

Western University
Department of Visual Arts

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

9540A/9543A MFA Studio Seminar

Term: Fall 2022

Time: Friday 9:30-12:30 am

Location: VAC 247

Professor: Soheila K. Esfahani

Office: VAC 120

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 – 2:20 & Friday 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

E-mail: skolahd@uwo.ca

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an opportunity for MFA students to participate in an exchange dedicated to the research and development of their studio practice. Students will be asked to participate by contributing to informal studio reviews that will be scheduled throughout the term. These group meetings may review work-in-progress; access ongoing technical concerns; assist with immediate needs of a project's concept and execution; develop an appropriate language for evaluation and critique; and involve discussion on related issues. Each student will be required to submit a detailed dossier that will provide information about studio visits with faculty as well as meetings with visiting speakers. Students will be required to present their work for critique to a committee at the end of the term.

Course Materials

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. 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.

All scheduled due dates must be respected. The following represents the principal requirements of the class:

Presentations

Reading/Artwork Presentations (first year students)

First year students are expected to select and prepare for discussion at least two readings (no more than 10 pages in total) from course text *Documents of Contemporary Art: Practice* and present these texts in conjunction with a researched case study focusing on a minimum of two recent artworks. The presentation should provide an informed interpretation of the selected texts and close examination/analysis of the artworks. The presentation should be organized to enable a focused discussion of ideas, issues and practices linking the selected texts and artworks. Presentations should be no more than 40 minutes in length including discussion. The selection of readings must be made available to the class at least one week before the date of presentation.

Research Presentations (second year students)

Second year students will present a clear introduction and summary of their thesis research and facilitate a productive discussion of concerns germane to student's studio inquiry. The presentation will be supported by a reading (consisting of a key research text or a portion of their working thesis or text selected from *Documents of Contemporary Art: Practice* or a combination of readings-no more than 10 pages). Research presentations should be 45 minutes in length including discussion.

Peer Critiques

All students will formally present recent studio work/experiments in a 40 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 second year MFA students in the weeks concurrent with the MFA exhibition at the ArtLab. The critiques for first year students will be scheduled starting the mid-point of the course.

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.

Formal Committee Critiques

Committee Critiques will be scheduled for all MFA students in the week following the end of classes. The student's mentor/advisor and all Graduate Studio faculty members and an invited critic will be present and engaged in assessing students' works in these sessions.

Dossier

This document will contain reflective notes on all studio visitor discussions relating to students' ongoing material production and research, including:

- a minimum of guest studio visitors engaged by the department
- a minimum of two independently arranged departmental visitors (faculty and/or Ph.D.) other than the student's advisor/mentor
- a minimum two meetings with the student's faculty advisor
- a critical reflection on your midterm critique

Evaluation and Grading Breaking Down

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

Studio work (including work presented in peer and formal critiques)	60%
Presentations	15%
Participation (including participation in discussions & critiques and dossier)	25%

Studio Work (weighted 60%)

Peer Critiques/ Research Discussions (weighted 25%)

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.

Formal Committee Critique (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 (1/3 the instructor, 1/3 the Advisor, and 1/3 an average of other faculty in attendance comprises the grade for the final critique).

Presentations (weighted 15%)

Students will be evaluated on their ability to highlight and elucidate key issues relating to their topic, organization, and insightfulness of the presented material, as well as the effectiveness of the delivery and the ability to engage productive discussion. Please submit your presentation file in the Assignment section of OWL after completing your presentation.

Participation (weighted 25%)

In addition to the evaluation of studio work in context of the critiques, assessment of individual course performance and participation will be based on three equally weighted areas:

1. Development of studio work throughout the semester
2. Active engagement in class discussions, seminar materials, contributions to critiques and studio discussions
3. Completion of dossier: The dossier will be evaluated on the basis of the rigor and clarity in the synopsis of critique and studio visit discussions.

Academic Offences

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Department of Visual Arts, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student’s home program.

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.