

FA306 Ecologies of the Visit / Consumer Ecologies

Seminar Leader: Richard Frater

Course Times: Weekly 9am – 12:15pm Wednesday September 5th – December 12th

Email: r.frater@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday by appointment

Course Description

This course addresses aesthetics of environmentalism from the perspective of visitors and consumers. We are *consumers* in a climate where purchase power is considered to be a political act. Studying the visual communication and political representation of NGOs, big energy, and clothing brands, can help us to juggle the persuasions of narrative, revealing limitations and possibilities for the conscientious consumer. From a local perspective, we are *visitors* to the site of BCB. What other visitors are present in this geography? The site is managed by a gardener and co-inhabited by non-human species that mingle with the learners. Should we think about climate change as if it was a brand? *Global warming: Change we can believe in!* This traces a capitalist idiom like, what is good for nature is ultimately good for consumerism too. The Madrid clothing brand *Ecoalf* promotes cleaner oceans by harvesting ocean plastic trash from fishing liners and transforming it back into raw nylon for their next season of urban wear. Climatologists, however, argue that in these instances of matter being redistributed for a political cause, expenditure has not been reduced. Refining existing plastics can expend as much energy as its “birth” production, contributing further to our climb up the carbon ladder. In this course we will visit these different perspectives on environmentalism, relating to practical activities like birding in Berlin city as well as to more ontological problems like humanity visiting earth. The course is graded on two practical outcomes. The participant selects an existing contemporary product and develops an essay, be it a photo or video or text about a contemporary product that openly displays environmental awareness. This will take the final form of an exhibition or a publication. Collectively, we develop an environmental work, like a garden, that will stay with Bard College Berlin.

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during the entire class time, including off-campus trips. They will be allowed to be used only during breaks.
- Be prepared to present artworks / assignments / presentations without reminder.
- Engage in critiques and discussions.
- Initiate appointments with Professor or Arts Staff outside of class time when assistance is necessary.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from Professor in a timely manner.
- Inform Professor at beginning of the semester if photos of student, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.

- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before end of semester inspection of spaces (including any storage offered). Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Please note: donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property. expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Attendance

- Attendance is expected at all classes.
- More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.
- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, the Professor must be informed in advance.
- Tardiness after five minutes will be considered an absence.

Assessment

Assessment Criteria:

The ambition of the work in terms of research and aesthetic resolution

Understanding and critical evaluation of core ideas of the course

Evidence of creative insight

The extent to which artistic outcomes match intentions

Evidence of response to feedback

Assessment task 1: Gardening

First four seminars: September 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th

Description: For the first four weeks of the course, part of the classes will be dedicated to developing a site at the BCB that has been confirmed for gardening activity. At this site, students will engage in landscaping and gardening through the removal and adding of what is present there, namely plant life and rocks. The goal will be to enhance the bio diversity of this site. This collective work will remain at the BCB site. Although the garden has a collective outcome, full participation is monitored and it will be reflected as a significant part of the grading weight of 40% for Participation.

Assessment task 2: Research Essay

Draft due: 3rd October at 9am

Final due: 10th October at 9am

Length: 1000 words

Description: The research essay presents three examples of environmental activism in three separate contexts. For example: the consumer market; organised protests; and law or Protection Acts. Each example should identify how visual communication and political representation has had a positive or negative impact on what is and how something is being protected (750 words; 250 words each); the conclusion (250 words) should address differences between representations of ecology and real ecological situations, where perceptions have changed, and reflect on the effectiveness of activism.

Note: Consultation with writing tutors is available through the Writing Centre.

Assessment task 3: Storyboard / Pitch

Due: October 24th 9am

Group discussion: Pitch

Length: 250 Words (with images and illustrations)

Description: Before the fall break, each student is required to present a storyboard or pitch to the group. This is an opportunity to introduce their independent aesthetic work they will develop and produce after the break. This work could either be a critical meditation of an existing product or the promotion of a speculated product ie. a sale pitch. The student selects a medium that best chronicles their narrative. For example, a photo or video essay, written essay, or a product advertisement, that which best embodies the student's personal voice and creative habits. The group class will be used to share ideas, suggest further avenues of research, and encourage brainstorming between peers.

Assessment task 4: Presentation and display of final work

Presentation and Exhibition deadline: Week 13:

The finished projects will be assessed in two ways. Firstly, during the final seminar, each student is expected to present a short oral presentation to the class. They identify key decisions made and what methodologies guided the project. This will be followed by feedback from the group. The second component of the assessment is the exhibition or display of final works. Depending on what mediums dominate, this could materialise as a loop of videos, or a display cabinet/table. The group develops a presentation model that meets both individual requirements and a creative identity package for the group at large.

The quality of the work's presentation in the exhibition as well as full participation in both set up and clean up of the Open Studios are key aspects of assessment. An inspection date of the studios is to be announced and it is every student's responsibility to take a full and active part in the clean up so that it is fully completed by that date.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (includes attendance, and maintenance of all common and private spaces used for production): 40%

In-semester assignments: 30%

Project presentations for critiques (includes end of semester presentations / performances): 30 %

Schedule

Fall 2018 classes start on Monday, September 3 and run until Friday, December 21 with Fall Break planned from Monday, October 29 – Sunday, November 4. Completion week is from December 17 - 21. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<http://www.berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/fall-2018>

Week 1: September 5th from 9am-12:15am **Introduction: Lecture and garden site visit**

9:15-9:45am:

Introduction: Seminar Leader presentation of practice and research

Introduction: participants

10:00-10:45am: Seminar Lecture: The Brent Spar:

Introduction of key themes and content the course will cover.

Activism: from “grassroots” occupy acts to “change happens in the boardroom.”

Examples of eco-conscious brands at work.

11-12am: Garden site visit. Discussion of collective work at site.

Show example of possible interpretations of gardening.

Introduce examples of Environmental Art

Homework:

Essential reading for week 2:

The Berlin Green Band / San Rocco

Against the Anthropocene by TJ Demos

Task: Begin researching eco-brands for next week's group discussion.

Week 2: September 12th from 9am-12:15am

Mandatory Orientation / Weeding Garden / Order sheet / group discussion

Arts facility orientations with Joon Park (Studio Manager) and Janina Schabig (AV Tech Consultant)

Weeding in garden.

Group discussion of readings:

TJ Demos's AA and The Berlin Green Band

Indigenous rights in the context of uneven development.

Imaging environmental catastrophe

ambivalence vs didacticism in contemporary photography.

Berlin city green band plan: unrealised and attempted versions.

Note: due to shortage of class time this week, there is a visit to one of Berlin's oldest plant nurseries organised for Saturday 15th that is compulsory to the course. Time to be negotiated.

Homework:

Essential reading for week 3:

This Changes Everything by Naomi Klein

A Foray into the World of Animals and Humans by Jakob von Uexkull

Research: Find two examples of brands or products that promote environmentally conscious ethics. What compromises do they also present? ie. excessive packaging.

Gather research for Assessment Task 2: Research essay

Week 3: September 19th from 9am-12:15am

Gardening workshop with Peter Thiem: Weeding / laying new earth

Finalize plant order sheet with participants and order plants. Order list placed!

Gardening equipment organized and at site: arranged with Peter Thiem.

New earth soil is laid.

Discussion of Naomi Klein reading *This Changes Everything*.

Discussion of research methodologies and montage techniques in image-based media relevant to this course.

Poetics of collecting. Making unconscious behaviour conscious and vice versa.

Documenting consumption of products / toxins / what are other examples?

Collecting through photos, film, or notebook entry / analog vs digital
What patterns and behaviours reflect and practice essayistic forms?

Note: Personal social media activity **cannot** be included as forms of research.

While they are relevant forms with which to collect and archive today, it is vital that the for this course be distinguishable from other courses and leisure activities in order to be graded.

Homework:

Essential Reading for Week 5:

Staying with the Trouble by Donna Haraway

Mushrooms at the End of the World by Anna Tsing

Vibrant Matter by Jane Bennet

Week 4: Sept 26th from 9am-12:15am

Planting day. Ordered plants delivered. Planting day with Peter Thiem.

Nuture plan initiated. Watering etc.

Plants delivered to Bard. Planting plants at site. Watering plant system explained and initiated with students.

Discussion break at Garden site of Haraway, Tsing's and Bennets texts.

Homework:

Assessment Task 2 draft

Living Cities reading: What does the term "likely presence" refer to in geography studies and how does it implicate surveying practices?

Essential Reading:

Living Cities: Towards a Politics of Conviviality by Steven Hinchliffe and Sarah Whatmore

Excerpts from *The Peregrine* by J. A. Baker

Week 5: October 3rd from 9am-12:15am

Birding at Tiergarten / Class Trip

Note: Class is meeting offsite for this day (location tbc)

9am: Draft of Assessment Task 2: Research Essay is due

Meeting at site near Tiergarten at 9am sharp!

Please allow half an hour extra for unforeseeable traffic errors or trainline closures.

Lecture slideshow by Richard Frater:

Photo study of Goshawks (habicht) in Berlin:

Discussion of *Living Cities* case study on Birmingham urban ecology.

Birding Trip to Tiergarten.(bring appropriate weather gear). In case of heavy rain:

Snacks and refreshments provided at site (tbc).

Homework:

Assessment Task 2 Final

Visit 'Nonfood' website and read the brands mission statement in preparation for next weeks workshop. What products are offered and what consumer demographics are being targeted?

Form a pair with one of your classmates. Together, build a brand for next week's workshop.

Essential Reading:

Post-modern Narrative Theory by Mark Currie

Week 6: October 10th from 9am-12:15am

Workshop with Denis Olgag "NonFood" Director and marketing consultant

Note: 9am: Final of Assessment Task 2: Research Essay is due

9am-10am:

LECTURE /

SCREENING

Input presentation lecture with recent brand examples / current theories on branding. Mapping a general shift in brand theory from more functional models to purpose-driven and narrative thinking.

Discussion.

10:30-12am:

WORKSHOP

"Shark tank" scenario: Each pair of students will be critiqued on how believable the idea is, discerning whether it is more about purpose or profit. This workshop focuses on training consumer criticality away from polarities, like profit vs purpose, toward dimensions that support each other and hold up the brand.

Home work:

Research one example of a contemporary act of boycotting. Explain whether you agree or disagree with the political intention of boycotting specific to this context with evidence of effectiveness/ineffectiveness.

Essential Reading: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

Week 7: October 17th from 9am-12:15am

One on ones with Tutor

Note: Two weeks before seminar break.
Next week: Assessment Task 3 is due

Short Lecture on the subject of boycotting by Richard Frater followed by discussion.

One on one tutorials: Ask questions.

Discuss individual initiative and management of the course criteria up to this stage. Review research methodologies. Reassert course requirements where relevant.

Discuss Assessment Task 3: articulate and refine ideas. Focus intention. Finalize a medium or 'voice'.

Present one chemical discovered in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and share your understanding of how it threatens organisms and environments that come in contact with it. What organisms are most at threat and why?

Homework:

Complete Assessment Task 3 in preparation for presentation.

Week 8: October 24th from 9am-12:15am

Group presentation of Assessment Task 3.

Feedback on developments of the idea and project.

Discussion and reflection on where individual projects connect between students.

Address the challenge of presenting individual works in a group exhibition setting.

For example, can some of the projects be tied together into a moving image timeline?

Group lunch.

Homework:

Essential reading:

*Giving Depth to the Surface – an Exercise in the Gaia-graphy of Critical Zones**

Alexandra Arènes, Bruno Latour, Jérôme Gaillardet.

Hyperobjects by Timothy Morton

Note: During the fall break, which is two weeks between classes, test small narrative vignettes in your chosen medium, video, photography, voice, sound, text, in preparation for week 9 where class will work together on time-based and documentary techniques and essay making.

Seminar Fall break 29th Oct - 2th No

Week 9: November 7th from 9am-12:15am

Note: No shopping nor running errands are permitted during class time!

On Camera: Documentary Techniques

A series of exercises have been designed to get subjects familiar with being in front of a camera, addressing each other, addressing the camera, foregrounding and speaking to the act of being observed.

Group task: Documenting the garden and the affects of the fall (Autumn/winter) on certain plants, the students must coach the plant life back to form through speech and their memory of their shapes, despite it not being possible.

Screening: excerpts from documentaries and films that exemplify narrative techniques inside or as montage. Examples of voice, still image, and moving image.

Homework:

Prepare all tools, recording equipment, materials for working in class next week.

Continue with

Week 10: November 14th from 9am-12:15am

Note: No shopping nor running errands
are permitted during class time!

class production / Independent work / one on one tutorials

Discuss installation requirements. Discuss group strategy for presentation

Homework:

Prepare all tools, recording equipment, materials for working in class next week.

Week 11: November 21st from 9am-12:15am

class production / Independent work / one on one tutorials

Discuss installation requirements. Finalize group strategy for presentation

Week 12: November 28th from 9am-12:15am

class production / Independent work / one on one tutorials

Finalize installation requirements. Last week to solve install challenges

Week 13: December 5th from 9am-12:15am

Assessment task 4: Presentations of final work occur where it is installed
(location / timing to be announced)

Week 14: December 11th from 9am-12:15am

Class Trip: Exhibition visit

Week 15: December 12 – 17th from 9am-12:15am

Facility inspections

Please note: the return of BCB property and spaces used, as well as the removal of materials and artworks, has a direct impact on final grades.

Note: The collective garden work is permanent and will not be removed, however anything additional added to site that has not been approved must be removed by the students.

Public Lecture: Social Tipping Points by climatologist Jonathan F Donges (PIK)

Note: Attendance of the following public lecture is compulsory for all participating in this class. Its timing in the programme will be confirmed at a later date. It will be scheduled after the fall break.

Facility Guidelines:

“The Factory” – Eichenstrasse 43

- 1) The BCB “Factory” (main arts building) has space and facilities available to BCB students with an academic purpose for using the building. Students agree to only use the common spaces in the building that are available for their needs, and must respect private spaces that are off-limits.. Any questions relating to this must be addressed to the Director of Studio Arts.
- 2) Chip access to The Factory building and other arts facilities is limited to those students currently registered for classes needing those facilities. Orientations are required before access is granted. In addition, students and faculty involved in clubs as well as event hosting may receive chip access and permission to use The Factory after orientations have been arranged through the Studio Arts Manager.
- 3) No smoking is allowed anywhere inside the building. There are to be no projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) inside any part of the building.
- 4) Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
- 5) No spray-painting inside of the building. This also includes any strong, odorous materials (with or without spray). All production involving odorous material is to be done outside of the building.
- 6) All work surfaces (table and floor) must be properly protected with thick plastic or cardboard. If production is to happen outside, ground / concrete is also to be protected.
- 7) No oil painting is allowed on the property unless student is enrolled in a BCB painting course, or approved in advance by the Studio Arts Manager

- 8) Food must be always cleaned up and removed immediately.. All food must be disposed of in lidded trash cans.
- 9) All students are to always be respectful of other student artworks and personal property.
- 10) No art projects may function as weapons, or potentially cause bodily harm.
- 11) No sandals, flip-flops, or bare feet will be allowed inside or around the workshop areas, which includes walking through the workshop. This includes dance and theater students as well.
- 12) Students should always wear adequate protection (goggles, gloves, dust masks, etc.) when needed. Protective gear can be found in the Factory workshop.
- 13) If you are uncertain how to use a tool or piece of equipment or require assistance, please ask Studio Arts Manager for assistance (by appointment).
- 14) Students must make sure all lights are turned off and doors are closed when leaving the building. No windows or doors are to be left opened or cracked. All electrical items must be unplugged when not in use.
- 15) Any unidentified property left in any common space is subject to either be taken or thrown out, without restitution.
- 16) All Workshop items checked out are due back during the Workshop hours the following day, unless other arrangements have been made in advance directly with Studio Arts Manager. Workshop hours are: Mon-Friday, 1-3 pm. Details will be offered during orientation.
- 17) Any items leaving the building without permission will be considered stolen, and access to the factory may be suspended for the rest of the semester. If an item must be borrowed for a purpose outside of the building, contact The Arts Staff, and be prepared to leave your Student ID as a deposit. Fines may be charged for late return.
- 18) All students must respect signage posted in the factory that may involve rules that are not mentioned in this document. This includes signage indicating reserved spaces where communal use is restricted.
- 19) There are to be no architectural changes to studios or any areas inside or outside of the building without first speaking with the Studio Arts Manager. When repainting any walls that need restoration, please consult with Studio Arts Manager beforehand.
- 20) During completion week, any space used by a student must be returned empty with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be bagged (or boxed) and properly disposed of. All students must accept the penalty of grades being affected and / or fines imposed if items are left (or renovations unfinished) by the inspection deadline.
- 21) Contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

AV Facilities – Eichenstrasse 43 (upstairs)

- 1) BCB's AV (Audio / Visual) facilities provide a limited quantity of AV equipment to support

- Admin, Faculty as well as those students enrolled in arts classes that require specific items. AV facilities do not include any black and white or color printing services for students.
- 2) The opening times may change every semester to adapt to specific course times. Once these times are established they will stay consistent throughout the semester, with possible exceptions. AV facilities are ONLY available during days when classes are held (closed during official BCB holidays).
 - 3) All items checked out are due back during AV hours the following day, unless other arrangements have been made in advance directly with AV Staff.
 - 4) Items to be reserved on a specific date should be requested at least one week in advance. Without reservation, availability is limited to a first-come, first-serve basis.
 - 5) The AV Staff may exclude students from borrowing items at any time, if the student:
 - failed to return items in time
 - failed to return items in person (pick up and/ or return by friends is not allowed)
 - returned items with missing pieces
 - returned items damaged or in poor shape
 - 6) AV equipment will be given out only to those students responsible in organizing, picking up as well as returning their items IN PERSON. No exceptions.
 - 7) All items returned late, regardless of patron's position at BCB, will be subject to a 1 Euro fine, per day.
 - 8) Any item returned without accessories (such as cables, SD card, batteries, tripod head, lens cap, etc) will be subject to a 1 Euro fine, per day (the same as late returns).
 - 9) Any items missing will be subject to patron reimbursement for its value (or under special circumstances, replacement, at the discretion of AV Staff). Any items damaged or malfunctioning are expected to be reported to Staff upon check-in.
 - 10) Please use the AV email to inquire about equipment or policy, as well as to reserve (av@berlin.bard.edu). Do not contact AV Staff through their personal emails.
 - 11) We strongly suggest personally visiting the facilities to inquire and reserve before borrowing equipment!
 - 12) AV equipment is limited at BCB. Whenever possible students are encouraged to use their own devices (computers, cameras) for production purposes.
 - 13) Contact AV Staff directly with any questions: av@berlin.bard.edu

MacLab and Photo Darkroom Facilities – Platanenstrasse 98 (downstairs)

** Guidelines to be offered during orientations.