COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will focus on the tactical, strategic, and organizational uses of artistic aesthetic taken up by the activist for the purpose of social change. The course will rely on both a survey of the existing theory and scholarship on “artistic activism,” as well as close analyses of contemporary practices on a local, national and global scale. Special attention will be paid to issues of creativity and efficacy, addressing questions concerning the value of this hybrid practice as both an aesthetic and political activity.

Course Overview

Throughout history, the most effective political actors have married the arts with campaigns for social change. While Martin Luther King Jr. is now largely remembered for his example of moral courage, social movement historian Doug McAdam’s estimation of King’s “genius for strategic dramaturgy,” likely better explains the success of his campaigns. Furthermore, the practice of artistic activism has only accelerated in recent times, as savvy organizers learn to use the increasingly mediated political terrain of signs and symbols, stories and spectacles to their advantage. This participatory and discussion-oriented course aims to explore case studies and issues of creative activism in-depth.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students in this course will be able to:

• Demonstrate understanding about how various political groups, past and present, use creative forms of media to advance their interests and/or effect social change.
• Synthesize theory and scholarship on artistic and creative activism, pulling from emerging research and deep-rooted theory on art as a practice, art as spectacle and art as means for social change
• Analyze the history of artistic activism and explain the politics of aesthetics in relation to activist movements.
• Critique artistic and creative activism on local, national and global scale, assessing contemporary social movements from Occupy Wall Street to Arab Spring.
• Formulate comparative analyses regarding strengths and weaknesses associated with specific media activist models and how they relate to democratic theory and political strategy.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Andrew Boyd, et al., Beautiful Trouble: Toolbox for the Next Revolution
- Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (ideally Kenn Knabb’s translation)  
  (link: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/)
- John Dewey, Art as Experience
- Stephen Duncombe, Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy  
  (on Blackboard)
- Rita Raley, Tactical Media
- Jacques Rancière, The Politics of Aesthetics
- T.V. Reed, The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Right Movement to  
  the Streets of Seattle
- Gene Sharp, From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation  
  (link: http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD.pdf)
- Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life (link:  
  http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/pub_contents/5)

**Essays and Selections:**
- The Bible: Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and The Acts (link:  
  http://www.biblegateway.com/)
- Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “The Industrialization of the Mind” and “Constituents of a  
  Theory of the Media”
- Simon Frith and John Street, “Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to  
  Politics, from Politics to Music”
- George Lipsitz, “Immigration and Assimilation: Rai, Reggae and Bhangramuffin”
- Ulysses, “Hip Hop Revolution (and the Arab Spring)” (link:  
  http://www.opendemocracy.net/ulysses/hip-hop-revolution)
- Andre Breton, “(First) Manifesto of Surrealism”
- James C. Scott, “The Arts of Political Disguise”
- Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto” ”(link:  
  http://www.redstockings.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Item  
  id=59)
- Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator”
- David Garcia and Geert Lovink, “The ABC of Tactical Media” (link:  
  http://www.ljudmila.org/nettime/zkp4/74.htm)
- Critical Art Ensemble, “Electronic Civil Disobedience” (link: http://www.critical-
  art.net/books/ecd/ecd2.pdf)
- Abbie Hoffman, from Revolution for the Hell of It

**Assignments & Evaluation**
1) Attendance, diligent reading, and active participation in all class discussions: 10%
2) Class presentations (assigned by week): 10%
3) 15-20 page analytic essay: 40%
4) At least 10 case study posts on Actipedia.org: 10%
   - **Case study posts:** Students should use provide a summary and visual for posts on a timely  
     topic in art activism (e.g. a person, group or event). Students should complete 5 posts before  
     Week 7 and 5 posts after. All posts must be completed by the last day of class.
5) **Group artistic activist project, planned and executed:** 30%
   - **Final project:** Student groups will be established early on in the semester and will meet  
     with the periodically to discuss the project aims. Students will complete original artistic
activism, be it through film, new/digital media, written manifesto, screenplay, etc. *More guidance on required assignments will be discussed in class.

**Evaluation Rubric**

**A= Excellent**
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

**B=Good**
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

**C=Average**
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

**D= Unsatisfactory**
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattentio to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

**F=Failed**
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

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**COURSE POLICIES**

**Absences and Lateness**
Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel
arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

Format
Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently throughout your writing. If sending a document electronically, please name the file in the following format Yourlastname Coursenumber Assignment1.doc

Grade Appeals
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

General Decorum
Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity
The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at New York University in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. This relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you
• cheat on an exam,
• submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
• receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
• plagiarize.

Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning, and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:
• copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
• download documents from the Internet;
• purchase documents;
• report from other’s oral work;
• paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
• copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people's ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources.

Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

Avoiding Academic Dishonesty

• Organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.

• Learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another's work need to be acknowledged.

• Always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks, footnotes and other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.

• Do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.

• Save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

Disciplinary Sanctions
When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken following the department procedure or through referral to the Committee on Student Discipline.

The Steinhardt School Statement on Academic Integrity is consistent with the New York University Policy on Student Conduct, published in the NYU Student Guide.

Student Resources
• Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.
• Writing Center: 411 Lafayette, 4th Floor. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Jan 23  Class Introductions
WATCH:
  - Bringing Down a Dictator

Jan 30  Theorizing Media, Theorizing Art, Theorizing Activism
READ
  - Gene Sharp, From Dictatorship to Democracy
  - Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “The Industrialization of the Mind” and “Constituents of a Theory of the Media”
  - Umberto Eco, “Towards a Semiological Guerilla Warfare”
  - John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 1-4 (Blackboard)
PRESENT
  - Contemporary Media Activist Examples

Feb 6  In the Beginning was The Word
READ
  - The Bible: Gospels and The Acts
  - John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 13-14
PRESENT
  - Historical Examples

Feb 13  Social Movements vs Mainstream Media
READ
  - Todd Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching
PRESENT
  - Mainstream news on Occupy Wall Street

Feb 20  NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS’ DAY

Feb 27  Underground/Grass Roots
READ
  - David Armstrong, A Trumpet to Arms
VISIT
  - Tamiment Underground Press collection
PRESENT
  - Contemporary Activist “Press”

March 5  Broadcasting Revolution: The Art of Protest, the Art of Alternative TV
READ
  - John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 15, 16, 20 & 21
- Laurie Ouellette, “Will the Revolution be Televised: Camcorders, Activism and Alternative Television in the 1990s”

WATCH
- Liberation Newsreel
- Paper Tiger TV

PRESENT
- Contemporary PSA

March 12  NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 19  Sounds of Rebellion
READ
- T.V. Reed, Art of Protest, chapters 1 & 6
- Simon Frith and John Street, “Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge”
- George Lipsitz, “Immigration and Assimilation: Rai, Reggae and Bhangramuffin”
- Ulysses, “Hip Hop Revolution (and the Arab Spring)”

PRESENT
- Contemporary “political” music

March 26  The Personal is Political
READ
- Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto”
- Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life
- James C. Scott, “The Arts of Political Disguise”
- John Downing, Radical Media, chapters 10 & 11
- T.V. Reed, Art of Protest, chapter 3

PRESENT
- Feminist media interventions

April 2  Art, Activism and Artistic Activism
READ
- Andre Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism” (first)
- Jacques Rancière, The Politics of Aesthetics
- T.V. Reed, Art of Protest, chapter 4, 7
- Andrew Boyd, et al Beautiful Trouble

VISIT
- Gran Fury exhibit at NYU galleries

PRESENT
- Contemporary Examples of Artistic Activism

April 9  Ethical Spectacle?
READ
-  Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (Ken Knabb’s translation)
-  Stephen Duncombe, “Ethical Spectacle” from Dream (on Blackboard)
-  Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator”
-  Jerry Rubin, from Do It!
-  Abbie Hoffman, from Revolution for the Hell of It

PRESENT
-  Examples of Spectacle, ethical and otherwise

April 16  Conservative Activism and the Media
READ
-  Richard Viguerie and David Franke, America’s Right Turn
-  John Downing, Radical Media, chapter 8

PRESENT
-  Examples of Conservative Media Activism

April 23  Internet Activism
READ
-  Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, Cyberactivism
-  John Emerson, “An Introduction to Activism on the Internet” (free on the web)

PRESENT
-  Examples of Internet Activism

Analytic Essay Due in Class

April 30  Tactical Media and other Digital Interventions
READ:
-  Rita Raley, Tactical Media
-  David Garcia and Geert Lovink, “The ABC of Tactical Media”
-  Critical Art Ensemble, “Electronic Civil Disobedience”

PRESENT
-  Examples of Digital Activism

May 7  (Our) Media Activism
PRESENT
-  Class Campaigns

Final Project Due In Class