

The University of Western Ontario - Faculty of Arts and Humanities - Visual Arts Department

VAS 4430 Practicum – Fall/Winter 2015-2016

Classes: **Wednesdays and Fridays 8:30-12:30** Room: **JLVAC 300 and 148**

Professors: **Patrick Howlett,**
 Office: JLVAC Rm. 241B
 Phone: 661-2111 ext. 80078
 Email: phowlett@uwo.ca
 Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 1-2pm
 or by appointment

Kelly Jazvac
 JLVAC Rm. 120
 661-2111 x.88503
kjazvac@uwo.ca
 Thursdays 12:00-1:00
 or by appointment

1. Course Description

Practicum is a studio/thesis course designed to prepare students to develop a studio practice in the context of contemporary art issues and various media processes. It emphasizes critical analysis and energetic discussion in combination with an intensive commitment to probing specific ideas and interests through creative exploration.

As a two-course load, practicum provides time for studio development and production with a related research component. The course will encourage students to experiment with materials and methods as they develop a critically-engaged studio practice. The university setting and the local communities offer access to information, ideas, and facilities that students are expected to use to enrich their creative practices. Attendance at speaker events and gallery openings is expected and should be considered an important complement to the weekly studio classes.

2. Learning Outcomes

- **Autonomy and Professional Capacity**
 Students will gain familiarity with the range of opportunities for artists within and beyond the academic setting, and will have an awareness of routes to be taken to make advancements toward further study and/or professional practice.
- **Communication Skills**
 Students will be able to communicate, both verbally and orally, the strengths and weaknesses of their projects. Additionally, students will be able to apply specialized terminology to discussions in critiques, and be able to articulate the relevant historical and contemporary contexts to each project under discussion.
- **Application of Knowledge**
 Students will use their capacities within their chosen medium as a critical tool to develop creative works: this will include the ability to assess the work's viability and explore, expand and hone the work further into a coherent project.

3. Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Present a honed and cohesive independent body of work and research.
- Demonstrate perceptual, visual and conceptual skills both through art making and as a critically-engaged viewer.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional artist career trajectories and how these may relate to their own practice.
- Demonstrate an understanding of publishing.
- Create a professional artist dossier and present their work in a professional manner.
- Prepare written and visual work for publication through the creation of a catalogue.
- Install and present their work professionally in a gallery setting.

- Demonstrate a grasp of historical and contemporary issues relevant to the making and evaluation of contemporary practices in the visual arts.
- Demonstrate the ability to translate and present information through various presentation strategies and media, as well as understand shifts in meaning generated through this process.

4. Course Requirements

Practicum meets twice a week for a total of 8 hours. *Students are also expected to spend a minimum of 16 hours a week outside course time on studio work and research.* Each student is responsible for knowing the assignments, procedures, and due dates. Students are expected to complete all assignments by the due date; failure to do so may result in a failing grade (F). Requests for deadline extensions cannot be considered unless approved by the instructor at least 24 hours before the assignment is due and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Late work will be accepted with a 5% penalty per day. Attendance is mandatory and missing 15% or more of class time can result in a failing grade. All students are expected to be present and available for discussions during all classes, even in the case that there is no scheduled activity. Students are also responsible for the preparation, installation, and de-installation of class exhibitions. Failure to deliver or remove your work by a required deadline could result in loss of sign-out privileges and will affect your participation grade. Additionally, failure to use studio space safely, professionally and respectfully will also impact your participation grade and could result in the loss of studio privileges.

5. Evaluation

Evaluation will be based upon the demonstrated ambition and resolution brought to meeting the creative, conceptual, and formal demands of assignments and studio work, as well as in the level of participation demonstrated in all other aspects of the course. Students will be evaluated on their understanding of relevant theoretical issues introduced in class and their ability to integrate these ideas in their studio practice. Qualitative evaluation will take the form of a numerical breakdown of each assignment grade in reference to the above criteria as well as through oral feedback from the course instructors.

6. Course Evaluation

First Term (45% of final grade):

First Term Assignments Quantified	Grading Weight
Informal critique sessions	10
Independent Studio Project: Midterm	20
Independent Studio Project: End of term	30
Annotated Bibliography	10
Reading discussion questions	10
Participation (Professional Conduct, Committee Work & Reports, Participation in Exhibition Planning & Development, Participation in Critiques, Working in Class)	10
Total	90 (/2=45%)

Second Term (55% of final grade):

Second Term Assignments Quantified	Grading Weight
Independent Studio Project: Midterm	20

Independent Studio Project: Semi-Final	20
Presentation of Final Independent Studio Project in ArtLab	30
Research Presentation	15
Application Dossier (includes all of the components required by a relevant application of the student's choice. For example, an application to an MFA program)	10
Catalogue Entry	5
Overall Participation (Professional Conduct, Committee Work & Reports, Participation in Exhibition Planning & Development, Participation in Critiques, Working in Class)	10
Total	110 (/2=55%)

VISUAL ARTS Undergraduate Grading Guidelines – Studio

Grades will be assessed on the following basis. These guidelines are benchmarks, not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. For example, grades at the first year level are generally lower than at fourth year.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The **studio work** shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated analysis and synthesis involving complex theoretical and conceptual thinking are demonstrated. Mastery of complex ideas is immediately evident. The studio work has originality, clarity and ambition. The project is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The **studio work** shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. The work is clearly focused and intelligently presented. Mastery of complex ideas is demonstrated. The studio work has clarity and ambition. The quality of the studio production immediately engages the viewer. The studio work has been sufficiently developed and demonstrates mastery of techniques so that results are compelling. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is impressive.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The **studio work** shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. It demonstrates a clear awareness of the parameters of the assignment and a very good attempt to respond creatively to them. The work demonstrates reasonable depth and/or breadth and engages in a production that is appropriate to the level of the course. The quality of studio work engages the viewer and demonstrates above-average mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is very good.

70-74 (Good, B)

The **studio work** shows a satisfactory attempt at analysis and critical thinking. It shows a good attempt to respond to assignment parameters. The work demonstrates some depth and/or breadth, making references to appropriate course material/art context. The studio production engages the viewer and demonstrates a

sufficient mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is satisfactory.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The **studio work** demonstrates adequate engagement with the project. It shows an attempt to respond to assignment parameters but does so at a very basic level that lacks creativity. Engagement with studio production demonstrates basic mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is competent.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The **studio work** shows less than adequate engagement with the topic and with the material covered by the course. The studio work waivers in its attempt to respond to assignment parameters and tends to be simplistic. Engagement with studio production demonstrates less than a basic mastery of techniques. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is less than satisfactory.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The **studio work** demonstrates a failure to comprehend/engage the topic. The studio work is incomplete and lacks redeeming creative merit. The work clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment. Background preparation and research, engagement with process and outcome of the studio production is unacceptable.

7. Readings, Research and Presentations

First Term

Students will participate in a number of seminar-like discussions on a variety of texts. Thorough knowledge of these texts will be required for active participation and students. On the day of each discussion, students will bring a **hardcopy of three engaged questions related to the reading**. We will use these questions in class to discuss the reading, and the questions will be collected by the instructor that day. Good questions should show an engagement and understanding of the ideas presented in the text, and should be as specific as possible, rather than general.

Additionally, over the course of the first semester, students will develop **an annotated bibliography of their own research interests** (primarily books/essays, but films, sound works and other cultural material/sources may be included). Your bibliography should have a minimum of 10 sources listed (from different books), and each annotation should describe the text and why it is of interest to you.

Second Term

Students will give **20 minute presentations on a term or concept integral to their own practices**. Topics will be chosen with the Professors before the end of the first term. Presenting students are expected to generate a minimum of 5 minutes of critical discussion based upon their own research into the theme. Presentations should include audio-visual material and will be delivered to the class in a standard lecture format. This presentation must incorporate the work of at least two artists (or collectives) whose work responds to and extends the theme as well as suggesting connections to the student's own work, and who has not been researched in any previous presentation or essay.

Reading List

*Note: Students will be polled for additional topics of interest.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp 543-570.

Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October*, Fall 2004, No. 110: 51-79.

Fraser, Andrea, "There's no place like home." Available at http://whitney.org/file_columns/0002/9847/andreafraser_theresnoplacelikehome_2012whitneybiennial.pdf

White, Roger. *The Contemporaries* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2015).

Sennett, Richard. "Resistance and Ambiguity" in *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

8. Practicum Mentors

Course instructors will seek out mentors for each student from the Visual Arts Faculty or Graduate students. Once introduced via email, students will be responsible scheduling individual consultations with your mentors once each semester as well as inviting them to final critiques (if available). Studio visits scheduled with mentors should be considered a formal occasion and you will prepare your work and presentation accordingly.

9. Artist Statement

Students will have the opportunity to workshop two artist statements over the two terms. Students will submit an initial statement to the class to be discussed as a 'bad artist statement'. After gathering feedback from their peers and instructors, students work on a 'good' statement and hand it in as part of the Application Dossier. A final, expanded version will be handed in and evaluated during the second term as part of the exhibition catalogue entry.

10. Proposal

Immediately following mid-term critiques in the first term, students will be asked to write a one-page proposal for the development of their studio work. Students will outline their formal, conceptual, and thematic concerns and describe their timetable for developing this work.

11. Application Dossier

The dossier will include all the materials required for a professional artist's application. This could consist of an MFA program application, an application for an exhibition at an artist's run centre, or other relevant application. It will be due early in the winter semester. This will help students prepare to meet some of the requirements of applications to graduate programs, grants, and exhibitions.

12. Studio Work & Critiques

In the first term students will have two informal critiques and two formal critiques. The informal critiques will take place at scheduled intervals (refer to critique team assignment and course schedule). They will be 30 minutes in duration each. You may present work in progress, but it is expected that you present your work to the class in a location that is amenable to 20 people viewing your work. Informal critiques may present work in progress, as long as it still demonstrates a committed engagement and an appropriate work ethic for the course. Please note that your critique may be cut short if you do not have a substantial amount of new work to discuss.

Formal critiques will take place at midterm and term-end. Students will also invite their mentors to these critiques. Studio work presented for discussion in the critiques should represent finished work. In some cases, very major or multi-faceted projects may be presented still in development. Except for the final Artlab critiques (which will be longer), all Formal critiques will be approximately 20 minutes in duration. All work presented must demonstrate a vigorous commitment to process as well as demonstrate an evolved conceptual and material practice, and a considered installation.

All class members are expected to actively participate in both informal and formal critiques and will be evaluated on both the presentation of their work as well as their generous engagement with the work of others.

13. Committee Work

Committee work is an important part of the Practicum Course and a large part of your participation grade. Each student will volunteer or be assigned a role in one of four committees: **Fundraising; Catalogue; Class-Trip;** and **Exhibition**. Specific roles will be discussed in class. Each student will submit a short report

on their activities on dates requested. Committee positions will often rely on each-other to do a good job, so good planning and communication is essential.

14. Student Conduct

All students will conduct themselves in a manner that will be consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.

Note:

An aim of this course is to engage the student with a very broad range of artistic practices. Some of the most canonical or universally esteemed works contain what is now 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).

15. Attendance

A student who misses more than 15% of the course hours, without written corroboration for health or bereavement, can be debarred from writing final exams, or participation in final studio evaluations. Note that if a student consistently is absent from a 3-hour class for 1 hour, they will exceed the 15% cutoff and can be debarred.

16. Course Medical Policy

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. See course outline for specific arrangements regarding less than 10% of assignments.

A student who cannot complete assignments totalling **less than 10%** for the whole course, due to medical reasons, may speak with the instructor and arrange a reasonable extension to complete the assignments without presenting medical documentation. A late academic penalty will apply to all extensions granted due to other reasons.

17. Mental Health Policy:

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

18. OWL:

All students will have access to the OWL Sakai course site: <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/owldocs>

Class Schedule:

This is a general overview of the topics covered and relative time allotted to each unit of study. *On occasion the class schedule may be subject to change in order to adapt to class needs or to take advantage of a visiting artist/scholar or a class field trip. When possible these changes will be discussed in advance (*).*

*1st Semester		Classes and Assignments	Due Dates and Other Deadlines
Week 1	Fri. Sept. 11	Course introduction Studio Assignments Readings Assignment of critique teams	
Week 2	Wed. Sept. 16	Committee selections & discussion. Critiques for Group #1	
	Fri. Sept. 18	Critiques for Group #2 (Bad) Artist Statement presentation and workshop. Work Period/Studio Visits	
Week 3	Wed. Sept. 23	Critiques for Group #3 Work Period/Studio Visits	Due: (Bad) Artist Statement
	Fri. Sept.25	Critiques for Group #4 Class studio visits and critique	
Week 4	Wed. Sept. 30	Critiques for Group #5 Committee Updates & Reports Work Period/Studio Visits	Due: Committee Reports
	Fri. Oct. 2	Critiques for Group #6 Class studio visits and critique	Approval for mid-term project to be discussed concurrently
Week 5	Wed. Oct. 7	Reading seminar (I: <i>The Contemporaries</i>) Work Class & Studio Visit's to discuss progress of mid-term work	Due: Three questions for reading discussion (hardcopy, due in class)
	Fri. Oct. 9	Field Trip (Local)	
Week 6	Wed. Oct. 14	Reading seminar (II: <i>The Contemporaries</i> con'td) Work class & studio visits	Due: Three questions for reading discussion (hardcopy, due in class)

	Fri. Oct. 16	Work class & studio Visits	Due: First draft of your annotated bibliography.
Week 7	Wed. Oct. 21	Mid-term critiques	
	Fri. Oct. 23	Mid-term critiques	

Week 8	Wed. Oct. 28	New York Trip Planning Work class & studio Visits	Due: Ideas for year-end exhibition title Due: Final Project Proposal (200 words max.)
	Fri. Oct. 30	Fall Study Break (University open – no classes)	
Week 9	Wed. Nov.4	Critique Group #5. Work period and individual studio visits	
	Fri. Nov.6	Critique Group #6 Work period and individual studio visits	
Week 10	Wed. Nov. 11	Critique Group #3 Work period and individual studio visits	
	Fri. Nov. 13	Critique Group #4 Reading Seminar (III: "Resistance and Ambiguity") Work period and individual studio visits	Due: Three reading questions, in hardcopy
Week 11	Wed. Nov. 18	Critique Group #1 Dossier workshop Work period and individual studio visits	Due: Come to class with a draft artist statement to workshop in small groups in class.
	Fri. Nov. 20	Critique Group #2 Work period and individual studio visits	
Week 12	Wed. Nov. 25	Breakfast Art Screenings Work period and individual studio visits	
	Fri. Nov. 27	Reading Seminar (IV: <i>Queer Phenomenology</i>) Work period and individual studio	Due: Three reading questions, in hardcopy Due: Final draft of your annotated

		visits Committee progress meetings	bibliography
Week 13	Wed. Dec. 2	1st Term Critiques	
	Fri. Dec. 4	1st Term Critiques	
	Wed. Dec. 9- Dec. 13th	New York!	

Key Dates for Winter Semester

*Note: a detailed schedule will be circulated in early January

Presentations	January 13,15,20,22
Application Dossier	January 29
Second term midterm critique	February 3,5
Final Critique (pre-install in ArtLab)	March 2,4
Installation of Final project in ArtLab	March 15, 16, 17
Opening in ArtLab	March 18
Final Critique in Artlab	March 23, 30 and April 1

**The University of Western Ontario
Visual Arts Department**

POLICIES**Student Conduct:**

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Attendance:

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Prerequisites:

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which may be defined as "The act or an instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own," will not be tolerated. (Citation excerpted from Black's Law Dictionary, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). (Refer to www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg113.html# or the 2014/2015 Western Academic Calendar, p. 19, with regards to academic penalties for plagiarism.)

Medical Policy:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. See course outline for specific arrangements regarding less than 10% of assignments.

Mental Health Policy:

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Building Access:

The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre will be closed at 10:00 pm each night. There will be no after-hour access for undergraduate students. The Centre is open weekends 12:00 noon-5:00 pm. Students should be prepared to vacate the building promptly at 10:00 pm and 5:00 pm. You must also sign-in with the building monitors when working in the workshop areas outside of regular office hours.

Please remember:

One of the most important resources for course counselling, special permissions, course changes, grade appeals, etc., is the Undergraduate Chair of Visual Arts, Prof. D. Merritt (tel. 519-661-2111 ext. 86182; vaugc@uwo.ca). Please note, however, that should you encounter any serious difficulties due to illness, family emergency, etc., you should consult the Academic Counselor for your Faculty (Mr. Ben Hakala, or Ms. Amanda Green for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities).

The Student Development Centre (WSS room 4111; tel: 519-661-3031; www.sdc.uwo.ca) offers a wide range of useful services to students including workshops on learning skills, career and employment services, and an effective writing program, amongst many more.

The D.B. Weldon Library offers orientation tours from the first week of classes until Thanksgiving, where you will get acquainted with the numerous research resources available. As well, the University libraries have an extremely useful website where you can search the library system, the databases, view your circulation record, renew materials, access your UWO e-mail account, and much more. Check it out at: www.lib.uwo.ca.

Financial Aid Services is your main source of information for OSAP, bursaries, loans, scholarships, and the work-study program which offer part-time positions on campus for Western students.

Tel: 519-661-2100; e-mail, finaid@uwo.ca; or check out their website at http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/student_finances/financial_counselling.html

August 4, 2014