



## Description

Structured as a collaborative, creative research group, Art & Ecology explores artistic responses to the environment and related social issues. Emphasis will be placed on critical approaches rooted in the humanities. In the first half of the semester, the course will examine student-chosen key themes in environmental discourse, paying particular attention to how artists have engaged them. In the second half of the semester, students will develop individual or collaborative projects that may take the form of video, installation, performance, writing, sound, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and/or electronic media. In-class activities will be supplemented with field trips, screenings, and guest presentations, and special effort will be made to connect students to university and community resources.

## Goals and Objectives

1. Understand key themes in contemporary environmental art practice through research, viewing, and discussion
2. Develop a formal and critical vocabulary through discussion and critique of artworks dealing with environmental themes.
3. Enhance research and writing skills for critical and creative inquiry in the arts.
4. Build aesthetic and conceptual sophistication through the creation of one major project exploring ecological issues through art.
5. Engage in an interdisciplinary, collaborative learning environment through presentation, discussion, and electronic communication tools.
6. Prepare and present work in a group exhibition with other course participants.

## Course and Faculty Information

01J:100:001: Intermedia Topics  
Communication Center 308  
Thursdays, 3:30-7:30 PM

Instructor: Sarah Kanouse  
Communication Center 300C  
Thursdays, 12-3 PM and by appointment  
319-384-0992  
sarah-kanouse@uiowa.edu

DEO: Dorothy Johnson  
School of Art & Art History  
Seashore Hall, 6th Floor

The administrative home of this course is the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

## **Expectations**

This upper-division course is structured to be responsive to students' backgrounds, interests, and existing creative practices while encouraging them to explore or further develop original work exploring ecological forms and themes. In content to the "expert" model typically found in higher education--in which a professor determines everything that will be presented and discussed in class--this course is structured as a collaborative, creative laboratory. Beyond the conceptual introduction, the description of key themes, and the detailed resource list appended to this syllabus, the specific content of the course will be student driven, with the instructor acting as a resource person, respondent, and creative facilitator for student work. This structure demands that everyone - students and instructor alike - be exceptionally cooperative, respectful, good-humored, and well-prepared while also willing to take intellectual and creative risks. Students are expected to make a serious, sustained commitment to individual and group research (including the maintenance of a wiki), discussion, and production over the course of the entire semester. As per CLAS guidelines, students should expect to spend at least eight hours per week on this course outside class meeting times.

As course instructor, I expect to be consistently challenged to expand my knowledge and deepen my understanding of art and ecology over the course of the semester. I pledge to personalize each student's experience of the course by forwarding information, articles, and announcements, returning email within 24 hours (excepting weekends), and meeting with students outside of class and office hours when necessary for discussion and technical assistance. It should be noted that I am due to have a baby in early June and have enjoyed a remarkably healthy pregnancy thus far. In the extremely unlikely event that pregnancy-related complications result in the disruption of the course, I will work with Intermedia Area Head Jon Winet and School of Art and Art History DEO Dorothy Johnson to enable students to successfully complete course requirements in a timely fashion.

## **Texts and Materials**

There is no required text for this course; readings will be distributed as photocopies, pdfs, and web links as assigned.

There is a \$30 course fee to cover the cost of maintenance for lab software and a limited range of equipment available for checkout from the Intermedia Equipment Pool. Students are expected to acquire any additional supplies their work requires.

Experimentation with different materials is encouraged, but students must exercise good judgement. Due to the communal space of the Communications Buildings, the use of solvents, spray paint or any fume producing chemical is prohibited. Guns, blood, bodily fluids, live animals, smoke, fire, alcohol, and broken television tubes (which contain lead) are absolutely prohibited. Be aware of the toxicity of your materials and consult with the instructor in advance if you are uncertain about the safety of a material.

**Coursework**

All students will complete the following coursework, with approximate grade weighting:

Key theme research and presentation: 5-10%

10-15 minute presentation in the second week of class providing an overview of a major contemporary theme in ecological discourse, with particular reference to the art. Presentations may be drawn from the resource list appended to this syllabus but are not limited to these topics. Presentations should include a slideshow with relevant visuals and/or media, and a narrative summary of the key theme should be posted to the class wiki.

Leadership of class session: 25-30%

Following the initial key themes presentations, students work individually or in pairs to develop a class session for the deeper exploration of some aspect of the theme. Students working in pairs are responsible for a full 4 hour session (including 20 minute break); those working individually may elect to develop a 1 1/2 hour session. Leadership of a class session requires the assignment of readings, the facilitation of discussion, the selection and acquisition of viewing materials, and the posting of a narrative summary of session content to relevant pages of the wiki. Other options to explore include developing in-class, hands-on activities; preparing a slide lecture; organizing a guest presentation; or planning an in-town field trip. Students should discuss their plans with me and give their classmates at least a week's notice of readings and any special requirements prior to leading their class sessions.

Final creative project: 50%

Students will develop final creative projects employing ecological forms and themes using the media of their choosing. Projects may be collaborative or individual but must be presented to the broader university and city community in a public exhibition to be coordinated by the instructor and students. Proposals for final projects will be due in written form (2-4 pages, with sketches) and for in-class presentation (15-20 minutes with slides) on March 26, 2009. Digital documentation of the final creative project MUST be submitted to me no later than May 15, 2009 in order for course credit to be awarded and a grade assigned.

Participation: 10%

Given the structure of the class, active participation in discussion and critique is vital. Students must share their thoughts generously, respectfully, and frequently in order to earn a top grade in the course.

**Additional requirement for students who have elected to take the course for 4 credit hours:**

Artist paper: 10%

This short paper (5-8 pages, double spaced) should critically reflect on the work of one artist employing environmental/ecological themes in his or her work. Papers should incorporate relevant history and theory and include visual examples of the artist's work. Papers will be due and presented in class on May 7, 2009.

**Grading**

Grading will be on a A to F scale, with plus and minus grades awarded. While I do not notify students of grades on individual course components, I will prepare written feedback for each student at midterm that indicates progress to date and an approximate midterm grade. Students are also welcome to contact me at any time to learn how they are doing in the course. I interpret letter grades to mean the following:

A+ / A / A-	Superior accomplishment
B+ / B / B-	Above average achievement
C+ / C / C-	Average work
D+ / D / D-	Below average achievement
F	Failure to meet basic course requirements

**Course Policies**

Because class meets only once per week, attendance is imperative. Students may be absent for any reason or no reason ONCE during the semester. Any absences beyond the first will result in a grade reduction, excepting extreme and documented circumstances to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. An unexplained habit of late arrival or early departure will also result in a grade reduction.

Late creative projects and written work will not be accepted under any circumstances. Because this course is student-driven, failure to give a presentation on the expected date will not merely inconvenience the instructor but rather undermine the entire class. Only in extreme and documented circumstance, to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, may presentations be rearranged with the consent of other course participants.

Student work completed in this course will be archived by the Intermedia program and the instructor and may be used for documentation, demonstration, and promotional purposes.

**Schedule of Class Meetings (subject to change)**

Unit I: Observing	January 22	Introduction, Key Words, Wiki
	January 29	Key Themes Presentations Screening: "Fast, Cheap & Out of Control" (1997)
	February 5	Required Reading Survey of Environmental Art (lecture)
	February 12	Faculty Panel: David Bennett (Geography), Jim Throgmorton (Urban Planning), David Depew (POROI), Thomas Dean (Interdisciplinary Programs), Steve McGuire (Art Education)  Community Panel: Friends of Hickory Hill, Local Food Connection, TBA

Unit II: Digging	February 19	Student-led session:
	February 26	Student-led session: Professor Kanouse at CAA conference in Los Angeles
	March 5	Student-led session:
	March 12	Student-led session:
Spring Break	March 19	Midterm narrative evaluations will be distributed
Unit III: Growing	March 26	Final project proposal presentations
	April 3	TBA (workday, guest speaker, or field trip)
	April 9	TBA (workday, guest speaker, or field trip)
	April 16	TBA (workday, guest speaker, or field trip)
	April 23	Work-in-progress critique
	April 30	TBA (workday, guest speaker, or field trip)
Unit IV: Harvesting	May 7	Artist papers due Preparations for presentation/exhibition event
	May 9	Final project due for presentation/exhibition event
	May 15	Digital documentation of final project due
Summary of deadlines	January 29	Key Themes Presentations (5-10%) Leadership of Class Session (30%)
	March 26	Final Project Proposals
	April 23	Work-In-Progress Critique
	May 7	Artist Papers (10%)
	May 9	Final Presentation/Exhibition Event (50%)
	May 15	Final Project Documentation (no grade; required for course credit)