University of Michigan

Stamps School of Art and Design

Social Spaces

The Role of Artists, Designers, and Citizens

Winter 2025

Registration info:	ARTDES 203.002, Class #36912	Instructor:	Laura Napier
Course Modality:	In-person	Office hours:	By appointment
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COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

This course explores the ways in which artists, designers, and citizens work within the public sphere. Students will gain an understanding of socially engaged art and design practice while learning the approaches and skills essential to engagement work. Through ongoing discussions and assignments, students will explore ways that their creative practice can exist outside of and parallel to the traditional art world. They will broaden their understanding of the role that art can play in strengthening and empowering communities. Coursework will include lectures, class exercises, discussions, and collaborative projects. By the end of the semester, students will have become more attuned to the social structures in which they reside and have a greater vocabulary, awareness and skill set as socially engaged artists/designers.

This section of social spaces will focus on art and social action. Following an experiential learning model designed by sociologist and educator Scott Meyers-Lipton, you will (with others) develop and launch a policy-change campaign of your choosing, that will seek to change a policy (rule, law, regulation, norm) on campus or in a broader community of which you are a part of. Along the way we will explore artist-as-activist precedents, socially engaged creative practices, and social practice theory, including texts from *Art as Social Action* (Sholette et al.), *What We Made* (Finkelpearl), and *Artificial Hells* (Bishop).

Students will share their work at the end of this course during the Spring 2025 Summit on College Social Action, a national network of college students engaged in social action courses in a variety of disciplines, including architecture, environment and sustainability, leadership studies, sociology, social work, and the humanities.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Build an understanding and awareness of the intricacies of engagement work.
- Discuss a broad range of creative approaches that artists, designers, and citizens use to
- engage the public.
- Discuss the aesthetic and ethical debates surrounding socially engaged art and design
- Deepen critical reflection skills, interpersonal skills, and cultural awareness.
- Situate your own work in a greater context and consider its role in society and the
- impact it can have on the issues that are important to you.

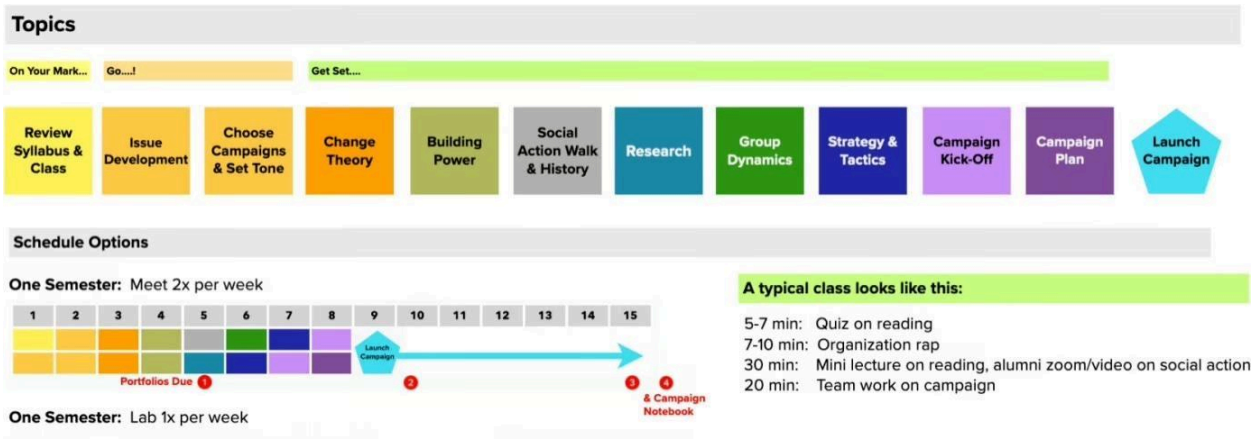
Additional Course Learning Outcomes (specific to this section)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Conduct issue development
2. Build power
3. Implement various strategies and tactics
4. Conduct research (historical analysis, power map, target analysis)
5. Work with the media
6. Perform campaign implementation and evaluation plans

Academic Course Policies

Course Organization



This course follows an experiential learning model where students develop and launch policy-change campaigns of their choosing. Student campaigns seek to change a policy (i.e., a rule, law, regulation, norm, or practice of an institution) on campus or in the community.

In this social action model, students choose the campaigns to work on, and they can be from a conservative, liberal, or no ideological perspective. The campaigns must be non-violent and cannot break the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The key is that students learn to do democracy, which is a goal of higher education.

There are several key components of the social action model. First, students do social action rather than just learn about it. In a traditional course, students read about theories of social change, analyze social problems, read about campaigns, develop an abstract understanding of concepts, all with the professor being the "sage on the stage".

In this experiential social action model, students read about theories of social change and apply it to real world campaigns, as well as define a social problem and develop concrete, quantifiable solutions (i.e., demands). In the process of choosing and leading campaigns students are transformed through a direct experience of democracy, all with the professor being a "guide on the side" where they are de-centered and co-creators of knowledge.

A key feature of this social action model is the topic and flow of the course. The motto of this model is "On Your Mark, Go!, Get Set." In order to launch their campaigns by mid-semester, students go through the issue development process (identifying demands and targets) in the opening days of the class. By choosing their campaigns by the 4th or 5th class (sometimes continuing a campaign from a prior semester), students have enough time to learn about all of the necessary aspects of social change, and then they launch their campaign by the ninth week, and still have almost half a semester to do several actions, as well as to cover the academic course material".

Image and text excerpt from teachingsocialaction.org

Expect readings, discussions, lectures, field trips, in-class workshops, and collaborative projects. We will also schedule course visitors who will share their experience and expertise. Student participation in all aspects of the course is required and will be considered in the overall evaluation of class performance.

The instructor (myself) will discuss your work with you individually and with your group during class sessions. Therefore, it is essential that you be prepared to work in class during scheduled workshops and workdays.

Most work in this course is highly collaborative. Students choose which campaign/group they will join, however, if, as the course progresses, a student wishes to change their group, they must schedule a meeting with the instructor to request permission to switch.

This course also focuses on fields of socially engaged art and design. We will learn about artistic & activist precedents both off and on campus, the aesthetics of engagement work, best practices for working with outside community partners, and how to bring creative engagements into public spheres.

Assignments
Because this is a three credit course, students are expected to spend up to 9 hours a week on coursework. We will spend four hours a week in-class, so be sure to schedule five additional hours weekly to complete your coursework. Students will keep track of their hours using a time log.. To be successful in this course, you are expected to fully participate during in-class workshops and independently outside of class to complete your assignments.

Critiques
A critique is a critical analysis of works that you and your classmates have developed. You will be expected to attend and make regular contributions to class discussions and critiques, discussing your own work as well as the work of others. Critique discussions will include constructive comments on the work, its relationships to ideas and intentions, historical and contemporary references, as well as the choice of materials and processes.

Grades

All projects will be evaluated with rubrics that evaluate conceptual rigor, quality of process and product workmanship. Final evaluations are based on careful consideration of all work completed during the course of the semester. This includes developmental work such as research, written assignments, preliminary sketches and models, etc. as well as finished products. In general, the quality of your grade is determined by your effort, a positive progression throughout the course, and your ability to visually and verbally communicate your ideas and concepts in a coherent and creative fashion.

Late work will be marked down a letter grade (10%) after deadline and per each day late, and will be only accepted up to seven days from assignment due date.

Assignments, participation and quizzes (percent of final grade)

40% Portfolio and logs (3x semester)
20% Campaign Presentation and binder
20% Active class workshop & discussion participation
20% Quizzes (on texts and other materials)

Grading Scale

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100 -99	98-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59 OR BELOW

See the "total" column in Canvas under "Grades" to find the percentage that corresponds with each letter grade.

A

Student's performance is consistently outstanding. The student exhibits thorough exploration, revision, and excellent craftsmanship in all aspects of work. Student exceeds the problem criteria and consistently challenges herself/himself to independently seek fresh solutions to assigned problems. The student exhibits a commitment to expanding technical skills, vocabulary and presentation abilities. The student augments the knowledge acquired in class with independent research. The student is always ready to participate actively, respectfully and constructively in discussion, responding to and applying criticism with a professional attitude. Student's attendance, participation, and class involvement are exceptional.

B

Student's work fulfills the expectations for the projects more than adequately. The student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship in all work. The student meets the project criteria and exhibits above average interest in expanding technical skills, vocabulary and presentation abilities. The student participates actively, respectfully and constructively in class discussion when prompted. Student's attendance, participation and class involvement are above average.

C

Student meets project criteria, but shows little interest/ability in developing his/her technical skills, craftsmanship and vocabulary. Self-expression and presentation skills are adequate. The student occasionally contributes to class discussion, adequately manages assigned tasks, but remains marginally invested in the studio experience.

D
Student's performance is uneven and project requirements are only partially fulfilled. Student's ideas are not fully developed and work output is inadequate. The student exhibits little progress in expanding technical skills, vocabulary, presentation skills. Students attendance, participation and/or class involvement are minimal.

E
Student's work does not fulfill the project objectives or adhere to project deadlines. Ideas are ill conceived and craftsmanship is poor. The student does not demonstrate any initiative or preparedness for developing technical skills, vocabulary and presentation skills. The student lacks achievement throughout the semester, exhibits poor participation in class discussion and/or engagement in the studio experience.

I (Incomplete)
An incomplete ("I") grade may be assigned at the instructor's discretion when a student, for reasons beyond their control, is unable to complete the work of a course before the end of the term. An incomplete may be assigned only when the work already completed is of passing quality; the grade of incomplete provides no undue advantage to the student over other students; and the work that remains to be done is no more than 1/3 of the total work required in the course. The student and instructor must have a written agreement for the amount of work needed to complete the course and the date the work will be due. The grade must be submitted no later than the last day of classes of the next full term.

Required Text(s) And Materials

Required Text(s):
Selections from Myers-Lipton, Scott J. *Change! : A Student Guide to Social Action*. Second edition., Routledge, 2023. Other texts will be provided throughout the semester through Canvas.

Tools and Materials:
Materials needed for specific projects are covered by the course fee. Student groups must coordinate with the instructor with enough advance notice to obtain materials and supplies.

Printing services are available via the Taubman Media Center. Please allow at least 48 hours for the instructor to submit your files with shortcode and for print services.

Students may also reserve on-campus tabling space at Stamps and the Duderstadt – please reach out to the instructor to coordinate.

Additional tools and resources are available through Stamps Studios.

Inclusive Teaching Statement

As an educator I am personally committed to the inclusive classroom, and I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. This means we will be discussing the work and ideas of artists of many backgrounds, and multiple perspectives are welcome. Please speak up, or contact me privately, if anything should occur in class that feels hurtful or disrespectful, or if you have suggestions on improving course materials. It may be that the uncomfortable nature of the material, discussion, or remark is unintentional, however, these incidences are important to address. We are all learning (including myself) and we stand to gain as a classroom community through respectful discussion, trust, and mutual support.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Class Start and End Times
It is both Stamps and U-M policy to start class at the posted time and to have students leave class 10 minutes prior to the posted class end time. This policy was put into place by the university in 2018 and reflects the 'Michigan Time' practice. For example, a class posted as starting at 8:30 will begin at 8:30, and a class posted as ending at 10:45 will allow students to be dismissed at 10:35. Stamps adopted this practice in fall 2018.

Be sure to bring your laptop to all class meetings unless meeting off-site.

Schedule subject to change; instructor will notify students in advance via in-class and Canvas announcements of changes.

Week 1
1/8 *Classes begin*

1/9 Introductions
Community agreement
Syllabus workshop

Week 2
1/14 Issue Development

1/16 Choose campaigns and set tone

Week 3
1/20 *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Symposium (no classes)*

1/21 Choose campaigns and set tone

1/23 Change Theory

Week 4
1/28 Change Theory

1/30 Building Power

Week 5
2/4 Building Power

2/6 Social Action Walk & History

Week 6
2/11 Research

2/13 **Portfolios Due #1**
Midterm course feedback survey
Group dynamics

Week 7
2/18 Strategy & Tactics

2/20 Strategy & Tactics

2/21-3/09 Undergraduate Juried Exhibition at Stamps Gallery

Week 8
2/25 Campaign Kickoffs

2/27 Campaign Kickoffs

Week 9
3/01-3/09 Winter Study Break (no classes)

Week 10
3/11 Campaign Plan

3/13 Launch Campaigns
Portfolios Due #2

Campaigns through end of semester
Continue exploring artist-as-activist precedents/socially engaged creative practices/social practice theory.

Week 11
3/18

3/20

Week 11
3/25

3/27

Week 12
4/1

4/3

Week 13
4/8

4/10

Week 14
4/15

4/17 **Portfolios Due #3**

4/18 Last day of Stamps classes

Week 15
4/22 Last day of university classes

4/21-4/23 Sophomore Reviews

4/24-4/25; 4/28-5/1 Final Critiques and Exams

Final
Thursday, 4/24, 4:00-6:00pm
Campaign Presentations & Binders Due

Spring 2025 Summit on College Social Action presentations (date TBA)
