

Sam Fox Commons Course Proposal
Submitted by Lisa Bulawsky
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Course title: From Propaganda to Decoration

Levels offered: 200 - 400

Credit hours: 3

Instructor name and contact info:

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Course Description:

From Propaganda to Decoration (posters to wallpaper)

This is a studio course that is conceptually driven and anchored in the philosophical terrain of the print multiple. The fundamental attributes of the multiple, including its accessibility and repeatability, arc from private to public and from political to aesthetic. Given this orientation, we will examine the place where the public and private spheres meet. Considering urban communication and social space, reproduction and distribution, gifting and exchange, private practice and public intervention, this course will use the print multiple as a starting point to explore a continuum that runs from propaganda to decoration.

This course

- is centered on research and production through collaborative projects.
- engages a variety of thematic topics in contemporary art, design, and architecture. Topics might include issues of ephemeral space, social practice, urban communication, the Creative Commons, art and/of service.
- includes lectures, readings, studio time, critiques/reviews, and visiting artists/designers.
- is conceptually based, not process/technique based. Projects will start with ideas; technique will be selected and learned as it applies to each project. Some traditional print techniques will be demonstrated, but multiple media, low-tech/low-cost alternatives, and philosophically relevant approaches will be part of the mix.

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Relationship to art and architecture:

The public and private spheres are increasingly blurred through social media, speed and access to information, shifting global values, and heightened cultural awareness. This course has the potential to help Sam Fox students, regardless of their major, work creatively and think critically about these trends in relation to their work, using the premise of the multiple as a jumping off point. Broadly defined – as poster, product design, tract housing, wallpaper, book, or broadside - the multiple addresses a host of ways that contemporary culture is expressed. Students will be able to draw from their areas of interest to consider how the continuum from propaganda to decoration can be a site for intervention and exploration.

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Course Schedule

(This is a draft for a possible schedule and projects. In the past when teaching similar courses, I have arranged for specific collaborations with area agencies, such as Arts in Transit/Metro, to coincide with course activities. If a collaborative opportunity were arranged ahead of time, its nature would help to shape the course and schedule.)

Weeks 1 - 3

Conceptual and technical grounding through readings, lectures, visiting artists, and demonstrations in the print studio. Quick, short-term projects during this portion of the class will guide students through a range of approaches, practices, and platforms.

Readings:

Lacy, Suzanne, editor, " Directional Signs: A Compendium of Artists' Works," Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art

Thompson, Nato, The Interventionists: User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life, Mass MoCA, 2004

Wye, Deborah, "Themes," Thinking Print: Books to Billboards

Weeks 4 - 7

Students will work in collaborative groups to design a community-based project focusing on distribution and service. Groups may research and seek out a community group to work with. Posters and billboards are examples or resources for this project, but individual concepts will arise out of collaborative group discussions. Groups will arrive at an identity and philosophy, a manifesto if you will, that will motivate the nature of the project.

Readings:

Kester, Grant, excerpts from Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art

McCollum, Allan, "Harrell Fletcher," BOMB 95/Spring 2006, ART

Mitchell, W.J.T., excerpts from Art and the Public Sphere (A Critical Inquiry Book)

Weeks 8 – 11

With this project we will explore the multiple as an instrument of economic politics, social connection, and cultural change. Methods and works will be determined democratically by the group, and will take the following into consideration:

- The market economy is deliberately impersonal. A gift economy establishes and strengthens the relationships between us, and connects us one to the other.
- Gifts are defined as both material objects and immaterial talents and inspirations. Talent in art is often referred to as a gift. The art object can therefore be seen as a natural extension of this gift, a gift in and of itself.
- Can an object retain or gain value when it is given away for free?

Readings:

Hyde, Lewis; The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property

Mauss, Marcel; The Gift

Purves, Ted (editor), What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art

Weeks 12 – 16

Public sphere/private sphere – final project

Students will consider the continuum from propaganda to decoration and the ideological possibilities along that continuum to propose a final project. Projects will be self-determined and may be individual or collaborative.