

VAST 301-01: Studio Concentration Seminar II
Wednesdays 3-6:20pm | Spring 2013 | MAC 13: Photo Studio

Prof. David Gyscek

*Two things significantly distinguish human beings from the other animals:
an interest in the past and the possibility of language.
Brought together they make a third: Art.*

-Jeannete Winterson (from Art and Lies, pp. 136-7)

Introduction:

Over the past three years, you have been working to develop skills in artmaking while finding your particular voice, conceptual interests, and passions. Last semester, in the first part of the Concentration Seminar, you explored and experimented, and, hopefully, started to narrow in on an emerging vision as budding artists.

This semester will be different.

Course overview:

The second semester of the Concentration Seminar has dual aims. The first is to create a coherent and cohesive, individual body of work to be included in a public, group exhibition with your seminar-mates in the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery. In addition to the actual exhibition are all of the associated activities that go along with mounting an exhibition including the installation of the show, the composition of an artist statement, documentation of your work, and the compilation of a portfolio. (The latter two will be done in the time after the exhibition has opened.)

The second aim is to further augment and amplify your ability to converse and write about your work, as well as the work of your peers and other artists. At this point in your studies, you should have a solid understanding of the forms and theories of contemporary art. This semester, we will make a concerted effort to fine-tune this understanding so that you can further see, feel, and articulate the connections between the art of our time and the larger world. This goal has the benefit of preparing you for further study in the arts, which will require a critical understanding and approach to making and experiencing art, which, as you know, is an ever-evolving phenomenon. Even if you do not pursue further study in the arts, participation and engagement in this project will help you become a more open and informed citizen.

The first goal of the seminar will obviously be achieved through intensive studio practice. You will have time during seminar meetings to work, but you should expect to spend significant time working outside of our seminar meetings.

The second goal of the seminar will be achieved through conversation, primarily, but also through written work, research, and your engagement with your journal/sketchbook. In seminar meetings, we will have the opportunity to discuss readings, critique your work, and talk about other concerns or issues that arise throughout the course of the semester.

Expectations:

The Concentration Seminar should be your top priority. (That is not to say that you should slack-off in your other classes!) Not only is this seminar the capstone—the culmination of *your* years of hard work—but it is also the core of the Studio curriculum at Holy Cross. The exhibition is arguably the most public face of the Visual Arts Department and as such, great things are expected of you! (Since you have made it this far, I have no doubt that you will rise to the opportunity... and challenge.)

Throughout the course of the semester, you should expect your work to be scrutinized at a high level. One of the great challenges for artists is at once pouring oneself into one's work while maintaining a critical distance in order to receive criticism without feeling personally attacked. I invite you all to discuss with me, with each other, and as a group any difficulties, fears, or anxieties you may have as this process unfolds. If you do have such feelings, it is likely that you are not alone. Discussing such pressures in a supportive environment can help alleviate them.

Requirements:

In addition to attending all seminar meetings (see attendance policy), you will be expected to participate in and/or attend a number of co-curricular events. Understanding that there are so many events and activities to which you are committed, you are not required to attend every Visual Arts event. However, as senior majors, you are also leaders, so the more you are present in the department, the better. Activities of particular importance (i.e. required) include participation in (submission to) the **Ninth Annual Colleges of Worcester Consortium Exhibition** at ARTSWorcester, a seminar van trip to **NYC**, and a **WAM** exhibition opening. (See schedule for dates and details.)

Throughout the semester, you should maintain a **sketchbook/journal** in which you write and/or draw everyday. You should use this space to reflect upon your struggles and successes and use it as a tool to explore ideas, make sketches, and collect information. Precisely how you use your journal is up to you. If you are having trouble establishing a routine with it, you might find it useful to establish a schedule of writing one page at a particular time everyday. This will help make journaling a habit, which will in turn help keep you focused and engaged. In your journal, you should not worry too much about grammar, coherence or well-argued thoughts and ideas. Rather, this is the place to struggle and work through your ideas. I will collect your journals (briefly) throughout the semester. I will not announce when I am collecting them, so keep them with you at all times and bring them to all seminar meetings.

Over the course of the semester, you will be assigned one **short paper** to write in response to our NYC trip. This should be more formal than your journal entries (it should have appropriate grammar, be well-considered, and typed), but not as formal as a research paper, which would include outside sources and all appropriate scholarly apparatus such as footnotes and bibliography.

Speaking of which,... you will be required to write one, **7 to 10-page research paper** over the course of the semester. There is no specific due-date for this. (Welcome to working independently!) Knowing how busy the end of the semester will be, some may want to “get it out of the way” earlier; some may want to use seminar discussions to help think through your topic. Obviously, the research paper must be submitted on or before our scheduled final (date TBD by the Registrar). The topic of your paper is similarly up to you. You may want to write on a particular art movement or trend in contemporary art that relates to your own practice; you may want to write about the gendering of images in pop culture, for example; you may want to write about a material or scientific process, or how political discourse intersects with art—the options are almost limitless. Your topic, however, should be related in some way to your own practice. The relationship does not have to be direct, but there should be some thread

tying it to you. I invite and urge you to consult with me before settling on a topic. In fact, please submit a **one-page abstract** once you have decided upon a topic. An abstract should include a brief statement (one or two paragraphs discussing your topic and offering a thesis, if appropriate), an outline of the structure of your paper, and a working bibliography. The abstract will help organize your ideas and sources. The document is not unchangeable, but is simply a guide to help focus your research. If you are having trouble coming up with a topic, I will be happy to work through it with you. If I have not heard from you by midterm, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss the problem and help resolve it.

Note on materials:

With your studio fee, the Visual Arts Department will provide you with a sketchbook and a limited amount of basic supplies. You will be responsible for acquiring any other materials you may need. I recognize that the retail price tag for art supplies may be shocking to you. If you are in financial distress, please talk to me and we will see if there is something we can do to help. If you are having trouble locating supplies, ask and we will help. I would also suggest pooling your resources. If several of you need photo paper, for example, if you chip in, you can get more for less. Be resourceful!

This year, the department is able to offer each of you some funding toward your exhibition. The exact amount available has not yet been determined. It will be paid out as reimbursements for supplies you have already purchased. Therefore, keep your receipts!

Our local vendor for most supplies is CC Lowell (258 Park Ave., Worcester). Kristen is very helpful and will be happy to assist you. You can also try Dick Blick or Utrecht online. Photo supplies at LB Wheaton (259 Park Ave., Worcester) or B&H Photo and Video in NYC or online.

Note on studios:

Each senior major will have studio space in Millard Art Center or Fenwick 434. This semester, you will have a bit more room to spread out. If you would like to change space from the fall, please let me know and we'll try to accommodate you. Keep in mind, your studio space should reflect the work that you are creating and show your weekly progress; it is not a storage space. Plan to spend eight or more hours working in your studio weekly. Your studio directly represents your crafting of an artistic self.

Students in Fenwick will be asked to sign/renew an agreement that respects and maintains this alternative studio space. You will also be given access to the Visual Arts Resource Room (O'Kane 497), which is equipped with two iMac stations and scanner in addition to many other resources.

Given the size of the Millard Art Center and the number of students using the space, it is important that the space you have been given to use is used well. It is a luxury that we work hard to provide. Since all other studios are used for teaching, if you do need to spread out into common spaces, please be sure you remove all of your work after you are done and you clean up after yourself. Remember, common space is for use by all enrolled students. Please be conscientious of their needs.

Also and again, as leaders in the department, please pay close attention to all safety rules (including the rules particular to the use of the Fenwick 434 Studio Annex) and lead by example. If you see other students misusing equipment or doing something unsafe or questionable, please say something.

Resources:

The **Equipment Library** is available for all students enrolled in Visual Arts classes and is located in the drawing studio of Millard 2 (this building). It is open M-F 5-9pm and 12noon-2pm over the weekend. Cameras, tripods, light kits, light meters, backdrops, etc. are available for you to borrow for three-day periods. See the Policies & Procedures posted outside the Equipment Library and on the Millard Art Center Moodle site for more information. **Since we do not charge late fees, I recognize how very tempting it may be to keep equipment beyond the 3-day loan period. Please remember that this resource is for ALL art students. Please only check out equipment when you will be actively using that equipment. If you know you need a piece of equipment for longer than 3-days, please make those arrangements explicit with Amy Archambault. *Thank you!***

The Visual Arts Department has subscriptions to the following magazines dealing with contemporary art, architecture, and design: *Sculpture, Flash Art, Contemporary, Dwell, Art Forum, and Art in America*. Current issues of *Flash Art* and *Contemporary* are located in the Millard lounge as well as back issues of the others. Current issue of *Dwell, Art Forum, and Art in America* are located in the Visual Arts Resource room in O’Kane 497 in addition to various DVDs, books, and other useful resources. (Materials may not be removed from the Library.)

We are also continually acquiring new books, which are available in Dinand Library. Feel free to ask Janis DeMarias (Visual Resources Coordinator, O’Kane 497) or me for a list of recent acquisitions.

The Worcester Art Museum is also a fabulous local resource for both research and the experience of original art works. We can arrange private viewings of works on paper (70% of their collection, but not on permanent view) and Holy Cross has a special relationship with their library, making it a particularly valuable resource for students and faculty. Admission is FREE with a Holy Cross ID.

Open Model Sessions: Beginning February 26th there will be models in the drawing studio from 6 – 9 PM on Tuesday nights. While these sessions are optional, they provide practice in gesture drawing and help build your skill in understanding the figure.

Grading:

You are in control of your grade with the labor you put into working in your studio this semester. A high grade reflects hard work, comprehension, and creativity. Participation and attendance are essential. Participation in events listed on the syllabus is required.

Your final course grade will be determined by averaging grade percentages within the following areas. Keep in mind, while the final product is very important and I will consider cumulative development, your final grade will reflect the entirety of the semester’s work.

Art work/exhibition:	60%
Journal/sketchbook:	10%
Research paper:	15%
Other writing, participation, attendance, work ethic, other:	15%

Grading scale:

A (A=95-100, A-=90-94)	Excellent work and work ethic; Exceptional class participation
B (B+=87-89, B=84-86, B-=80-83)	Solid work and work ethic; Great participation
C (C+=77-79, C=74-76, C-=70-73)	Average work that fulfills basic requirements

D (D+=67-69, D=64-66)
F (under 64)

Less than average work and poor work ethic
Failure to complete course work and non-participation

Attendance policy:

Attendance to all seminar meetings is required. Unexcused absences will be reflected in your final grade. In cases of an unforeseen absence (i.e. illness, family emergency, etc.) notify me as soon as possible. The College advises anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms to stay away from others until at least 24-hours after your fever is gone. To be clear, if you are suffering from any influenza virus, STAY HOME. If you know that you will miss a class on a specific future date (i.e. a college-sponsored athletic event), let me know in advance. Leaving campus early for a vacation or break is NOT an excusable absence. Do not schedule travel during a class period; plan accordingly. I reserve the right to request a letter from your Class Dean to excuse any questionable absences.

Plagiarism & cheating:

Artistically, this can get a little fuzzy, as much of contemporary art appropriates pre-existing imagery and objects. However, there are cases where “artistic plagiarism” is very clear. In cases where students are found handing in projects that are not their own, or “recycling” projects from past courses or from another current course, for this course, the College policy on plagiarism will be strictly enforced. TO BE CLEAR, YOU MAY NOT USE WORK FROM OTHER CLASSES FOR THE CONCENTRATION SEMINAR. To do so is cheating.

Plagiarism and/or cheating are serious and can lead to permanent expulsion. The College has a policy and you are well advised to bone-up on it. It is available online and in the College Catalogue (*Academic Honesty*). In your written work, when using a source, cite it – be obsessive about it – use either footnotes or parenthetical citations. Do not ever cut-and-paste from the Internet, no matter how very tempting it may be. Although the information is ‘out there’ seemingly available to all, your use of it without citation, no matter how tiny a fraction or fragment it may be, is plagiarism, pure and simple. When in doubt, ask advice.

Bibliography:

Bayles, David and Orland, Ted, Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking. The Image Continuum: Santa Cruz, CA, 1993.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich, Interviews, Volume 1. Edizioni Charta: Milan, 2003.

Pieper, Josef, Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation. Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1988.

Robertson, Jean, Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980 (Third Edition). Oxford University Press: New York, 2010.

Weintraub, Linda, In the Making. Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.: New York, 2003.

Winterson, Jeanette, Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.: New York, 1995.

Assignments:**Project 1: *Trading places*** (due February 6):

Each student will be paired with a classmate. You will each be making one work of art using your partner's interests, vision, and point of view. To start, meet and discuss what it is that each of you are interested in artistically—interview each other. (Spend about 20-minutes each.) Then, retreat to your individual studios and create something, using your own chosen medium that reflects your partner. You may continue to consult with one another but you should not “instruct” your partner what specifically to make.

This project will have the benefit of forcing each of you to clearly and fully articulate your vision, creating deeper bonds between each other, challenging yourself in the studio so that you do justice to your partner's ideas, and finally, it will help you to appreciate, articulate, and describe another artist's work.

You will present the final products to the seminar in pairs. You will each be asked to describe your partner's vision and your interpretation of it. The seminar will then critique what you have done.

Project 2: *Make your own work...* (new progress due every week)**Schedule:**

January 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and discussion • Work session
Jan. 23-25	Drop off submissions to ARTSWorcester (1-4pm)
January 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the reading: <i>overcoming fear</i> • Work session <p>Reading for class today: “Art and Fear” by David Bayles & Ted Orland (pp. 9-21 from Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking)</p>
February 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique: Trading Places (30-minutes/pair) • Work session <p>Career Night at the Worcester Art Museum, 5:30-8pm</p>
Fri., Feb. 8	Opening reception for Ninth Annual Colleges of Worcester Consortium Exhibition at ARTSWorcester, 660 Main Street, 6-8pm
Sun., Feb. 10	Jill Slosburg-Ackerman artist talk at WAM, 2pm
February 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the readings: <i>inspiration, intent, and growth</i> • Work session <p>Readings for class today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Remembrance: Mother of the Muses” by Josef Pieper (pp. 59-64 from Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation) • “Conceptual Worlds” by David Bayles & Ted Orland (pp. 93-112 from Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking)
February 20	Work session
Sat., Feb. 23	Van trip to NYC: Depart 7am, return 10pm
February 27 MIDTERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of NYC trip • Critique of one “exhibition ready” work • Work session

	<p>Response paper due: respond to one artist or exhibition you saw in NYC. Provide contextual background in addition to discussing your impressions and analysis of the work. (2-3 pages)</p> <p>Remember to submit your paper proposal/abstract!</p>
March 6	NO CLASS: SRPING BREAK
March 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First draft of artist statement due • Presentation of your work: installation demonstrations, troubleshooting for potential difficulties in the gallery, expecting the unexpected, documentation demonstration, portfolio/web development • Work session
Thurs., March 14	Opening reception for SPARK: Selected Alumnae Artists from Holy Cross, Cantor Art Gallery
March 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the reading: <i>overcoming biography</i> • Work session <p>Readings for class today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Semiotics of Sex” by Jeanette Winterson (pp. 103-118 from Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery) • Felix Gonzalez-Torres interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist (pp. 308-316 from Interviews, Volume 1)
Sat., March 23	Opening reception for Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison’s Wall at WAM, Worcester Art Museum, {time TBA}
March 27	NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK
April 3	Last studio critique
April 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final artist statement due • Majors/Minors Studio Reviews (5-7:30pm)
<i>Installation begins: week of April 15th!!!!!!</i>	
April 17	Work session
April 24	Finishing touches
Thurs., April 25	CANTOR OPENING DAY: Artists talks, gallery tour, or panel discussion 12noon-1pm; opening reception 6-7:30pm
May 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief: Discussion of the reading, the exhibition and your experience • Clean studios, paint walls if needed, etc. <p>Reading for class today: “A View into the Outside World” by David Bayles & Ted Orland (pp. 65-77 from Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking)</p>
Final Date Fri., May 10	All material due (portfolio/website and paper) by 12noon

Final comments:

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus if it is warranted. I will post amendments to the syllabus, a calendar, and announcements as they arise on Moodle. Please note: in the event of inclement weather, I will post cancellations or rescheduling with any applicable assignments on Moodle. It will be your responsibility to keep up with such information.

Be happy—you’re now in a course in which your independence and creativity—your authentic self!—are desirable and anticipated parts of the experience. ***Welcome and congratulations!***