GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

**Topic and Scope of the Course:** The challenges and contradictions of situating works of art in urban space have never been greater. Since the end of the 19th century, when traditional urban monuments began to lose both their visual effectiveness and their symbolic significance, artists have sought new ways of creating effective interventions in public space while also attempting to address a wide array of urban audiences. As the different media, especially painting, sculpture and architecture became increasingly autonomous in the early 20th century, the art and public space became increasingly difficult to coordinate. Even as aesthetic strategies diversified in the mid-twentieth century, drawing on such disparate movements as collage, assemblage and pop art, the forms and meanings of public space continued to shift, destabilizing any sense of continuous urban context or frame. Moreover, the diverse and cosmopolitan urban societies that emerged in the 20th century increasingly lacked the kinds of common reference points that might define a unified public audience. Works that might be seen to properly provoke an elite museum-going audience might be seen as offensive when inserted into the everyday spaces of the city, especially when the works were paid for by public funds. Finally, the production of public art has been inseparably bound up with larger efforts to remake entire urban areas according to the interests and ideologies of particular groups, often revealing fundamental conflicts among theses groups and their particular publics.

The first section of the course will be devoted to the problem of defining a public or publics in relation to works of art that are, by their nature, “exposed” – inhabiting spaces that are deemed public or common. What does it mean to speak of public art or public space? To what extent does it make sense to speak of a “public sphere” in such contexts? What kinds of private, including corporate and real estate interests, govern the limits and definitions of publicness? The second section of the course will deal with the aesthetic strategies involved in inserting works of art into pre-existing urban spaces with their own particular forms, histories and popular associations. How does public art intersect with the related art of urban design? What are the consequences of sculpture crossing over into the realm of architecture? What are the problems of attempting to represent neighborhood-based communities? How can public art critically intervene in pre-existing urban space? The final section of the course will focus on two well-documented examples of public art: Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc and Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Both examples proved exceptionally controversial, and the nature of these controversies will serve to illuminate a number of the main issues raised in the course.
Purpose and Expectations of the Course: This course is a graduate seminar, whose purpose is to combine historical research with creative approaches to public art and its meanings. The course will allow students to develop familiarity with the critical issues surrounding public art in urban space, while also applying that knowledge to a particular example of public art in Philadelphia. Students will be expected to keep a journal related to a particular artwork and to share the results of ongoing journal assignments with the rest of the class. Parallel to the journal project, students will be expected to develop a ten-page analytical paper related to critical issues in public art. This project may take the form of an art historical research project, a theoretical exercise, or a manifesto. In any case, however, the paper will need to be documented by evidence and supported by research. To that end, students will be encouraged to become familiar with various archives and libraries in the City of Philadelphia. One or more field trips may be arranged, according to the interests of the class. Students will also be expected to take an active role in class discussions, including introducing one of the readings during the semester.

Class Format: This course will be a seminar discussion course, with various times set aside for lectures and student presentations.

Required Texts: Articles and book chapters will be available for download via e-reserve. In addition to those listed below, other required readings may be added over the course of the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 17: Course introduction

January 24: Public Art?

Assignment: Initial Survey of Public Artwork in Philadelphia (1st site visit)

PART I: DEFINING PUBLICS

January 31: Publics, the Public Sphere, and the City

Assignment: Historical Background of Site

February 7: Symbolic Content and Public Interpretation

Assignment: Initial Survey of Site (2nd site visit)
February 14: Monuments, Anti-Monuments and Historical Memory
Assignment: Preliminary Paper Proposal (one page with bibliography)

February 21: Public Space and Private Interests:
Assignment: Historical Background of Artist and Other Works

February 28: Public Art and the Politics of Urban Restructuring
Assignment: Public Interaction with Site and Artwork (3rd site visit)

March 7: [SPRING BREAK --- NO CLASS]

PART II: FORMAL TACTICS

March 14: Urban Design and Public Space
Assignment: Mental Map of Site and Artwork

March 21: Spatial Interventions at the Intersection of Sculpture and Architecture
Assignment: Points of View / Optical Survey (4th site visit)

March 28: Public Art and Representations of “Community”
Assignment: Definition of Public(s) for Artwork
April 4: Visual Subversions and Public Provocations:
Assignment: Preliminary Paper Report (verbal)

PART III: CASE STUDIES

April 11: Case Study – Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc
Assignment: Imaginary Debate

April 18: Case Study – Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial
Assignment: Journal conclusion

April 25: Student Presentations
Final paper and journal due in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements:
The course is a graduate seminar in art history, intended to combine rigorous theoretical knowledge with creative interpretations. Evaluations will be based on class participation, journal presentations, a project proposal, a final journal, and a final analytical paper of at least 10 pages. These papers will be presented as 15-minute oral presentations at the last seminar session. Course performance will be evaluated on a combination of: a formal project proposal; class participation, including journal presentations; the journal itself; and the quality of the research paper, both as submitted and as presented to the class.

Relative weight of course requirements:

1) Paper Proposal (10%)
2) Paper Presentation (15%)
3) Public Art Journal (25%)
4) Final Analytical Paper (35%)
5) Class Participation (15%)
Policy on late assignments and class participation:
Extensions and incompletes will only be granted in cases of documented personal emergencies. Since class participation is an essential component of the course, students may normally not miss more than 2 sessions without their final grades being negatively affected.

Statement of Academic Rights and Responsibilities:
Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy statement on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

Exceptional Accommodations:
Any student who has a documented need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should discuss the matter privately with me within the first two weeks of classes. The student should also contact Disability Resources and Services at (215) 204-1280.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
This syllabus is subject to change, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, or in the case that changes will significantly enhance the quality of the course.