

19A Urbs 410/FNAR 410- Urban Communities and the Arts

Molly McGlone & Derek Rigby

Course Objectives:

1. Ask students to analyze and investigate works of art and music that come to represent activism- either political or social protest
2. Challenge students to consider the ways in which art (visual and sonic) comes to represent the ethos of a city (both as a marketing tactic but also as a way to stake a claim to uniqueness, authenticity, or to represent the residents who claim their neighborhoods)
3. Help students understand the possibilities and the limits of art as activism
4. Historically ground protest movements and their artistic outreaches in the realities of underrepresented communities living in city environments- what are the challenges being faced and how can art, as a seemingly non-essential item (an essential item would be food, housing, clothing, etc), impact the well-being of everyday people
5. Ask students to create art/music that reflects their relationship to the topic of art and activism or responds to the artists/scholars they have encountered this term

Urban Communities and the Arts: Arts, Music and Activism in Philadelphia

Urban Communities and the Arts concerns itself with Arts, Music and Activism in Philadelphia. We investigate the social, economic and cultural fabric from which activism in the arts arises. To do so, we will investigate the histories and artistic reactions to oppression between in Philadelphia by drawing on specific examples from various sections of the city and through the media of music, visual art, theater, and dance. The long history of systemic and individual oppression in the US manifests itself in different ways in various urban neighborhoods in Philly and artists of various genres and inclinations participate in activism in many different ways. Examples of artistic and musical responses to the various forms of oppression will be offered and class participants will be asked to bring their own examples to share and analyze. By visiting significant arts practitioners and organizations that provide access to arts education and justice work, participants will have a hands-on experience to unpack the dynamics of artistic production in city life. In addition to art as an outlet for exposing oppression, we will also consider the ways that art and music become markers of the uniqueness of a neighborhood or city, which further complicates the idea of art as a tool for activism. Participants in Urban Communities and the Arts will unpack the role of music and art in defining city or neighborhood cultures by considering a few key sectors that reveal the ways in which cities fail to provide equal access to resources or participate in outright discrimination. At the same time, cities continue to cultivate creative spaces and socio-economic opportunities for economic gain and social understanding through art and music. It is the contradictions that this course will concern itself with and out of our study we will invite course participants to respond creatively. Participants will create either an original work of art, music or intellectual response like a visually interesting research poster as part of a final art/music show. Ultimately students will be asked to reflect back on the role of art in social and political activism to better understand the successes and failures of such movements as they come to define the ethos of city life and its limits.

Grade Breakdown

20% Class Participation (Responding to both online discussion posts and in class with thoughtful comments that move the discussion forward. The number of times one speaks is not the goal but rather engagement with the material and your colleagues. Each student will be responsible for bringing one question to lead discussion for one reading over the course of the term.)

20% Critique Engagement (Giving constructive reflection on your colleagues works in a timely manner and having your work prepared for the day you are to receive a critique).

20% Site Visit Summation and Engagement (Participating fully in the dialogue assigned after each site visit (totaling 3), this may look like writing a small paragraph reflection and commenting on two or more classmates reflections, a small paper of no more than 2 pages, or a short creative response like a video or podcast that reflects what you learned from the site. These will be assigned specifically based on the site visit and posted on canvas.)

40% Final Project (Participants are invited to create an original piece of art, music, or research in the form of a poster to be presented to our community partners at the end of the term with an accompanying 5-page analytical paper with annotated bibliography.)

Notes on Office Hours

Derek and Molly work full-time jobs at Penn which means that we are on campus every work day but it also means that it is difficult for us to schedule regular office hours. Instead, we invite you to email us, ask us in person, or call to find a time for us to meet together if you want more guidance, talk through an issue or just want to get together. PLEASE know that we are available to meet with you. The more you meet with us, the easier it is for us to write you a letter of recommendation in the future or connect you with future opportunities that we are aware of (because we know your interests and strengths).

Molly's Office is 114 Cohen, Derek works at the ICA at 36th and Sansom. Derek & Molly will coordinate to ensure that we are both available as resources to you throughout this term and beyond.

Accommodations

Students requiring special accommodation should make an appointment to see me during the first week of classes. It is important that students with disabilities connect with the Weingarten Learning Resource center to obtain the proper documentation so that I can grant the appropriate accommodations.

We will also be sharing a meal with the artists we work with so please let us know your food allergies.

Attendance

This is a course which will rely on the participation of each member. We have a number of site visits planned and events scheduled that we expect everyone to participate in. Each student will be granted one unexcused absence for a class meeting without any need for documentation or letting us know. After the first absence, being gone from class will lower your class participation grade and possibly your critique grade (if you miss one of those three evenings). We understand that life can sometimes get in the way, if you have a concern that is impacting your ability to either come to class or complete the work, please let us know as soon as you are able so we can agree on a plan for helping you catch up. There are many wonderful advisors on campus who are here to help you out and we will be happy to work with you and your advisors should anything arise.

Religious Observations

Please let us know a week in advance if you have religious observations which impact class time or assignments as well.

Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

The University of Pennsylvania has clear [code of academic integrity](#) and a [student code of conduct](#). Please be sure that you understand these policies and respect yourselves and your colleagues by following these agreed upon standards.

Site Visits/Guest Speakers for Spring 2019

[Yolanda Wisner](#), Curator of Spoken Word, Philadelphia Contemporary

[Kindred Presents](#) (Philadelphia Soul group, Aja Graydon and Fatin Danzler)

Vernoca L. Michael [West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance](#) (50th and Walnut)

(for academic reflection, not a community partner per se) Mark Stern, SP2, [Social Impact of the Arts Project](#); [Philadelphia Arts \(informational\)](#)

Christina Jackson, Professor of Sociology @ Stockton University, [Community Engagement/Arts, Tour of MOVE sites & location of the bombing](#)

Course Dates Jan 16, 28, Feb 5, 11, 18, 25, March 2-10 Spring Break, March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; final exams May 6-14

Course Readings (all books & articles will be provided)

Beverly Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria (Basic Books, 2017).

Yolanda Wisner, Monk Eats An Afro, (Hang Loose Press, 2014).

Selected chapters from Imani Perry, Prophets from the Hood (2006) and Nina Eidsheim, Race of Sound (2019).

Paul Robeson, Here I Am (Beacon Press (1958), 1998). And Mark Allen Rhodes II, "Placing Paul Robeson in History: Understanding His Philosophical Framework," *Journal of Black Studies*, 2016 Vol 47 (3), 235-257.

Abika Solomon and Kenrya Rankin, How We Fight White Supremacy: A Field Guide to Black Resistance (Nation Books, March 26, 2019).

Topics At A Glance

Jan 16 Week 1- Introduction, Johari Window, What Is Art Activism?

Jan 21 No Class MLK Day

Jan 28 Week 2- Why are all the black kids

Feb 5 Week 3- Yolanda Wisner, Cherry Street Pier Studio Visit & Read Wisner, Monk Eats an Afro

Feb 11 Week 4- Read Imani Perry on Hip Hop, Nina Eidsheim on the Race of Sound

Feb 18 Week 5- Read Paul Robeson, Here I Stand

Feb 25 Week 6- **Aja Graydon, Kindred the Family Soul, Clef Club Visit**

Spring Break

March 11 Week 7- West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance Visit (Paul Robeson House, Walnut & 50th), Vernoca Michaels

March 18 Week 8- Value of Art in the City: **Mark Stern guest academic speaker**

March 25 Week 9- Critique #1

April 1 Week 10- Art/Propaganda/City Renewal/Activism: **Christian Jackson, Tour of West Philly & MOVE sites**

April 8 Week 11- Critique #2

April 15 Week 12- Read Solomon and Rankin, How We Fight White Supremacy

April 22 Week 13- Critique #3

April 29 Week 14- Art/Music Show, Open to the Public OR Unveiling with Community
Artist/Museum