

# Radical Art/Work: Art and Politics in the US

arth/aam/pols 3930  
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Spring 2023  
TR 2:15-3:30pm, Xavier 116  
Office Hours: see online calendar  
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## Course Description

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Art is often held up as a passive mirror/window to society. But art can also be made to witness, provoke, condemn, and question our social, economic, and political realities. Some describe this genre of art as “radical”—a term that marks major shifts from established norms—or, the act of “grasping things by the root”. But importantly, what counts as “radical art” is subjective and depends on the time period. In this class, we will ask questions about the capacity of art to foster political change: **what kind of work can art do to impact our political realities?** To think about these questions: this class looks at social and political art, protest art, and performance art from the last 60 years, with an emphasis on the last ten. The killing of Trayvon Martin a decade ago sparked a renewed period of both social and artistic activity in a rising climate of racial and political activism. To this point, we will discuss differences between genres and modes of art. We will explore the work of visual artists/collectives like Afri-COBRA, Emory Douglas, Demian DinéYazhi’, Project Row Houses, Dread Scott, and St. Louis Artists, to name a few. We will also examine the work of several poets, musicians, writers, and scholars and consider the nuances of their politics and how those ideals manifest in their art/work. This course requires four short response essays or video response and one final research paper.

## Course Objectives

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This course aims to cultivate a learning space where we can engage and clarify ideas in curious, non-judgmental discussions. In our time together, we will explore the intersections of art and politics. Our periodic sessions with Counterpublic are opportunities to think through these ideas in real time with our arts community here in St Louis. By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) develop a critical understanding of the concept of “radical/revolutionary” as it applies in the arts and politics.
- 2) identify the histories (and recent) artistic and political flashpoints on themes of race, indigeneity, gender/sexuality, ecology, health/wellness, and economic inequity.
- 3) critically analyze the response of artists to these political flashpoints.
- 4) reflect on the central ideas of the course in our in-class sessions with artists and organizers of Counterpublic (2023).



## Grading & Extra Credit

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10% Attendance

Excused absences (such as but not limited to serious personal illness, family emergency, University sponsored non-sports event, regular religious obligations) will not be penalized but do require written documentation. You may have one (1) unexcused absence (such as but not limited to, personal travel, non-University sponsored event, sports event, conflicting appointment) but any subsequent absence will result in a “0” grade for both Attendance and Participation for that day. If you have an unexcused absence on the day that an assignment is due and you fail to

submit the assignment on that day, 5pts (half grade point) will be deducted from that assignment each day that it is late, until it is submitted.

If I ever need to cancel class for any reason, I will notify you all by SLU email.

20% Participation in Presentations and Online Assignments

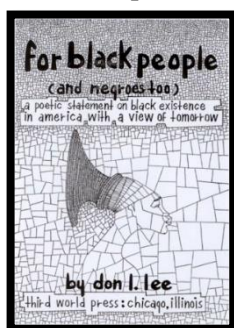
You are expected to read assigned pages and be prepared to discuss the material in class on that day. In the course of the class period, you may be called on or asked to take part in group discussions. If so, you should make a concerted effort to participate, ask questions, and make your own observations. If you do not participate or have an unexcused absence from class on that day, you will receive a “0” Participation grade. Online Assignments are included in the Participation grade and must be completed by the due date. **See Discussion Board Instructions**

30% Four (4) reflection essays

Write 1000 words on any 4 Counterpublic class visit. **See Short Essay Assignment Instructions.**

40% Final Paper

You will choose to complete a final paper. Please note will be expected to do an in-class presentation that will be 25% of this final grade. **See Final Paper Instructions.**



Just as it is your responsibility to get assignments in on-time, it is my responsibility to return all assignments to you promptly. For my part, I promise to have your assignments graded and returned to you within one week of being submitted. Once your assignments are returned, your grades will not be changed. The best way to get the grade that you want is to attend class, ask for assignment help/clarifications, ask for help with drafts, and give yourself plenty of time to complete the assignment. Extra Credit: I am happy to give extra credit at the end of the semester. To be eligible for extra credit, you must have less than three (3) absences, have all your required assignments submitted, and make a request, in-person, by April 20 (at least two (2) weeks before the last day of classes).

### Athletes Attendance Policy

SLU Varsity Athletes whose team travel results in class absences above the course maximum are allowed one additional excused or unexcused absence beyond the team travel scheduled absences without grade penalty for the course. If you do go beyond this absence, 10 pts will be deducted from your next required assignment, for each additional absence.

### Arts & Sciences Grading Scale

The Arts & Sciences Grading Scale can be accessed at: <http://www.slu.edu/x6352.xml>

- A 4.0 (>92.5)
- A- 3.7 (92.4 to 89.5)
- B+ 3.3 (89.4 to 87.5)
- B 3.0 (87.4 to 82.5)
- B- 2.7(82.4 to 79.5)
- C+ 2.3 (79.4 to 77.5)
- C 2.0 (77.4 to 72.5)
- C- 1.7 (72.4 to 69.5)
- D 1.0 (69.4 to 59.5)
- F 0.0 (<59.4)

## Email, Office Hours Meetings, and Lunches

I hope you will all feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the class. If you have simple questions regarding the syllabus, BlackBoard, absences, etc, please send me an email. I will respond to all emails within 48hrs of receiving them.

If you have more complicated questions (such as how to complete an assignment, grades, your progress in the class) I will be happy to meet in-person. For those sorts of question, in-person meetings are often clearer and more helpful than an email exchanges.

If you don't have questions and you just want to chat, I would be happy to meet with you more casually over tea, coffee, lunch (my treat!).

## FPA Classroom Civility Statement

To ensure an optimal learning environment we must all active participants in the educational endeavor. Our behavior not only impacts our own learning, but the learning of others and the goals of the course. In order to facilitate an optimal learning environment, we must all observe the following:

- 1) We will all be in class and ready to begin on-time
- 2) We will be respectful when addressing each other
- 3) We will refrain from talking out of turn or interrupting others
- 4) We will mute/shut off cellular telephones during class
- 5) We will refrain from packing up prior to the end of class, etc.

If you are waiting for an emergency phone call, please let myself and your fellow classmates know that your phone may ring and promptly excuse yourself to answer it when/if it does ring. In order to encourage attentiveness and engaged conversations during the class period, please do not use wireless devices (laptops, PDAs, etc) in class. If you have special needs that require technology, please speak with me and we will make the necessary arrangements. Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in one warning. Any issues thereafter will result in 10 pts being deducted from your next required assignment.

## Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students can visit [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success) to learn more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning).

## Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement:

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at [Disability\\_services@slu.edu](mailto:Disability_services@slu.edu) or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact to Disability Services.

## Title IX Syllabus Statement

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [akratky@slu.edu](mailto:akratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web addresses:

<http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy>;  
[www.slu.edu/here4you](http://www.slu.edu/here4you) .

### Academic Integrity Policy

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Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: [http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic\\_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

### Required Texts:

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- Articles for the class are available online on CANVAS. You will be responsible for accessing, printing, reading, and bringing these articles to class with you on the appropriate dates.
- Videos will be available on the Reserves Shelf in Pius Library 24hrs after being shown in class.

The material that we read and discuss each day builds on previous classes. We may also discuss relevant material/examples not featured in the assigned readings so it is important to attend each class.

### Changes & Notifications

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I reserve the right to make any changes to the content or schedule of the syllabus in response to our progress (or missed classes). If I do need to make changes, you will be notified one week in advance, in class and by SLU email. Again, if I need to cancel class for any reason, I will notify you all by SLU email.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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**JAN 17            Introduction**

**JAN 19            “Radical” or “revolutionary,” but what does it mean?**

VIDEO: “Make it Revolutionary” Ford TV spot (2021)

READ: [1] Lucy Lippard, “Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power” (1984); [2] [Alain Badiou, “What Does It Mean to Be Radical?”](#) [3] Alexander Alberro, “What is Radical?” ARTMargins Roundtable

RECOMMENDED: “Principle: Balance Art and Message,” in *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (2012): 100-1

**JAN 24            Art that does Political Work**

READ: [1] [Ben Davis](#) “A critique of social practice art: What does it mean to be a political artist?” *International Socialist Review*, Issue #90; [2] [Growing Dialogue: “What is the Effectiveness of Socially Engaged Art?”](#) in a blade of grass, (2013)

**JAN 26            Counterpublic Session: [James McNally and/or Katherine Simóné Reynolds/Kalaija Mallery]**

READ: [1] [Community Report](#); [2] [Curatorial Line-up](#); [3] [Statement and Artists](#); [4] [McAnally, "The Art World Is Reckoning With Calls for Social Justice. Could Biennials Show Us How to Change With the Times?"](#)

RECOMMENDED: [1] *As Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* excerpt; [2] McAnally, "Organizing the Future," Artnet.com

**JAN 31**      **Discussion**

**FEB 2**      **NO CLASS**

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### **PART I: Racial Equity**

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**FEB 7**      **Art and Black Political Work**

READ: [1] Barbara Smith, on Radical vs Reform; [2] Black Radical Congress, Freedom Agenda (1999) [3] M4BL Political Agenda

**FEB 9**      **BLM's Radical Chic**

READ: [1] Jones-Hogu, "History, Philosophy and Aesthetics of Afri-COBRA" in *Afri-COBRA III Exhibition Catalogue*. University Art Gallery, U-Mass, Amherst (1973); [2] Tom Wolfe, "Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's" *New York Magazine* (1970)

RECOMMENDED: [1] DuBois, *Criteria for Negro Art*; [2] Wright *Blueprint for Negro Writing*

**FEB 14**      **Counterpublic Session: [ARTIST]**

RECOMMENDED: [1] Donaldson, "The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of the Wall of Respect Movement" *International Review of African American Art*. 15:1 (1998): 22-26

**FEB 16**      **Discussion**

**DUE: Short Essay**

**FEB 21**      **NO CLASS**

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### **PART II: Gender & Sexuality**

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**FEB 23**      **Women, the Global South, and Transgender Rights**

READ: [1] Joyce Ladner, "Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman" excerpts; [2] International Bill of Gender Rights (1995) and *Read My Lips* (1997)

**FEB 28**      **TBA**

**MAR 2**      **Counterpublic Session: [ARTIST]**

**MAR 2: BRIDGE LECTURE: DR TANISHA FORD**

**MAR 7**      **Discussion**

**DUE: Short Essay**

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### **PART III: Indigenous Rights**

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**MAR 9**      **Struggles for Red Power in the US**

READ: [1] Sherry L Smith, "Epilogue" in *Hippies, Indians and the Fight for Red Power*"; [2] ["Protest Art and the Fight for Standing Rock"](#)

**MAR 13-17: SPRING BREAK**

**MAR 21      The Legacy of Standing Rock**

FILM: AWAKE A Dream from Standing Rock (2020)

READ: [1] Emilie Lockett, “Radical Care in Precarious Times: The Socially Engaged Art of Cannupa Hanska Luger and STTLMNT” Ch. 1 and 3

**MAR 23      Counterpublic Session: [ARTIST]**

**MAR 28      Discussion**

**DUE: Short Essay**

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**PART IV: Climate Crisis**

**MAR 30      What’s More Important: Art or Life?**

READ: Morgan Ome. “[The Other Climate-Change Art Protest](#)” (2022)

RECOMMENDED: [Every Artworks Attacked by Climate Activists \(2022\) ArtNet](#)

**APR 4      Counterpublic Session: [ARTIST]**

**APR 6: NO CLASS - EASTER**

**APR 11      Discussion**

**DUE: Short Essay**

**BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK PANEL**

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**PART V: Housing**

**APR 13      Housing Crises and Occupations**

READ: [1] Occupy Wall Street reading; [2] ArchCity Defenders, and others “[Segregation In St. Louis: Dismantling The Divide, Recommendations.](#)”

RECOMMENDED: “Tactic: Occupation,” in *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (2012): 78-81

**APR 15: COUNTERPUBLIC OPENS**

**APR 18      Where Communities Lived**

READ: Vivian Gibson, *The Last Children of Mill Creek*, (2020) selected excerpts; Jodi Rios, *Black Lives and Spatial Matters* (2020) selected excerpts

**APR 20      Counterpublic Session: [ARTIST]**

**APR 25      Discussion**

**DUE: Short Essay**

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**APR 27      Reflections**

**MAY 2      Presentations**

**MAY 4      Presentations**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE**

**TUESDAY MAY 16, 5pm**