

ART 6933 Grad Seminar
Positioning Practice through critique & writing
Fall 2025, Syllabus

Wednesday, 11.45am–2.45pm (periods 5–7)
Fine Arts Building C, Room 306

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2.45–3.45pm
Office location: Fine Arts Building D, Room 333
And on zoom by appointment

Course Description

This seminar guides students in positioning their work in relation to their selected influences, including artists, theorists, filmmakers, and other cultural producers. The course begins with an introduction to semiotic methods of “reading” artworks, which students will apply to their own practice through a series of group critiques and workshops. The dialogue generated in these critiques will then be translated into writing, providing a foundation for thesis development. Students will also apply semiotic analysis to the work of visual artists they intend to reference in their thesis writing. To engage the work of visual artists, as well as influential writers and theorists, students will practice the “they say/I say” method, learning to situate their voices in relation to established discourses. Further building on this, students will examine the relationship between their own work and their references through eight strategies of critical engagement. By the end of the seminar, students will have produced written analyses of their artwork that demonstrate its connection to three key references, establishing a conceptual framework that positions their practice within a broader cultural and theoretical context.

Course Objectives & Goals

This course is designed to strengthen students’ ability to critically analyze their own creative practice in relation to artists, theorists, filmmakers, and other cultural producers. Students will be introduced to semiotic methods of interpreting artworks and will apply these approaches in both written and visual contexts. Using the “they say/I say” method, students will learn to situate their writing in dialogue with influential theorists and cultural figures, while employing eight strategies of critical engagement to refine the conceptual framework of their work. Emphasis will be placed on identifying and analyzing connections between their practice and at least three key references, culminating in written analyses that clearly articulate how their artwork is positioned within broader cultural and theoretical contexts.

Required Reading

The readings listed below will be provided to students as PDFs.

Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today" in *Visual Culture: The Reader*. Evans, J. and Hall, S. (eds.). London: Sage, 1999, 51–58.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. *The Craft of Research, Fifth Edition*. University of Chicago Press, 2024.

Gaipa, Mark. "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for Their Writing." *Pedagogy* 4, no. 3 (2004): 419-37.

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say / I Say*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2024.

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Eds. Stuart Hall, Sean Nixon, and Jessica Evans. London: Sage, 1997, 1-14.

Murray, Donald M. *The Craft of Revision*. Cengage Learning, 2013.

Grading + Evaluation

This course includes the following assignments that you will be graded on the following:

Studio + Critique Assignments // 20% of final grade

Writing + Research Presentations // 40% of final grade

Participation // 40% of final grade

Your work will be graded on specific criteria defined by individual project goals. However, all projects will be graded on their success in the following areas:

- Level of critical engagement with the methodologies of each assignment
- Research efforts
- Response to feedback
- Development over the course of the semester
- Successful completion of reading assignments
- Engagement and participation during seminar discussions
- Level of engagement in the workshops
- Attendance + professional communication and conduct

Grading Criteria

A: This grade is awarded for exceptional work that demonstrates critical thinking, a full realization of the ideas put forth in assignment, and outstanding engagement of both form and content; excellent amount of effort given to the class and assignments, with minimum lateness and absences; going beyond the basic course requirements through independent work and research; display a strong commitment to learning, being an active member of the class community, and growth as an artist and student.

B: This grade will be awarded for very good work that demonstrates a sound and competent realization of the ideas put forth in each assignment; excels in many areas but lacks one or more of the outstanding characteristics listed above.

C: This grade will be awarded for well-presented, average work that demonstrates a fairly good attempt at grasping the expectations of each given assignment. This work lacks a competent, comprehensive understanding mentioned in 'B' above.

D: This grade is awarded for inadequate work, extremely poor and/or half-finished work with no care or attention to the assignment. In addition, when someone has missed three or more classes, has failed to be completed one or more assignments, or keep up to date with the studio- based syllabus.

E: When someone stops coming to class and stops communicating with instructor. This is a severe grade and is usually given in severe circumstances.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Syllabus + Readings + Assignments	Reading due next week: Stuart Hall
Week 2	Semiotics + Representation	Reading lecture + discussion
Week 3	Semiotic Method in practice, part 1	Harn Museum visit: applying the method to contemporary artwork
Week 4	Semiotic Method in practice, part 2	Studio visit: applying the method to your own work
Week 5	Artist Statement Writing workshop	Due: write up from studio visit semiotic reading into an Artist Statement
Week 6	Critique	Due: Final Artist Statement + 3 references to be discussed during critique

Week 7	Critique	Due: Final Artist Statement + 3 references to be discussed during critique
Week 8	Independent Research	Due: Further research from critique discussion Reading due next week: <i>The Craft of Research</i> ; <i>Breaking into the Conversation</i> ; <i>They say/ I say</i>
Week 9	Positioning your work	Reading lecture + discussion
Week 10	Individual meetings	Due: research presentation materials/ draft Due next week: Research presentations
Week 11	Research Presentations, part 1	Due next week: Research presentations
Week 12	Research Presentations, part 2	Due next week: Research presentations write up
Week 13	Critique: context, question, response	Lighting round critique: context, question, response Due: Writing from research presentations, draft
Week 14	No class–Thanksgiving	
Week 15	Wrap Up	Workshop: Final Research Presentation, edit

Health and Safety

Each student must complete a Health and Safety Student Waiver for this course. These forms will be turned in to the School of Art office. <http://saahhealthandsafety.weebly.com/>

Class Attendance

Students are required to attend every class meeting. Attendance includes arriving on time and with all materials necessary to actively participate in that date's discussion, lecture, or presentation. Students arriving without assigned materials may be counted absent on that date. Three unexcused late arrivals may be recorded as one absence. At the discretion of the instructor, students who have more than three unexcused absences may receive a failing grade for the course. Additionally, a student's grade may be affected if they have unexcused absences or do not present work on their designated critique day. In the case of an absence, students are asked to communicate this via email and in advance of class unless

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extenuating circumstances prohibit doing so. Make up work will be made available for all students who have excused absences.

Academic Policies & Resources

Information about university-wide policies and resources can be found here:

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>