

## **SOPHOMORE SEMINAR: POST-HUMAN PRACTICUM**

**The School of the Art Institute of Chicago**

**SOPHSEM 2900-009 / SPRING 2019**

**Room MC ? / DAY TIME TBD**

**INSTRUCTOR**

**Nicholas Sagan [[nsagan@saic.edu](mailto:nsagan@saic.edu)]**

**Writing Fellow: TBD**

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### **Topic Description**

**Post-human Practicum** will focus on the ever-evolving state of 'human-ness'; what does it mean to be human as technology and our integration with alter our definitions of ourselves? What is our role as artists practicing within the current media landscape with current tools and resources? We will examine the varying approaches to Posthumanism (Transhumanism, Anti-humanism, New Materialism, Object Oriented Ontology) and ways in which they manifest within the artistic landscape. Students will explore these concepts as they relate to their own art practice and develop both creative and theoretical responses to topics/readings/screenings discussed. We will discuss crucial topics such as the pros and cons of human enhancement and cybernetics, space migration and speculative posthumanism, and how to move towards an equal and just posthuman society. This course aims to augment each students intellectual, existential and social perspectives, to the end of realizing agency in the evolution of possible futures.

### **Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes**

What are the concerns that drive your creative practice? How do you set the terms for your future development? This course offers intensive faculty mentoring as well as interdisciplinary strategies for the evaluation and communication of students' individual practice as artists, designers, and scholars. Through essential readings, studio critiques, and writing, students will generate narratives about how and why they make art.

The Interdisciplinary Sophomore Studio Seminar is a studio seminar course focused on mentoring by SAIC core faculty, student portfolio development, visualizing a future curricular pathway, and expanding critique skills. The overall goal of sophomore seminar is to provide intensive faculty mentoring for designing unique curricular plans for each student, foregrounding immediate creative goals and long-term career aspirations. A secondary goal is to utilize faculty and peer mentoring to increase the quality and originality of each student's personal portfolio work.

### **Technics & Infrastructures**

This Interdisciplinary Seminar focuses on the creation and use of tools – digital and otherwise - and their relationships with the infrastructures in which they exist.

Artists' training in observation, research, and communication provides unique skills to critically untangle complex relationships and navigate complicated structures. This ability enables the creation of meaning through interpreting and organizing our technological reach and imagining of actual space, virtual worlds and systems, digital culture, objects and signifiers, language, and mechanics.

The creation of images and art exists within the infrastructures that make up our social, political, and economic contexts. As active agents we must investigate our lives, efforts and resources within these contexts to further the understanding of them and what it is that we do. This section of Sophomore Seminar explores contemporary art making strategies, particularly practices that engage the use of experimentation and technology and attempts to further our understanding of how our tools and practices relate to larger infrastructures, and how we may mine these relationships for meaning. This does not limit the course to artists practicing digital art-making, however - it is open to all methodologies. In a workshop setting, students will leverage and develop their creative skills, focusing on personal and professional growth.

Coursework will emphasize writing and critique while exploring our unique role as creators of shared culture. Through discussion, reading, and critique we will explore and chart students' unique interests, their projects, and the tools in use in relation to culture and society. Together we will mine the collective and diverse perspectives of the class to inform our discussions and critiques.

### **Course Objectives and Assessment Methods**

1. Present self-motivated work of an iterative nature that demonstrates conceptual focus and technical ability as well as the beginning of a personal direction. Assessed by the progression of studio work shown for critique and Documentation of Practice assignment.

2. Communicate a rationale for a self-designed curricular pathway for the junior and senior year at SAIC as well as a post-graduation goal. Assessed by the Curricular Mapping essay.
1. Participate in a rigorous critique process in the art and design context that integrates peer-to-peer analysis as well as faculty to student feedback. Assessed by participation during in class critiques/ discussions, and completed writing assignments.
2. Demonstrate the ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively especially in regards to the developing body of creative work. Assessed by the Self-reflective essay, Documentation of Practice assignment, and student performance at critique.
3. Display an empathetic capacity to respect, understand, and evaluate work made by a wide variety of peers and artists pursuing creative expression in a broad array of disciplines. Assessed by the Self-reflective essay, Documentation of Practice assignment, and student performance at critique.

### **Classroom Culture and Participation**

All participants will read the selected texts and come to class prepared to discuss the material assigned for that day

All participants will actively participate in critiques, discussions and presentations

- All participants will maintain a positive and safe classroom environment
- During class, laptops, cell-phones, and other digital devices may only be used for course related work
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- **The Dean's List for Outstanding Sophomores**
- All sophomore seminar sections are encouraged to recommend ONE student from their class for the Dean's List for Outstanding Students. Recommendations are due by April 12, 2016. Students nominated to the Dean's List for Outstanding Sophomores must display excellence in the following areas:
  1. High quality portfolio in development with emerging conceptual focus
  2. Critique and oral communications skills
  3. Community engagement in the classroom or demonstration of leadership skills in class
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- **Processed-based Learning**
- SAIC's credit/no credit system structure encourages experimentation. The school places a unique emphasis on creative visual-research, which in turn is fundamental to an innovative multidisciplinary professional practice. At SAIC, students are required to take risks and try new materials, processes, and techniques. Faculty focuses on students' creative development while stressing a rigorous and exploratory studio practice. Students are encouraged to investigate, develop, or resolve a creative problem or theme by investigating new approaches or different media.

### **Student Attendance**

Students should miss class only with reasonable cause. If a student needs to miss class with reasonable cause, it is the

student's responsibility to contact the instructor to receive instruction for how to make up for the missed class. It is the instructor's responsibility to give this information to the student. Missing class for other than a reasonable cause may jeopardize the student's academic standing in the class.

Reasonable cause to miss a class might include:

- Illness or hospitalization (the student should contact Health Services, who will relay information to the faculty in whose class the student is enrolled)
  - Observation of a religious holiday
  - Family illness or death
- If a student misses MORE than 3 classes, whether or not for a reasonable cause, s/he/they will fail the class, if s/he/they does not withdraw from the class prior to the deadline for withdrawal with a grade of "W". If a student attends FEWER than 3 classes his/her financial aid, merit scholarship, academic standing, and/or immigration status will be compromised, regardless of an individual faculty member's modifications of these recommendations.
- 3 late arrivals = 1 absence. If you enter the class up to fifteen minutes late, it will be considered a late arrival.
  - 3+ absences = NO CREDIT for the course. If you enter the class beyond fifteen minutes late, it will be considered a full absence.
- Grades - Classes at SAIC are graded as credit/no credit. Students must achieve at least an average

performance in a course (the traditional grade equivalent of a "C" or 75%) in order to earn CR (credit).  
Receiving CR for this course is based on  
the following areas:

1. Attendance (25%)
2. CourseWork(60%)
3. Participation(15%)

### **Incompletes**

Grades of INC (incomplete) are granted by the instructor only if the instructor believes that the student's reason for the request is justified.

Students receiving an INC should have attended the majority of classes as well as regularly completed assignments prior to the last day to officially withdraw from the class. INC must be requested in writing prior to the last day of class.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor regarding the completion of the INC grade. Incompletes must be changed within the first two weeks of the following regular semester or the grade automatically changes to NCR.

### **Progress Reports**

Progress Reports will be issued to students who do not complete the course requirements. This may include issues regarding attendance, quality of work, and the submission of multiple late assignments.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities.

Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health or chronic physical condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) by phone at 312.499.4278. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to all of your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one's own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources. Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place, including LDAP authentication, to verify student identity. To find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, you can read about it in the Student Handbook under the section "Academic Misconduct."

### **COURSE WORK**

Each assignment is intended as a starting point for students to explore their own interests. Students are welcome to interpret course work as long as they are meeting the stated requirements of each assignment. If you need additional guidance on a project, just ask!

To receive full credit for an assignment, it must be turned in on the day it is due (even if a student is absent on the due date). Partial credit for an assignment may be issued up to one week after the due date. Assignments are not accepted, nor given credit, after one week from the original due date.

Per U.S. Department of Education regulations, for each credit hour assigned to a course, the student must be expected to perform a minimum of three hours of student work per week throughout the semester. Accordingly, a three credit hour course requires nine hours of student work per week (three hours of student work for each credit hour assigned). Student work may take the form of classroom time, other direct faculty instruction, or out-of-class homework, assignments, or other student work.

The Interdisciplinary Sophomore Seminar course meets once a week for a total of three hours of classroom time. In order to meet the required nine hours per week of student work, students in this course are expected to also perform at least six hours of out-of-class work per week. The six hours of out-of-class work will be comprised of the following activities and assignments:

#### **1. Reading Assignments**

Students are required to complete all readings and write a concise, bulleted summary (in their own words) of the readings' key ideas prior to the next class. Students should refer to the Purdue Owl website to better understand the process of summarizing. In addition to the bulleted summary, students should also write two (2) questions for each reading. Students should use their generated questions and summaries as catalysts for class discussion. Summaries are due prior to each class and must be submitted via Canvas.

## **2. Presentations and Critiques, and Studio Work**

Students in this course will complete and submit studio work that will be utilized for informal critiques, discussions and presentations. The scope of each assignment varies, and students are encouraged to explore and experiment in new approaches and techniques that will expand their current skill set.

Presentation - Under the Influence (10 influences in 10 minutes)

Brief descriptions of your top 10 influences in art, in life, in culture. What do they do? How do they do it? Each influence in 1 minute and 1 minute. Go!

### **Critiques**

There will be three critiques during the semester. Each critique will explore a different format (casual conversation, formal presentation, and a self-directed/designed critique). The work presented for critiques may be from previous semesters or studio classes you are taking now. Students are encouraged to present works in progress.

Documentation of Iterative Practice Documentation of a selection of work contextualized with supporting writing and documents demonstrating your creative process.

## **3. Writing Assignments**

There will be short in-class writing exercises and homework throughout the semester. These short assignments will be used as the building blocks for the longer Curricular Mapping Paper. This paper will be 3 to 5 pages in length, and will require the completion of a first draft and submission of to the course Writing Fellow for comments; meeting one-on-one with the Fellow to review feedback; and submission of a final draft to the instructor.

Writing assignments are due prior to class on the day they are due and must be submitted via Canvas in the following format: lastname\_assignment\_name.doc.

Writing/Presentation Assignment 1 – Methods, Tools, & Connections:

Description of your current work in progress, and the possible connections your tools & methods make with larger systems.

Writing Assignment 2 - Critical Response:

Respond to a tool-set or invention and describe its origins and its implications.

Writing Assignment 2.5 – Respond to Bi-Weekly Readings TBA

## **Paper 1 - Curricular Mapping**

Write an essay for your fellow students and faculty mentor that describes who you are and where you are going as a creative person. The purpose of this assignment is to create a convincing argument of how future SAIC classes might support your long-term career or creative goals.

## **Paper 2 - Self-Assessment Evaluation**

While reflecting on your experience in Sophomore Seminar, write a narrative reaction to your self-identified strengths and areas of possible growth. Students will also articulate an assessment of the tools, time, and space needed to best support the development of their individual creative practices.

## **4. Sophomore Seminar Visiting Artist Lecture: TBA**

Attendance is mandatory for the visiting artist lecture – if you are absent due to illness or other reasons, you will need to consult with the instructor to complete an alternative activity.

## **5. Individual Advising Meetings with Instructor**

Students must sign-up for three individual or small group meetings with the instructor over the course of the semester. These required meetings will be roughly 20 minutes in length.

## **6. Individual Meetings with Writing Fellow**

Each student will work with a graduate student Writing Fellow to assist with writing skills throughout the semester. Fellows serve as sympathetic readers, providing informed, constructive criticism directed toward the argumentation, analysis, organization, clarity and style of papers. Writing Fellows do not regularly attend class, but meet with students in a one-on-one conference setting.

The Fellow will meet individually with students to review the first drafts and comments, and advise students on strategies for the second/final draft. These required meetings will be roughly 20 minutes in length.

• **Selected Readings (uploaded to canvas)**

Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*

Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*

Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*

Edward Shanken, *Cybernetics and Art: Cultural Convergence in the 1960s*

Michael Mateas, *Expressive AI: A Hybrid Art and Science Practice*

Francesca Ferrando, *Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms*

Victoria Vesna, *Towards a Third Culture*

Roy Ascott, *The Technoetic Predicate*

Damien Broderick (ed), *Year Million: Science at the Far Edge of Knowledge*

\*\*\*MORE SUGGESTED READINGS\*\*\*

Anything written by Donna Haraway.

Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy.*

Susan Squier, *Liminal Lives: Imagining the Human at the Frontiers of Biomedicine.*

Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely; Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power; Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth.*

Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within*

Anne Marie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice.*

Joseph Dumit, *Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity.*

Catherine Waldby, *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine.*

Vanessa Lem, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*

Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, ed. *Material Feminisms.*

Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Cosequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*

Sherryl Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction*

Patricia Melzer, *Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought*

Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*

Alan Wiesman, *The World Without Us.*

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake.*

**CLASS CALENDAR**

\*\*\***Syllabus Subject to Change. Any adjustments/changes to the course schedule and syllabus will be updated via Canvas.**\*\*\*

**Week 1: January 24**

- /// Course Overview
- /// Peer Interviews and Introductions
- /// INTRODUCTION TO POSTHUMANISM
- /// Reading Assignment: Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (intro)
- /// Assign Project 1, presentations
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**Week 2: January 31**

/// EARLY CYBERNETICS

/// Reading Discussion

/// PRESENTATIONS 1 :: influences-ideas-patterns

**Week 3: February 7**

\*\*\*WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 DRAFT DUE

/// Assign Paper 1

/// PROJECT 1 CRITIQUE

/// Reading Assignment: Edward Shanken, *Cybernetics and Art: Cultural Convergence in the 1960s*

**Week 4: February 14**

\*\*\*WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 FINAL DRAFT DUE  
/// Assign Project 2  
/// Reading Discussion

**Week 5: February 21**

\*\*\*PAPER 1 DRAFT DUE  
/// Reading Assignment: Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*

**Week 6: February 28**

/// PROJECT 2 CRITIQUE  
/// Reading Discussion

**Week 7: March 7**

\*\*\*PAPER 1 FINAL DRAFT DUE  
/// Assign Writing 2  
/// Assign Paper 2  
/// Assign Project 3

**Week 8: March 14**

[SPRING BREAK:::NO CLASS]

**Week 9: March 21**

\*\*\*MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS  
/// Reading Assignment: Francesca Ferrando, *Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms*

**Week 10: March 28**

[CRITIQUE WEEK:::NO CLASS]

**Week 11: April 4**

\*\*\*WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 DRAFT DUE  
/// Reading Discussion  
/// PROJECT 3 CRITIQUE  
/// Reading Assignment: Roy Ascott, *The Technoetic Predicate*

**Week 12: April 11**

\*\*\*PAPER 2 DRAFT DUE  
/// Assign Presentations  
/// Reading Discussion

**Week 13: April 18**

\*\*\*WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 FINAL DRAFT DUE  
/// Reading Assignment: Damien Broderick (ed), *Year Million: Science at the Far Edge of Knowledge*

**Week 14: April 25**

\*\*\*PAPER 2 FINAL DRAFT DUE  
/// Reading Discussion  
/// POSTHUMAN FUTURES

**Week 15: May 2**

\*\*\*FINAL PRESENTATIONS pt1

**Week 16: May 9**

\*\*\*FINAL PRESENTATIONS pt2