ART 6933 THINGNESS  
GRADUATE SCULPTURE SEMINAR  

ALISON MCNULTY, VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, FALL 2013  
MEETING TIME: W 6:15-9:10PM (11-E2)  
OFFICE HOURS: TUES. 11:30-12:30, OR BY APPOINTMENT  
3 CREDITS  

COURSE SYLLABUS  

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:  

This seminar will address the topic of thingness, or the nature, theory, and agency of the material world, especially as it relates to contemporary art, and our place (as makers, subjects, material bodies) within it. The course will be structured by critique of artwork produced for the seminar, discussion of texts and online resources, presentations, and individual studio visits. Participants are expected to consider the seminar themes in their work, discussions, and critiques, and to develop and articulate their own critical concerns with thingness, objects, and matter.  

How do humans connect through materials and systems of objects? What does it mean to ‘articulate materials’? Does matter have an agency of its own, apart from the way humans think, interact with, or feel about it? How does the act of making negotiate thing and idea? In what ways do things and physical phenomena shape our individual and social memories and evolve our comprehension of temporality? Could acknowledging all bodies (animate and inanimate) as actants positively adapt our understanding of the forces at work in the world that shape us, our research, and our politics? The seminar will consider the ways in which language helps us recognize and deepen our sensibilities to the non-linguistic call of things, and explore the ways things materialize, dematerialize, and re-materialize in the world and in art. The course will investigate metaphor as extension of the limits of objects, and address the relationship between the material world and immaterial networks. We will debate the implications of new theories of materialism, such as vibrant materialism, for the arts and look at the transformative ways artists attend to, translate, and express the liveliness of materials and objects.  

We will search across disciplines for insight into these and other topics relating to thingness. From political theory to ecology, anthropology to biology, poetry to contemporary art, we will trace developments and applications of materialist philosophy, especially toward examining and complicating contemporary theories of objects, art, and materials. Discussion component of the seminar may include online lectures and videos, podcasts, articles, and selections covering a broad range of artists, thinkers, and critics, such as Jane Bennett, Joshua Simon, Tony Cragg, Lucretius, Deleuze, Jan Verwoert, Bruno Latour, David Ireland, Susan Stewart, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Bill Brown, Peter Schwenger, Joseph Beuys, Michel Foucault, Jennifer Moxley, Spurse, Ian Bogost, Dianna Coole and Samantha Frost, Georges Bataille, Daniel Miller, Marx, Spinoza, Freud, Althusser, Žižek, others…  

TOPICS:  


REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS:  

INTRODUCTIONS: Students will be asked to give a 10-15 min. presentation of their work and research interests to
the group at the second meeting. The presentation could include past and current work, plans, short artist statement, brief background, influential artists, your ideas or interests related to the topic…in under 15 mins.

**READING/DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION/BIBLIOGRAPHY:** each week we will begin with a discussion or presentation(s). Students should be prepared with the physical book or printed-out readings at class meetings. Students are expected to prepare written reflections and notes on the readings and videos. Active participation in discussion and critique is expected from all students. Students will be asked to lead a discussion and make a presentation during the semester. At the end of the semester students will also be expected to turn in an annotated bibliography of all required readings and videos as well as sources used for individual research related to the course studio work. Details will follow in the second week of classes.

Please keep in mind that attitude, willingness, patience, tenacity, outside research, and open-mindedness are essential components of understanding, relating to, integrating, and expressing the relationship between theory and art, or thinking and making.

**CRITIQUE:** Generally we will critique 2 students’ work each week. Each student should expect to have their work critiqued 2-3 times this semester depending on the number of students enrolled.

- Work that is not completely and professionally installed before 6:15 will not be critiqued. It is not acceptable to install or finish work during the discussion component of the course.
- Artwork must be presented effectively and in finished condition as if on exhibition to the public. Artwork must be produced for this course independent of other coursework.
- Typed, double-spaced artist statements turned in to the instructor are mandatory for each of your crits, but it is up to you when and how you share them with the group.
- Please check the room schedules and crit space sign-up sheet ahead of time to ensure your work and installation process do not disturb other classes or critiques in the space.
- If you wish to have your work critiqued in a space other than the sculpture crit space, you should inform the instructor by email a minimum of 24 hours in advance.
- It is each students’ responsibility to consider and determine the format of their own critique and to communicate this format to the group at the start of crit.
- You will be evaluated on the quality and consistency of your critique participation throughout the semester, as well as your ability to listen, observe, and respond to others. Students should place special importance on generating and critiquing work with regard to the course topics and discussions. Critique dialog should synthesize independent research, class reading and discussion materials, clear and focused observation of the presented artwork, and historical contexts. Your participation in critiques should evince increasing clarity and awareness of critical and philosophical issues in contemporary art-making, art- and social-historical contexts, and material issues.

**STUDIO VISITS:** each student must email the instructor to arrange an individual studio visit at least once in the semester. Please give a week’s notice. Prepare your studio space, reflections, and questions for the visit.

**CRITICAL DATES:** It is critical that each of you attends all class meetings. There is no possibility for making up a discussion, lecture, or critique for this seminar. Students are committed to the critique dates selected at the start of the semester.

Our final meeting is scheduled for Wed, Dec. 11.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**
ISBN: 978-0-8223-4633-3

Other required readings will be made available to students online. Students must have access to and check daily their ufl.edu email account and must be able to download and print the required pdf files regularly.

**ATTENDANCE (AND MAKE-UP POLICY):** Attendance is required at all class meetings, discussions, lectures, and critiques. Special circumstances and valid absences (see full UF absence policy link below) must be dealt with individually. Unexcused absences in excess of two will result in the lowering of the final semester grade by one letter. The grade will continue to drop with each successive absence. Arriving late or leaving early three times
counts as an absence.

**LECTURES:** Students will be expected to attend visiting artist and critic lectures and other events outside class. Notice will be given as events are scheduled. The first required lecture is Tues. 9/17 at 6:00pm at the Harn Museum: Pamela Lee, Professor of Art & Art History, Stanford University “Pattern Recognition circa 1947”

**EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

Your performance in this class will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:
1) Fulfillment of course objectives, expectations, requirements
2) Conceptual rigor and critical thinking skills in discussion, artwork, writing.
3) Comprehension, expression, and implementation of the course material
4.) Clear, informed, productive writing skills and discussion skills, and improvement through the semester
5) Depth of, breadth of, and commitment to, independent research and original thinking
6.) Material inventiveness, risk-taking, experimentation, trying different strategies
7.) Preparedness and thoughtful and consistent vocal contributions
8) Physical investment and appropriate craftsmanship, effective presentation
9) Overall quality of the work and conflation of formal strategies, materials, and content
10) Tenacity toward growth and development in the above areas

**GRADING FORMAT:**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent/A</td>
<td>Goes well beyond all the requirements and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good/B</td>
<td>Meets all of the requirements and expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good/C</td>
<td>Meets most of the requirements and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/D</td>
<td>Meets very few of the requirements and expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fail/F</td>
<td>Meets virtually none of the requirements or expectations.</td>
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**FINAL SEMESTER GRADES** will be averaged as follows:

- Artwork (2 crits, studio practice, independent research, studio visit) 60%
- Preparedness, participation, investment in discussions and critiques 25%
- Written work, presentation(s), leading discussion 15%

**POLICIES:**

**UF POLICY ON GRADES AND GRADE POINTS:**
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA ATTENDANCE POLICY:**
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences

**ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY:**
Academic Honesty: http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty
Honor Code: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php
Student Conduct: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
The instructor will assist any student to make appropriate accommodations for a disability. Please make an appointment to discuss how to request classroom accommodation by registering with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation that you can provide to the Instructor to obtain appropriate accommodations. You may also directly contact the Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office:
email: accessuf@dso.ufl.edu office: 0001 Building 0020 (Reid Hall)
CLASS Demeanor Policies:

Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior in the class areas shall result, minimally, in a request to leave class.

Cell phones will be turned off when entering the classroom and sculpture shops. For emergency calls go in the hallway or outside. No headphones during class or in the sculpture shops.

Laptops, smart phones, tablets may only be used for class-related research and class projects. Students using laptops for other purposes will lose the privilege of having a laptop in class. None of these devices should be used when working in the shop.

Students are required to use their ufl.edu email for all course electronic communication. Students are required to check and maintain their ufl.edu account. Students will be held responsible for all updates, announcements, and other communications sent to their ufl.edu accounts.

The instructor, the Art Department, and UF assume no responsibility for student work or materials left in workspaces, installation spaces, the critique space, the shops, or the classrooms after the course has ended.

Projects/materials are not to be stored in in shared spaces of the sculpture area without permission from Alison and Brad. Projects and related materials must be removed from the sculpture area directly following each critique unless student makes specific arrangements otherwise.

Please repair any and all alterations to crit spaces promptly and respectfully refrain from using the crit space when other classes are in session or other individuals have signed up for the space.

Please address your concerns, problems, and questions regarding this class to the instructor. Outside class, I am available during office hours, by making an appointment a couple of days in advance, or through email. If you need help or have concerns, or if you are having trouble keeping up, please arrange a meeting to discuss the issue.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RESPONSIBILITY:

1. Informed, environmentally-aware practices and material choice and use are an important concern of contemporary art practice and this course.
2. The goal of the SA+AH Health and Safety Program is to protect the health and welfare of all faculty, staff, and students and to cooperate with the University of Florida’s Department of Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S). The SA+AH Health & Safety Policy and Handbook website gives all policies and training information regarding health and safety in the art studios. All students must follow the policies in the handbook, receive proper training, sign the signature page, and submit the signature page to the SA+AH Director of Operations, FA Bldg C, Room 103, no later than the third meeting date of the course.
3. SA+AH H&S policy and handbook http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/healthandsafety
4. See attached forms for sculpture area rules, regulations, best practices, and inherent hazards.