

## **SENIOR THESIS**

### **Parsons The New School for Design**

1999 PUFA 4032 Section B  
Fridays 9AM - 11:40AM  
Parsons East, 25 E 13<sup>th</sup> St, Room 503  
Faculty: Simonetta Moro  
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Office Hours: Mondays 12-3pm and by appointment (two days notice)  
65 W 11<sup>th</sup> St, Room 063

#### **Course Description**

This course provides a structure in which students can focus on writing their Senior Thesis. Students will examine artists', curator's and critics' texts, complete a series of specific writing assignments, engage in class discussions, and develop a written body of work that will be part of their final thesis paper. Students will be sharing their experience on a weekly basis with their group of peers, gaining from the exchange of ideas and common concerns. At the same time, they will receive individual tutorials as the thesis progresses. Along with assigned readings and writing exercises, gallery and museum visits are part of the course requirements. This course is conceived in tandem with Senior Thesis section A, taught by Andrea Ray. Readings and activities will be shared between the two classes, with some differences reflecting each instructor's personal experiences and philosophies, and the particular dynamics of each group of students.

#### **Course Outline**

In my experience, writing about my work and process has been an invaluable tool for the development and the clarification of ideas, concepts and meanings within my work. Writing is – just as painting, drawing, sculpture or any artistic form – a medium that requires practice, time and dedication, and that grows out of a process of trial and error, accumulations, subtractions, adjustments and endless revisions. It is not an easy task. Amidst all the pain and suffering and frustration there is pleasure, though, the kind of pleasure that derives from being able to craft a well-formed thought, a precise statement, a document that best represents my work, in its intentions, motifs, conceptual underpinning and external references.

Writing not only serves the purpose of clarifying one's ideas about the work, finding a direction among many possible paths, or reconsidering one's priorities; it also allows the artist to communicate these ideas effectively to the world, and thus to provide a point of access to his or her own work.

The verbal analysis of one's work has been a steady discipline in most artists' practices, across time periods. The legend of the inarticulate artist is exactly what every artist knows, a false myth; one only needs to look at the writings produced in the Twentieth Century (to just mention a time closer to us) by the most diverse artists, to realize the level of refinement and intellectual rigor that goes into their discipline. In our increasingly complex and competitive times, it is the artist's duty to learn the tools to communicate and verbally convey sophisticated ideas, and forge an adequate language to represent his or her studio practice. This is the goal you should set for yourself in the context of this class.

We will approach the semester by breaking it up into three sections. Section I will focus on the Art of Writing; the tools, techniques, and uses of writing as a creative and critical medium. In Section II you will work your way through a thesis worksheet that will aid in focusing the content and development of your thesis paper. Finally in Section III, you will be writing and producing the Thesis Paper.

You should expect the course to be reading and writing-heavy; however, we shall also incorporate creative (studio) work, and fieldtrips into the rhythm of the three sections as a way to bridge your studio and analytical work.

Please see Working Class Schedule below for a detailed outline.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students develop a dialogue between their studio practice and theory-based disciplines.

Students become familiar with writing as another creative tool for artists.

Students learn the writings of seminal artists, critics, curators and philosophers.

Students develop their analytical thinking skills, and critical writing abilities.

Students study, perform research, collate references, and articulate their diverse materials relationship to their work.

Students learn to speak about their work in a professional manner.

Students' written thesis may provide a framework for studio work post-graduation.

### **Requirements and Expectations**

1. Prompt attendance at 9AM. In the event of an absence, you must inform me via e-mail me beforehand or as soon as possible, and arrange to make up any missed work.

Two absences are tolerated, three absences will result in a failing grade.

10' is considered late. Three (or less, according to the case) instances of being late equal one full absence.

Leaving earlier will be considered under the same standards.

2- You are required to a thorough completion of all readings and assignments on time. Assignments submitted late without prior notice and arrangement made with me, will be devalued one half-letter grade per day late.

3- You are expected to be seriously involved with the course and give it your full dedication. You should take responsibility for your personal growth and development in the course. It is also expected of you to undertake research and groundwork relevant to your work and to the issues discussed in class, and to participate, whenever possible, to the cultural life of the City. Make an effort to be up to date and informed about openings, articles and art reviews.

4- The initiative of challenging discussions with dissenting views is encouraged, but is to be engaged in a respectful and productive manner.

5- It is required and expected of you to develop of a comprehensive and scholarly thesis that is evidence of the thoughts, developments and ideas found in your work.

### **Some suggestions for you**

Print out all readings and other docs from Blackboard that are due each week, and put them into a binder so that you may have the one binder to hold all things 'thesis' and bring it to class each week.

Read and listen carefully. It is not unusual to have to read things at least twice for comprehension. Don't read online - print out your readings so that you may mark them up and carry them around.

Be mindful of your time commitments and schedule. You won't want to fall behind in the material, so be sure to make a system for yourself that includes a manageable schedule.

## Working Class schedule and Assessable Tasks

(See attached Reading List for details)

<p><b>Week 1</b> 1/29 <i>Section I will focus on the Art of Writing; the tools, techniques, and uses of writing as another creative medium.</i></p>	<p><b>Introduction to the course.</b> Goals, expectations, schedule and details. The thesis, the 6 questions, what the course is about. <i>Writing as a creative tool:</i> Introduce artist writings as readings for next week. <b>Read excerpts from artists' writings</b>  <b>Studio visits</b> begin</p>
<p><b>Week 2</b> 2/5 (last day to add a class)</p>	<p><b>Discussion of readings and assignment</b> <b>Readings:</b> Kantor, Martin, Brouwn, Agnetti, Abakanowicz, Latham, Bing, Paz <b>1<sup>st</sup> writing assignment:</b> write a text that can stand beside of one of your pieces as one component of a complete work, or that stands alone as an independent piece. Text can be narrative, poetic, autobiographical, non-descriptive, etc. Be ready to discuss this in class.  <b>Studio visits</b> (continuation)</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b> 2/12 (last day to drop a class)</p>	<p><b>Discussion of readings and assignment</b> <b>Readings:</b> Mcelheny, Vidokle, Bourriaud, Groys, Jaudon &amp; Kozloff <b>2<sup>nd</sup> writing assignment:</b> choose an artist who is relevant to your work and write three pages about the influential part(s) of the artist's practice.</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b> 2/19 <i>In Section II you will work your way through a thesis worksheet that will aid in focusing the content and development of your thesis paper.</i></p>	<p><b>Discussion of readings and assignment</b> <b>Readings:</b> - Horn, Nauman, Reinhardt, Rosenberg, Greenberg, Reed <b>3<sup>rd</sup> writing assignment:</b> a) Listen to the audio guide (visual description for visually impaired) at MoMA's. Visit the Orozco's exhib., and verbalize a similar description of the artwork (given) in the assignment; b) Using Rosenberg / Greenberg, compare the two critical approaches, and in pairs, write a review of the Orozco representing 2 contrasting points of view.  Conversation to summarize Writing as a creative tool section. <b>Introduce and discuss the worksheet of six questions.</b>  <b>Class workshop:</b> develop a core question, and a set of concerns in hierarchical order (in preparation for midterm crit.</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> 2/26</p>	<p><b>Class cancelled due to snow</b> <b>4<sup>th</sup> writing assignment:</b> see guidelines – choose one piece of work, provide one core question, detailed description of your work and references.</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b> 3/5</p>	<p><b>Assignment 5 due / midterm review</b> <b>Readings:</b> Kaprow, Kabakov, Cohen Gan, Hesse, Turrell</p>

Week 7 3/12	<p><b>Class workshop.</b> Academic writing: an annotated bibliography, comment on texts, and more.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Krauss, Barthes, Kubler</p> <p><b>6<sup>th</sup> writing assignment:</b> see guidelines</p>
3/19	----- Spring Break ----(March 15-21)
Week 8 3/26	<p><b>Discussion / workshop continuation</b></p> <p><b>7<sup>th</sup> writing assignment</b> – see guidelines</p> <p><b>Individualized Readings</b></p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> group of tutorials</p>
Week 9 4/2 <i>Finally in <u>Section III</u>, you will be writing and producing the Thesis Paper.</i>	<p><b>Discussion and preparation of extended outline.</b></p> <p><b>First draft of thesis due</b> (7-8 pages)</p> <p>Develop extended outline from the six-question worksheet</p> <p>One-to-one tutorials and individual readings</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> group of tutorials</p>
Week 10 4/9	<p><b>Second draft due</b> (8-9 pages)</p> <p>One-to-one tutorials and individual readings</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> group of tutorials</p>
Week 11 4/16	<p><b>Third draft due</b> (10-12 pages), with introduction and conclusion in progress</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> group of tutorials</p>
Week 12 4/23	<p><b>Final draft due</b> - this should be your thesis completed or near to completion; remember that I need time to edit and give you feedback before the deadline next week, so please bring as finished a product as you can.</p> <p><b>Workshop</b> to be determined, as needed.</p>
Week 13 4/30  <b>3pm hand in of thesis in office</b>	<p><b>Final thesis due</b></p> <p>Final editing during class time.</p> <p>Specifications: 10-12 pages about 3000+ words double spaced.</p> <p>Turn this into the office formatted as a PDF (Mike will allow you to use the copier in the office to transfer them to PDFs) on one disc with at least <b>10 images of current work by 3pm</b>. Clearly label both the disc and its folder.</p> <p>After you are done formatting, please <u>send me a copy of your thesis, including folders with images, or hand me a disc with the documents.</u></p>
Week 14 5/7	<b>Class review and discussion</b>
Week 15 5/14	<b>Reviews</b>

### Final Grade Calculation, Evaluation and Grading:

As with most things, what you get out of your coursework is directly correlative to what you put into it. With our class structure, it is also true that what you put into the course effects what your classmates get out of the course. You will be graded on your individual accomplishments, growth and effort over the course of the semester, as well as your participation in the collaborative effort.

#### 1- Writing Assignments = 30% of final grade

Includes all exercises working up to the thesis draft writing.

#### 2- Individual growth = 10% of final grade

Exhibition of having challenged yourselves further with each new submission. Consistent growth exhibited in writing and critical thinking abilities as evidenced in completed assignments.

**3- Group effort / Discussion participation = 10% of final grade**

Timely attendance exhibiting frequent initiative, and participation in group discussions.

**4- Thesis = 50% of final grade**

**Includes drafts and final production**

It is expected to be creative, informative, rigorous, articulate and extremely well written.

**Paper Requirements and Grading Standards**

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date specified. Papers will be marked down if they are late, if they are shorter than the specified length, or if they do not include a list of sources (when applicable). Do not add a blank line between paragraphs. Please do not staple the pages together. You may fasten them with a paper clip. Font size should not exceed 12 pts, and not be smaller than 10pts. Margins should not exceed 1" on any side. Leave a 1.5 space between lines (not a double space). Images should be counted IN ADDITION to page length, even when embedded in text (when in doubt, consider that a regular 1 page of text written in 12 pt size, 1.5 spaced, includes approx. 450 words).

For specific Thesis guidelines, please refer to the appropriate separate sheet in Blackboard (they differ slightly from papers guidelines).

**F**

Failing grades are given for required work that is not submitted, for incomplete final projects or for examinations that are not taken (without prior notification and approval). Make-up work or completion of missed examinations may be permitted only with the approval of the instructor and the program director.

**D**

The paper adheres to all of the general guidelines of formatting, page-length, and the minimum terms of the assignment. Written work receiving a "D" grade may be a simple restatement of fact or commonly-held opinion. These kinds of papers also will tend to put forward obviously contradictory or conflicting points of view. "D" papers may also have serious organizational and grammatical errors in evidence, which may or may not impede the reader's ability to understand the author's point.

**C/C+**

These are average papers. They will demonstrate some success in engaging with the assigned readings or material. The paper will show that the student can identify and work with key terms and passages in a text and apply them to ideas and examples found in other texts, or other outside material. Additionally, the paper will demonstrate effort in the areas of analysis and critical thinking by posing an interesting problem or question. Typical of a "C/C+" paper, however, is that the original problem or question, once asked, does not move the paper forward. Often, there is no real solution given, or there is a variety of possible solutions put forward without a clear sense of where the author's commitment lies. "C/C+" papers may also have significant organizational, grammatical and/or editorial errors in evidence. These errors may periodically impede the reader's ability to understand the author's point, or may lead to a paper that seems repetitive or circular.

**B/B+**

These are very good papers. The "B/B+" paper does everything a "C/C+" paper does, but offers a sustained and meaningful structure to a critical endeavor that is more complex than a paper at the "C/C+" level. What also distinguishes a "B/B+" paper is the author's ability to offer a unique insight, to ask questions of primary or secondary source material, and/or to set up a debate between texts or points of view. The author's point of view is clear and an argument is sustained fairly consistently throughout the paper. "B/B+" papers are logically organized, and also respond to the assignment in thoughtful and distinctive ways. Although minor grammatical and editorial errors may be present, they are under control and do not impede meaning or clarity in the paper.

A

These are exceptionally good papers that go above and beyond the expectations and set forth in the assignment. They demonstrate compelling and insightful commentary developed clearly throughout the paper; excellent close reading of texts and/or use of outside sources to support main arguments; very good writing style and clear structure; no grammatical problems, punctuation errors, or misspellings; reading is used to formulate original ideas that may be applied to creative work.

### **Feedback**

I will be responding to your assignments on an individual basis as well as in class as a group. Should you desire a further, more personal response, or if you have questions, set up an appointment with me for that purpose.

At times individual meetings will be required as per the class schedule.

If you have suggestions on how we may strengthen any of our goals, please let me know via e-mail or by scheduling a meeting during my office hours or at a different time. Your thoughtful input could be beneficial for all.

### **Readings and Resources**

All readings will be posted on Blackboard, as pdf documents. Check the **Readings and Assignments** sections until further notice (e-reserve may become available soon).

Most of the readings (unless otherwise specified) are from *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. by Stiles and Selz (University of California Press, 1996).

A [Worksheet of Questions](#) to begin thinking about your thesis ideas is also posted on Blackboard, as well as a [Thesis Worksheet](#) that will be your guide for the requirements and sections of the thesis composition.

The Chicago Manual of Style is found online for formatting all written assignments for this course (see Blackboard).

Suggested reading: Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

### **Materials and Supplies:**

Purchase a three-ring binder for all course materials and readings and research related to the development of your thesis. Of course you may keep a notebook, journal or digital archive for your research.

### **Divisional, Program and Class Policies:**

#### Responsibility

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent. Late papers, failure to complete the readings assigned for class discussion, and lack of preparedness for in-class discussions and presentations will jeopardize your successful completion of this course.

#### Participation

Class participation is an essential part of class and includes: keeping up with reading, contributing meaningfully to class discussions, active participation in group work, and coming to class regularly and on time.

#### Attendance

Faculty members may fail any student who is absent for a significant portion of class time. A significant portion of class time is defined as three absences for classes that meet once per week. Lateness or early departure from class may also translate into one full absence.

### Blackboard

Use of Blackboard may be an important resource for this class. Students should check it for announcements before coming to class each week.

### Delays

In rare instances, I may be delayed arriving to class. If I have not arrived by the time class is scheduled to start, you must wait a minimum of thirty minutes for my arrival. In the event that I will miss class entirely, check the Blackboard for communications indicating your assignment for the next class meeting.

### Academic Integrity

This is the university's Statement on Academic Integrity: "Plagiarism and cheating of any kind in the course of academic work will not be tolerated. Academic honesty includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of instructors and other students). These standards of academic honesty and citation of sources apply to all forms of academic work (examinations, essays, theses, computer work, art and design work, oral presentations, and other projects).

It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university.

Every student at Parsons signs an Academic Integrity Statement as a part of the registration process. Thus, you are held responsible for being familiar with, understanding, adhering to and upholding the spirit and standards of academic integrity as set forth by the Parsons Student Handbook.

### Guidelines for Written Assignments

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas in any academic work using books, journals, internet postings, or other student papers without proper acknowledgment. For further information on proper acknowledgment and plagiarism, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and proper forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the Chicago Manual of Style (cf. Turabian, 6th edition). The University Writing Center also provides useful on-line resources to help students understand and avoid plagiarism. See <http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/>.

Students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without the prior permission of instructors is plagiarism.

### Guidelines for Studio Assignments

Work from other visual sources may be imitated or incorporated into studio work if the fact of imitation or incorporation and the identity of the original source are properly acknowledged. There must be no intent to deceive; the work must make clear that it emulates or comments on the source as a source. Referencing a style or concept in otherwise original work does not constitute plagiarism. The originality of studio work that presents itself as "in the manner of" or as playing with "variations on" a particular source should be evaluated by the individual faculty member in the context of a critique.

Incorporating ready-made materials into studio work as in a collage, synthesized photograph or paste-up is not plagiarism in the educational context. In the commercial world, however, such appropriation is prohibited by copyright laws and may result in legal consequences.

### Student Disability Services

In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to meet with Jason Luchs in the office of Student Disability Services, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter to you to bring to me. At that point I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Mr. Luchs' office is located in 79 Fifth Avenue, 5th floor. His direct line is (212) 229-5626 x3135. You may also access more information through the University's web site at <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability/>.