a reasonable mitigating circumstance for which you have documentation, please contact me prior to the due date so that we

may discuss your options. Mitigating circumstances would include the death or serious illness of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, or child), your own serious mental or physical illness, a major weather emergency, or your own military deployment. Malfunctioning computer equipment, software, or lack of an internet connection will not count as mitigating circumstances. For further information please contact me directly.

Guidelines for Written Work

All written materials and assignments must be typewritten or word-processed utilizing the following format. Except for the active reading notes, NO handwritten papers will be accepted.

- 1-inch margins
- Times New Roman, size 12, black
- Double spaced
- Heading: your full name, the date, and the assignment title at the top of the first page
- Correct use of citations, if applicable
- Included illustrations, if any, must be located at the end of the document (not in line with text), accompanied by correct citations, and DO NOT count towards total page length of the assignment.

EVERYTHING that is not the student's own work, words, or ideas must be CITED correctly including all images used in written work and presentations.

APA format for citing works of art:

Format: Artist (last name, first name), artist's role (in parentheses i.e. Artist, Architect), title, the work type, in brackets [Painting, Cathedral, Chair], country/city/state of origin, and repository. Include URL or other identifying material about source, if needed.

Example: Cattelan, Maurizio. (Artist). (1997). *Novecento (Twentieth Century)*. [mixed media]. Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://www.bos2008.com/app/biennale/artist/61>

To find the correct way of citing other materials according to APA format, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Wikipedia is NOT an acceptable source in scholarly research or writing. Do not use it. Do not cite it.