



EJ Hill, *Brake Run Helix* (2022)

Sculpture: Concepts and Strategies

Fall 2025, ART 3712C/5930C

Fine Arts Building C, Room B1

Tue & Thu, 8:30–11:30 am

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<https://calendly.com/conradcheung/office-hours>)

INTRODUCTION:

What is the field of sculpture preoccupied with today? More pressingly, what should it be — and how?

This course examines the historical and contemporary questions, methods, and contexts that have shaped the emergence of sculpture's expanded field, as well as the genre's entanglement with adjacent disciplines such as performance, social practice, video, photography, and painting. Through lectures, research, discussion, and experimentation, students will develop *critical proximity* — self-reflective, hands-on familiarity — with the issues that animate contemporary sculptural practice. In the process, they will begin to locate where their own emerging practice — whether expressive, relational, speculative, systemic, or otherwise — sits in relation to others.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

This course is divided into three sections:

1. **Contexts, Materials, Methods** (Weeks 1–5): How do you situate your emerging practice in relation to *yourself, histories, and discourses*? How do *material and method* operate in your emerging practice — formally, expressively, semiotically, socially, ecologically, ethically? After decades of dematerialization and the conceptual turn, artists are reasserting matter and process as central — not just as carriers of meaning but as sites of social, ecological, and ethical proposition. This section asks how material and method shape argument: how working through unfamiliar substances and processes can register and respond to social, environmental, and cultural conditions.
 - This section is paired with Project #1: *All the World's Stuff*.
2. **Systems, Places, Publics** (Weeks 6–10): How does your emerging practice engage the *social agency of an artwork*, especially histories of site-specificity, participation, and relational aesthetics? What is the urgency of *site* today? As everyday life is increasingly mediated by digital networks and private platforms, questions of space and shared presence gain new urgency. Artists have long treated sites as more than backdrops, attending to their histories, uses, exclusions, and publics. This section situates sculpture as a genre historically attuned to spatial inquiry: how interventions in places can bear witness to systems of circulation and control, and how practice can generate possibilities of encounter, dialogue, and attention.
 - This section is paired with Project #2: *Thinking in Place*.

3. **The Field's Edges & Beyond** (Weeks 11–15): How does your emerging practice understand sculpture as a *genre* and *field*? Sculpture has, for more than half a century, been defined by its tendency to exceed itself, absorbing practices from performance, video, and beyond. Today, as disciplinary boundaries continue to blur, the question of sculpture's scope and limits remains both historical and immediate. This section asks what happens when sculpture crosses into other genres and disciplines: how its edges can be stretched, tested, or transformed in order to imagine what sculpture does, and what it might still become.

- This section is paired with Project #3: *What Is Sculpture, Anyway?*

These three sections get further subdivided into topics of focus that have figured centrally in the trajectories of contemporary sculpture; see schedule for each section's topics.

This course takes each of you seriously as an emerging creative and civic agent in your own right. This course also assumes that you have some familiarity with basic issues in sculpture and some proficiency with sculptural techniques; it will expand and deepen those theoretical and technical toolkits. You are expected, in turn, to be self-motivated and resourceful, and to take your and your peers' interests, ideas, and studio investigations seriously. Practice without theory is uninformed; theory without practice is untested; this course aims to cultivate praxis, the co-enactment of practice and theory.

Viewings and readings assigned for a given date must be completed *before* you come to that date's class. This course's viewings and readings come from a wide range of disciplines — art and beyond. Sculpture, like all art, is a cultural field entangled with, not separate from, the rest of culture. Our discussions, references, readings, and sharing of interests will reflect as much. Cultural work varies in shape, and often the so-called “avant-garde” and “cutting-edge” are illegible as such until future reassessments.

PROJECTS:

Note that two of the course's three projects are open to collaborations (≤ 3 people), but collaborative assignments must evidence work commensurate with the number of people in the group. Exercises must be completed individually.

Project #1: *All the World's Stuff* (due Week 5)

What does it mean to understand material and method as argument or proposition? Pick something from the world that you feel strongly about — something you love, hate, obsess over, or don't understand. It might be an object, a trend, a system, an image, a habit, a platform, a cultural figure, a tool, or a device. It must be *contemporary* and *specific*: e.g.,

fidget toys, a specific experience of parasociality, normcore, spotted lanternflies, the shocked Pikachu meme, Kristen Stewart.

Produce a work that critically analyzes, reframes, and/or counterproposes your chosen subject. The key challenge: you cannot depend just on *signification or representation* to do the job of analysis, criticism, or reframing; your chosen *materials, methods, and presentation formats* must also be meaning-makers in the project. Everything besides what your work looks like — the way you integrate research, the ways you choose to build, what you choose to build with, how you choose to present the work, where you choose to present the work, and how you choose to intervene — should contribute to our understanding of what you're trying to feel, understand, or ask.

Key dates: In Week 2, you'll bring in your source (physical object, screenshot, artifact, documentation, or description) and prepare language to describe what you are trying to understand about the source. You will introduce it to the class. In Week 3, you will bring two different test objects you have made. One must use a material unfamiliar to you; the other must use a fabrication method unfamiliar to you. Critique will be held during Week 5.

Additional requirements: your final project must incorporate at least one unfamiliar material or method; this can be something you tested in Week 2.

Project #2: *Thinking in Place* (due Week 10, open to collaboration)

Choose a real, physical, accessible location and develop a sculptural intervention or response. Your work should not treat the site as a passive setting. Instead, ask: what systems shape this place? Who uses it, and who doesn't? What histories does it hold? What public does it assume or exclude? Your project can range in approach — it can be subtle or direct in its address, physical or performative in mode, lasting or ephemeral in duration, etc. — but it must take the site seriously as a system and a situation.

Key dates: In Week 7, you will bring documentation of a chosen site. Documentation should include 5–7 images with superimposed annotations of points of interest and observed descriptions or diagrams of systematic processes and circulations. Be ready to speak as someone with significant observational experience with the site. In Week 8, you will bring documentation of two different engagement strategies you have tested with your chosen site. These may include a physical prototype, a public action, a spatial intervention, a sound test, a map, a score, and/or a temporal experiment. Critique will be held during Week 10.

Additional requirements: Your chosen site must be within walking/biking distance, and you must use at least one research method in addition to observation: autoethnography, mapping, interviews, archival images, public records, etc.

Project #3: *What Is Sculpture, Anyway?* (due on Final Exam, open to collaboration)

Design and construct an artwork that is *interdisciplinary* and/or *transdisciplinary*. This project does not prescribe a theme; it is agnostic about concept. Instead, its primary concern is asking what happens when sculpture enters into dialogue with at least two other fields: either non-sculpture art genres (e.g., photography, video, sound, performance, creative writing, social practice) or disciplines beyond art (e.g., urban design, environmental design, pedagogical tools, speculative architecture, or community engagement). This is your chance to define sculpture on your own terms through cross-genre translation, social dialogue, or environmental attunement. What can sculpture hold? What can it activate? What does it do when it steps outside the art world?

Key dates: In Week 12, you will bring three genre-crossing tests: one small test that integrates sculpture with video, photography, or digital media; one small test that combines sculpture with creative writing or sound; and one small test that integrates sculpture with performance or social practice. You'll show these to the class for feedback. Critique will be held during Final Exam, Dec. 8 from 3-5 pm.

SCHEDULE:

WEEK	TOPICS + EXERCISE REMINDERS
FIRST SECTION: <i>Contexts, Methods, Materials</i>	
Week 1	Whose Expanding Field? (after Krauss, after Stockholder) Sculpture's Historical Logics: Represent, Decorate, Memorialize, Purify, Resist <input type="checkbox"/> <i>due for Week 2:</i> Bring in your source for Project #1 (physical object, screenshot, artifact, documentation, or description) and be prepared to describe what you want to know about the source.
Week 2	<i>cont'd:</i> Whose Expanding Field? (after Krauss, after Stockholder) <i>cont'd:</i> Sculpture's Historical Logics: Represent, Decorate, Memorialize, Purify, Resist Material as Argument: Traditional, Digital, Found, Living, Experimental <input type="checkbox"/> <i>due for Week 3:</i> Make two object tests, one using a material unfamiliar to you and one using a method unfamiliar to you.

Week 3	<i>cont'd</i> : Material as Argument: Traditional, Digital, Found, Living, Experimental Method as Argument: Crafted, Industrial, Deskilled, Temporal, Social
Week 4	<i>cont'd</i> : Method as Argument: Crafted, Industrial, Deskilled, Temporal, Social
Week 5	PROJECT #1 CRITIQUE
SECOND SECTION: <i>Systems, Places, Publics</i>	
Week 6	Understanding Site: Archive, Map, Ethnography Site-Responsivity as Spectrum What Is Systems Thinking? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>due for Week 7</i> : Bring in documentation of a chosen site for Project #2: 5-7 images with annotations for points of interest and observed descriptions or diagrams of systematic processes and circulations
Week 7	<i>cont'd</i> : What Is Systems Thinking? Publics & Participation <input type="checkbox"/> <i>due for Week 8</i> : Develop and document two different strategies of site/public engagement.
Week 8	<i>cont'd</i> : Publics & Participation
Week 9	Check-in for Project #2
Week 10	PROJECT #2 CRITIQUE
THIRD SECTION: <i>What Is Sculpture, Anyway?</i>	
Week 11	Genre-Crossing: Sculpture Beyond the Object Installation as Performance, Performance as Installation <input type="checkbox"/> <i>due for Week 12</i> : Develop and document three small test works: i. one small test integrating sculpture + video, photo, or digital media ii. one small test integrating sculpture + writing or sound iii. one small test integrating sculpture + performance or social practice

Week 12	Crit-lite of Genre-Crossing Exercises Histories of Social Practice Sculpture's Adjacencies: Architecture, Landscape, Urbanism
Week 13	Histories of Social Practice <i>cont'd</i> : Sculpture's Adjacencies: Architecture, Landscape, Urbanism
Week 14	HOLIDAY
Week 15	Check-in for Project #3
Final Exam (Dec. 8, 3-5 pm)	PROJECT #3 CRITIQUE END OF SEMESTER CELEBRATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To gain both a broad and fine-grained understanding of contemporary sculpture's methods, histories, and concerns.
 2. To build fluency in artmaking strategies that operate across media and genres and that are responsive to personal interests and situated constraints.
 3. To strengthen art-theoretical frameworks and vocabulary for advanced discussions of artwork.
 4. To develop independent forms of conceptual risk-taking and technical experimentation.
 5. To gain familiarity with how sculpture can operate in conversation with other art genres and cultural fields.
 6. To develop self-aware, generative modes of art practice.
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COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS:

Our studio and shops are shared spaces — physically, intellectually, and socially. You are expected to:

1. clean up as you go (do loops: regularly circle through studio and shop spaces and tidy),
2. treat your peers with respect in discussion, collaboration, and critique,
3. engage generously and honestly with others' work and ideas,

4. take your own work seriously (and make room for humor, joy, risk, and failure), and
5. contribute to a culture of experimentation, care, and mutual respect.

We are here to develop critical care and confidence — in making, experimenting, thinking, speaking, and working with others. This class is a space for real inquiry and collective momentum; help maintain that.

GRADES:

Grades are determined by three primary categories: the course's three major projects, which will be accompanied by project prep, research, demos, workshops, readings, and viewings; exercises that embody the strategies addressed in each of the course's sections; and participation, which includes your involvement in discussions, lectures, one-on-one check-ins, and visiting artist lectures. Here's the breakdown:

Project #1:	22%
Project #2:	22%
Project #3:	22%
Exercises:	16%
Participation:	18%
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Total:	100%

Projects will be evaluated on five equally weighted criteria:

1. **Content:** clarity, originality, depth
2. **Form:** appropriateness and development of formal decisions
3. **Process:** sustained experimentation, appropriate engagement with craft
4. **Understanding:** integration of research, references, readings, discussions, and feedback
5. **Risk-taking:** departure from the safe or familiar in the context of your practice

You will be graded out of 20 on each criterion, and your total score out of 100 will be your assignment grade. Each assignment grade will be posted privately on Canvas. You can generally expect the following: an A if you exceed the assignment's criteria and show exceptional ambition, work ethic, care, and consideration in the assignment's research, process, and product; a B if you meet the assignment's criteria and show some ambition, work ethic, care, and consideration; a C if you barely fulfill the assignment's criteria; and a D if you do not fulfill all of the assignment's criteria.

Documentation and submission: As part of your emerging practice, you are expected to produce strong documentation of each major project in this course and submit it on Canvas. How you provide documentation matters: you must consider how to capture all the parts of the work that you think we need to see; this might include process, hidden mechanisms, and changes over time. Documentation should be appropriate to the nature of the work: while photos may work in most cases, video may be necessary for time-based work. *Documentation of a project is due the same day as its critique, by end of day (midnight). Documentation is mandatory; you will not be able to see your project grades on Canvas until you submit documentation for the assignment.*

Here's the chart for grade/percentage/GPA conversions:

Letter Grade	% Equivalency	GPA Equivalency
A	94-100	4.0
A-	90-93	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.00
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.00
C-	70-72	1.67
D+	67-69	1.33
D	63-66	1.00
D-	60-62	0.67
E, I, NG, S-U, WF	0-59	0.00

Students must earn a grade higher than C- to earn credit toward their major. For more information, please see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Late work: All projects, exercises, and reading responses must be completed on time for full credit. Specific due dates are provided under the projects and schedule sections of this syllabus and will be announced in class. Failure to complete any project on time will result in a drop of one letter grade per day late. This includes the day of critique; if you fail to complete and install your project by critique and submit it on the same day *after* critique, your grade will be lowered. Failure to complete any responses, exercises, or other class work on time will result in a drop of a ½ letter grade for each day it is late. On critique days, your work finished and

installed before the start of class or your work will not be critiqued and your project grade will be lowered.

TEXTS & MATERIALS:

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be provided via Canvas or hyperlinked. Please check ONE.UF registration for standard required lab fees; these will be used to invest back in the provision of materials and demos for you.

ATTENDANCE:

You are expected to work/participate for the entire duration of scheduled class, and to participate fully during critiques by showing up with completed, installed work and engaging thoughtfully with your peers' work during class. You are expected to attend all classes. *More than three unexcused absences will be cause for a lowered grade. A fourth absence will result in a one letter grade drop.* Appropriate documentation from the student health service should be obtained for medical excuses. In general, acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competitions or debates. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) will be excused. Other sound reasons may be offered and considered on an individual basis.

If an absence occurs, it is your responsibility to make up all work. You should check with the instructor or another student outside of class time when they miss a class (prior to missing the class if possible), as in-and-out-of-class exercises are regularly assigned. Doctor's notes should be provided, within a week's time of illness, for any class from which one expects to be excused. Please address any concerns, problems, and questions with the instructor as they arise.

Arrival to class more than ten minutes late, or departure from class more than ten minutes early, will be counted as tardiness, unless an acceptable reason (consistent with acceptable reasons for absences) is provided. Three occasions of tardiness count as one absence.

You are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Students who do not attend at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and who have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, may be dropped from the course. The university recognizes the right of the individual professor

to make attendance mandatory. After due warning, professors may prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.

You must check your UF email and Canvas regularly. Canvas notifications must be turned on. You are responsible for any information, deadlines, and updates emailed to you or posted to Canvas.

PHONES:

Students in the UF School of Art + Art History (SA+AH) are not permitted to have cell phones turned on in class, unless explicitly given permission for particular uses. If it beeps, chimes, rings, or makes any type of noise, it must be turned off before entering the classroom. Continuous cell phone disruptions will result in lowered grades.

AI USE:

This course recognizes that AI is ubiquitous now and implements no prohibition or grade penalty on the use of AI assistance. *However:* AI should be used only as an *aid*, not a *substitute*; your ideas, your choices, and your understanding of course materials must ultimately come from you. You are expected to be open about when and how you've used AI; lack of transparency will be treated as a breach of academic honesty (<https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>).

Most importantly: the core ways we will learn in this class — discussion, critique, design, experimentation, construction, and collaboration — happen live, in real time, and requires your full intellectual and creative presence. Overreliance on AI will hinder the development of your practice, your interests, and your work — and much more often than you may think, it will do so very visibly.

SCULPTURE SHOP & STUDIO POLICIES:

The UF SA+AH expects all students to follow these guidelines:

Health & Safety:

- Review and follow the SA+AH Health & Safety Handbook: <https://arts.ufl.edu/academics/art-and-art-history/health-safety/>
- Follow the SA+AH Satellite Waste Management Chart and posted media-specific

safety guidelines.

- Report any safety issues immediately to your instructor.

Emergencies:

- Call 911 and/or the University Police Department (352-392-1111, <http://police.ufl.edu/>). Your course is in Fine Arts Building C, Basement, UF Building #0599.
- File an incident report (forms in SAAH H&S handbook, faculty handbook, and main office); turn into the SA+AH Director of Operations within 48 hours.
- First aid kits are located in every studio/shop. Notify your instructor if supplies are low.
- Familiarize yourself with the nearest eyewash unit in the studio and shops.

Shop Access & Supervision:

- Shop hours outside class are posted on the door.
- Get permission from the Teaching Lab Specialist (TLS) before working.
- After approval, sign in on the clipboard.
- The table saw, jointer, and planer may only be used under supervision of TLS or shop technicians. Unauthorized use = expulsion from shops.
- Only currently enrolled SA+AH students who have completed orientations may use the shops. No visitors, even friends or family, allowed.

Personal Safety:

- Eye protection must be worn when using power tools (goggles provided).
- Hearing protection is available (ask TLS).
- Long hair tied back; long shirt tails tucked in; loose sleeves rolled up.
- Shoes must cover toes.
- No loose jewelry.
- Keep hands at least 5 inches from stationary saw blades; use push sticks or ask for help on difficult cuts.

Conduct & Cleanliness:

- No food or drink in shops.
- Do the loop: circle the space and organize tools/materials as you go.
- Clean up: dust off tools/tables, sweep floors, dispose of scrap immediately, and return tools to proper storage.
- All courses participate in end-of-semester cleanup.

Material Use & Restrictions:

- No SA+AH property may be taken home.
- Students may not store materials/projects in wood or metal shops.
- Do not cut painted, recycled, or pressure-treated lumber on stationary equipment.
- Painting/sanding must be done in the courtyard when weather permits.
- Use paper or plastic to protect surfaces from paint, glue, or plaster.
- Paint rollers/latex paint often yield better results than spray paint (consult instructor).

- Store all flammables in the flammable cabinet; keep it closed.

Hazardous Waste & Containers:

- Two types of labels must be used (found at red MSDS boxes):
 - White labels** – for all new/used products in containers (hazardous or potentially hazardous: e.g., watered gesso, solvents, powders, spray paints, oils, fixatives).
 - Must include: contents, your name, date opened.
 - Required for all secondary/satellite containers.
 - Unmarked containers will be disposed of without notice.
 - Yellow labels** – for all containers designated as trash for weekly EHS pickup.
 - Required on flammable solid containers (red flip tops), 5-gallon disposal jugs, and each item in blue bins.
 - Labels must list all waste constituents with approximate percentages totaling 100%.
 - Must also include building/room number and the Waste Manager (posted at sinks/Waste Management Area).
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WORKING IN PUBLIC & OFF-CAMPUS:

Proper care should be taken in order to assure all property in the surrounding area is respected and well-maintained, and projects should be executed with public health and safety in mind. Vandalism of any kind will not be tolerated. As on campus, students doing site-specific work off-campus will be legally and financially accountable for any illegal or destructive actions. In addition, projects involving the greater community should be carefully considered and faculty must be consulted throughout. All public projects must be cleared by faculty and permission granted. Remember, that the UF SA+AH retains the power to require a more appropriate solution to any project that may violate any of the guidelines outlined above. Please do not litter or leave materials out in public. Failure to comply with these rules may result in disciplinary action, withholding of grades, the possible lowering of grades, or course failure.

RESOURCES, ACCOMMODATIONS & OTHER POLICIES:

For information on UF academic policies and student support resources, please visit <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices>. Should you require accommodations, please register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) and provide appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to give the instructor. For mental health support, contact the Counseling & Wellness Center at 352-392-1575 or visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu>.