

Western University
Department of Visual Arts

VAS 9540a/9543a Graduate Studio Seminar

Fall

2017

Professor Kelly Wood

Office:	VAC 119
e-mail:	kwood@uwo.ca
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 13:00-2:30pm (or, by appointment)
Room:	VAC247 and MFA Studios and/or TBA
Time:	10:00-1:00pm

1. Course Description

This course will provide a weekly forum for the critical engagement of the ongoing material production and research of MFA students. The course will be structured around presentations of student thesis-related research and the close analysis of contemporary artworks. Over the term these presentations will be complemented by both formal critiques and less formal studio discussions. Critique sessions will be directed to sustain discussion and debate concerning students' developing material, conceptual and theoretical engagements. Critiques will be scheduled by the instructor throughout the course and the end of the term.

Students are required to schedule individual or class meetings with the instructor to discuss the development of their studio work. All students will also be expected to arrange studio visits with Visiting Artists, Faculty and other individuals.

2. Course Requirements

This course presupposes each student's vigorous and regular engagement with a studio practice and with the activities of the MFA community as a whole. All scheduled due dates must be respected. The following represents the principle requirements of the class:

Research Presentations: Diatribe (all students)

All students will produce and deliver, to the class, a 30 minute presentation in the form of a diatribe, on a current or historical artistic movement and/or artist. The student is encouraged to form the presentation around visual cues to the argument and emphasize their various points

using visual, and or textual, evidence. In other words, the student can use plain language and mostly deliver the diatribe via speech and normal live discourse—a formal written diatribe/essay/critique need not be produced. A supporting theoretical text should be sought out to strengthen the argument where possible (this should be possible in most cases). A minimum of 20 slides would be expected. More about this requirement will be discussed in the first class. What is a diatribe? See below:

[Latin *diatriba*, *learned discourse*, from Greek *diatrib*, *pastime*, *lecture*, from *diatrbein*, *to consume*, *wear away*: *dia-*, *intensive pref.*; see *dia-* + *trbein*, *to rub*; see *ter*⁻¹ in Indo-European roots.]

Word History: Listening to a lengthy diatribe may seem like a waste of time, an attitude for which there is some etymological justification. The Greek word *diatrib*, the ultimate source of our word, is derived from the verb *diatrbein*, made up of the prefix *dia-*, "completely," and *trbein*, "to rub," "to wear away, spend, or waste time," "to be busy." The verb *diatrbein* meant "to rub hard," "to spend or waste time," and the noun *diatrib* meant "wearing away of time, amusement, serious occupation, study," as well as "discourse, short ethical treatise or lecture, debate, argument." It is the serious occupation of time in discourse, lecture, and debate that gave us the first use of *diatribe* recorded in English (1581), in the now archaic sense "discourse, critical dissertation." The critical element of this kind of diatribe must often have been uppermost, explaining the origin of the current sense of *diatribe*, "a bitter criticism."

diatribe /'daɪə, traɪb/

n

a bitter or violent criticism or attack; denunciation

Etymology: 16th Century: from Latin *diatriba* learned debate, from Greek *diatribē* discourse, pastime, from *diatribein* to while away, from *dia-* + *tribein* to rub

**please get your diatribe subject approved by the instructor prior to your presentation

Note:

An aim of this course is to expose the student to a very broad range of photographic art. Some of the most canonical or universally esteemed works depict what is nowadays called ‘mature subject matter’. Be forewarned that a small percentage of the visual material students will be expected to view is of an explicit nature, containing for example, scenes or depictions of sexual and/or violent acts. Students must accept that by taking this course they have consented to viewing such material. If this poses a problem for a student, for whatever reason, it must be BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INSTRUCTOR IMMEDIATELY (DURING THE FIRST CLASS).

Peer Critiques/Research Discussions

All students will formally present recent studio work/experiments in a 60 minute critique. Work presented for discussion may represent recently completed projects and/or projects still in the developing stages. All work-in-progress presented in peer critiques must demonstrate sufficient commitment to warrant class discussion. The schedule for these critiques will be identified early in the course.

All students presenting studio work in these sessions are responsible to invite their advisor/mentor and are welcome to personally invite department adjunct professors or any other member from the university or broader community they would like to have participate in the critique. Students

electing to support their critique with reading materials should notify the group about the reading at least one week in advance of their presentation.

Critiques will be scheduled for all MFA students in the week concurrent with the MFA exhibition. The student's mentor/advisor and all Graduate Studio faculty members will be present and engaged in assessing students' works in these sessions.

In addition to formal critiques the course will allow for informal peer discussion of prospective projects or emerging work in progress. These discussions may be arranged to take place individually with the instructor or with the class as a whole.

Dossier

In addition to ongoing critical consultations with their advisor, each MFA student is expected to independently arrange for a minimum of one studio meeting with a visitor from outside the Department proper. At least one visit from a department studio faculty member other than the student's advisor or mentor must be arranged before mid-term. Three studio visits must be arranged in total for the term; thus one more studio visit should be arranged. Students are welcome to arrange visits with PhD students. At the end of the course, students will submit a dossier that clearly summarizes each of these three meetings, as well as discussions arising from the peer critique.

3. Evaluation and Grading Breaking Down

The final grade for the course will be broken down as follows:

<u>Studio work</u> (including work presented in peer, formal critiques and studio discussions).....	65%
<u>Research Presentations: Diatribe</u>	15%
<u>Participation</u> (including presentation and critique discussions, and critique facilitation).....	10%
<u>Dossier</u>	10%

Studio Work (weighted 65%)

Peer Critiques/ Research Discussions (weighted 30%)

Students presenting work for the peer critiques will be assessed on the ambition and level of development demonstrated in the work. A portion of the mark for this critique will be based on the student's ability to orally articulate their ideas and readily engage in critical discussion.

The course instructor will evaluate the peer critiques in consultation with the individual's advisor.

Critique Grade Breakdown (weighted 35%)

Department graduate faculty members attending the formal studio critique in December will submit to the course instructor recommended grades for the student. The critique grade will be determined by averaging the recommended grade of the Committee, the Advisor and the Instructor. This averaged grade will count for 35% of the total grade for the course.

Diatribes Research Presentations (weighted 15%)

All students will be graded on their preparedness to discuss the significance of the work in question and to develop a terrain for a lively group discussion. Students will be graded on their ability to highlight and elucidate key issues relating to their diatribe, as well as their ability to productively facilitate discussion around this research and its relation to their studio work.

Performance and Participation (weighted 10%)

In addition to the evaluation of studio work in context of the critiques, assessment of individual course performance and participation will be based on an assessment of ongoing productivity throughout the semester and ongoing engagement in discussion in critiques, seminars and related materials and readings.

Dossier (weighted 10%)

The dossier will be evaluated on the basis of the rigor and clarity in the synopsis of critique and studio visit discussions.

4. Diatribe Guidelines

In preparing to present a diatribe, consider some or all of the following questions below. Be prepared to address these as you talk about the subject and set it up for a discussion. In addition, you should spend some time researching the work in relation to its context: (art) historical, material, and more broadly "social." In planning what to say about the subject, integrate your responses to some of these questions with your understanding of the subject's relevance. Plan a discussion in which participants may engage in a focused encounter with the subject (or with an artifact) you are showing us and that will lead to an engagement with the questions, "Why this subject/work; why here; why now?"

1. MATERIALS. Of what materials is the work built? What are its material and formal characteristics? Are they conventional or unconventional? What advantages/disadvantages do these materials provide?
2. PROCEDURES. What procedures produced the work? Are they like other art world methods, or like production methods from outside the artworld? How do these connect us to the world-at-large?

3. ADDRESS: How does this work address a viewer? What kinds of behavior does it elicit?
 4. QUALITIES: What kind of qualities do you see in the work? Does it produce beauty, difficulty, resistance, complacency, daring etc? Are these qualities negative or positive in your view? What aspects of the work would you consider to be dominant?
 5. COMMITMENT: What is the work committed to? What position does it take? Is there evidence of a clear position?
 6. ARTIST: What kind of artist does this work exemplify? How can this be determined?
 7. AUDIENCE: What kind of viewer or audience does this work produce?
 8. ATTENTION: What way of paying attention does the work require? What does it ask us to pay attention to? What does this attention foreground in the social world? Does it matter?
 9. VALUE: How is value determined relative this work? Who has determined its value and why would/can we dispute it?
 10. HISTORY: What is its relation to the other artworks already in existence? Does it disturb/displace them? Enhance them? What tradition does this work emerge from? What works does it eclipse and why? What dialogues are set up by the work in relation to other work?
 11. ART: If you assume that every artwork is a statement of what art is or should be, what does this work say about art? Why should we care? Why should we not care?
 12. RISK: What was at risk in the work appearing at all, in its moment?
 13. IMPLICATION: What is the social and political implication in the work, if any?
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EXHIBITION DATES: Oct. 5-19, 2017

INSTALLATION DATES: Mon. Oct. 2-4

NOTE: The gallery will be open from 9am-5pm for install. No evening install is avail

OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday Oct. 5th from 5-7PM

DE-INSTALLATION: Friday Oct. 20th

(Please come to the gallery following Grad Seminar with Kelly Wood)