Art in the Age of Networks - Networks as a Way of Thinking

Rabeya Jalil

Lesson Sequence

for Digication e-Portfolio

Rabeya Jalil

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(I would like to thank Sean Justice, my professor at Teachers College, Columbia

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Rabeya Jalil, rabeyajalil2013@gmail.com
Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi
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Art in the age of Networks
Networks as a way of thinking

3 Theme-based and Material-based Units (with lessons and lesson sequences)
Proposed Curriculum for 1 academic semester

Student Body: Sophomore (2nd year) or Junior (3rd Year) students
in an Undergraduate Visual Arts School

Summary/ Abstract

The theme-based and material-based units (with lessons and lesson sequences) propose a curriculum for one academic semester in an undergraduate visual arts school (for sophomore, 2nd year, or junior, 3rd year students). However the lessons could be modified and tailored to any age group developmentally. This curricular framework aims to foster collaboration (within individuals, materials and disciplines), explore networked pedagogy and networks in pedagogy as a collaborating force through and with the visual arts and explore the materiality of the code and the digital media. The course also engages with new media theory and literature, investigates the materiality of the digital media as collaborators, mediators and metaphors and reflects on how technology affects pedagogy and allows students to tailor projects according to their own interests. The course content is flexible in its approach with plenty of elbowroom. The 3rd Unit of the suggested curriculum also seeks to advocate for social justice; students cultivate perspectives about the power of digital media to address social issues, they probe into matters of social justice or injustice with the featured artists and make connections with the artistic processes and goals of the artists (listed in the lessons) to reflect on the sociopolitical context of their own art making. The students also think about *networks* as an abstract or tangible concept (digital, social, physical, and biological networks) and create works in an open-ended, student-centric environment that encourages critical thinking, independent decision-making and enables them to chose their own nature/ track of projects.

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Umbrella themes/ philosophies

1. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY
2. DIGITAL NETWORK AS A MEDIATOR
3. DIGITAL NETWORK AS A METAPHOR

1. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

       Collaboration amongst individuals:
Collaboration with the media department (intellectual/ technical expertise, sharing of resources and materials, media)
Teachers as facilitators

       Collaboration within materials:
Collaboration amongst materials within the digital technology and materials within the traditional media
Within digital networks, web 2.0 and web 1.0, scratch, iMovie, Photoshop and HTML (different materiality within the code)

       Collaboration within disciplines:
Exploring Trans-, Multi-, Inter-, Intra- and Cross –disciplinarity in Art-Technology based practices

2. DIGITAL NETWORK AS A MEDIATOR
- Make connections across different media
- Combine and collaborate within various kinds of materials; with the traditional and digital media. Students will first create work manually and will later render and treat it with the new media
- Later, it could be the reverse of the previous sensibility; students will first create work digitally and will later render and treat it manually/ outside an interface/ in the traditional media

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3. DIGITAL NETWORK AS A METAPHOR
- Think about 'Networks' as an abstract concept (digital, social and biological networks, pencil as a network, gossip as a network, epidemic as a network, talking/ hearing, body gestures as networks, *Chinese Whispers* activity)
- Reading/ resource material discussion
- Exploring urban spaces/ public places as networks
- Online social networking: Facebook, YouTube and Flickr, Social media as networks

Objectives

This learning object is an idea/ plan/ prototype/ framework for a curriculum that

- Fosters Collaboration (within humans, materials and disciplines)
- Explores networked pedagogy and networks in pedagogy as a collaborating force/ agency through and with the Visual Arts
- Explores the materiality of the code and the digital media
- Engages with new media theory and literature
- Reflects upon (and meta-thinks about) how digital networks as a collaborator, mediator and metaphor might affect pedagogy in relation to what will be taught.
- Is flexible in approach with plenty of elbow room – allow students to tailor projects according to their own interests
- Could be modified and tailored to any age group developmentally
- Advocates for social justice; students cultivate perspectives about the power of digital media to address social issues
- Addresses issues of social justice or injustice with the featured artists. Students to investigate the goals of the artists listed in lessons to reflect on the sociopolitical context of their art making.

Pre-requisites:

1. Students should be familiar with or have already taken a course about Scratch - a programming language learning environment, created by the MIT Media Lab. It is intended to motivate children and beginner programmers for further learning through playfully experimenting and creating projects, such as interactive animations, games, etc.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scratch_%28programming_language%29)
2. Students should be familiar with Photoshop, Apple iMovie
3. Students should have prior experience of digital photography and the use of scanners

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Unit 1a
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

Main Objective:
Students will learn to combine and collaborate with the traditional and digital media. Students will first create work manually and will later render and treat it with the digital media; in Photoshop, through a scanner and in Scratch, etc.

Activity and goals:

1. Introduction to Scratch
   a. Play around, tinker in Scratch
   b. Scratched resources
   c. Introduce the idea of remixing
2. Make rubbings (using paper, pencils, crayons and pastels) of natural and man-made materials (leaves, bark, pebbles, brick, walls, twine, threads etc.), scan various materials or tangible textures (fibers. laces, net, sandpaper etc.) or photograph different surfaces to achieve various textures to as the raw material to render in Scratch to create a code animation/ code poem.
3. Make sketches/ drawings/ collages to use in Scratch to create a code animation/ code poem
4. Create an "About Me" project as a code animation/ code poem

Materials Used:
Colored crayons, magazines, charcoal, pencils, white drawing paper, Scratch software, computers, scanner, Adobe Photoshop

Transition into Unit 2:
Bring one or more images, photographs, cut outs, art work, videos, documentaries, webpages, films, excerpts, clippings or advertisements that reflects your interests, intrigues you, fascinates you or disturb you.

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Unit 1b
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

Main Objectives:

1. Learn to combine and collaborate within various kinds of materials; with the traditional and digital media. Students will first create work manually and will later render and treat it with the new media
2. Learn to collaborate within two programs/ departments/ specialties, experience multidisciplinary collaboration
3. Learn to work in groups and share resources

Materials Used:

Optional traditional media: acrylic paint, tempera, charcoal, pencils, glue, brushes, and a variety of paper (tissue paper, construction paper and magazine clippings), clay, cardboard, found objects, toys, dolls or any other materials

Optional digital media: Computers, Scratch software, computers, Apple, Flash, Dreamweaver, iMovie, Scanner, Adobe Photoshop, digital still camera, video camera

Activities and goals:

1. Open discussion/ Opening exercise: Think of and discuss the ways in which collaboration can happen organically (in nature) and inorganically (man-made).
2. Create (in groups of three or four) 2 or 3-dimensional tangible / traditional forms or compositions through traditional materials and found objects and then transform or render the artwork through the digital media with the help and resources of the new media department and digital technologies department.
3. Discuss and deconstruct the image, video, documentary, webpage, website, film excerpt, clipping or advertisement that intrigues, fascinates or disturbs you.
4. How would you respond to them?
5. As a response to your digital material, how might you visually articulate your thoughts and concerns by making a 2 or 3 dimensional composition; installation, collage or bricolage through the material of your choice (acrylics, tempera, clay, fiber, plasticine, play dough, bubble wrap, music/ songs cardboard, packing material, illustration, found objects, toys, dolls, materials

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from popular culture, acrylics, magazine cuttings, construction paper, printmaking, pastels, etc.)

6. Once the form is created, how would you further treat it or render it to make a video, game, performance, music, dance, play/ theatre, blog, website, code poem, animation, bricolage (with photographs, images or any with digital media), images, stop motion animation/ video, gif etc.

Transition to Unit 3:
Bring/ discuss a cultural object, ritualistic object, popular/ material cultural icon, toy, anything from your material, visual and popular culture that has a personal and/ or communal significance in your life

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UNIT 2
DIGITAL NETWORKS AS MEDIATORS

Main Objectives:

1. Learn to collaborate within two programs/ departments/ specialties, experience multidisciplinary collaboration
2. Learn to work in groups from across disciplines and share resources
3. Learn to collaborate with, combine and connect various kinds of materials; with the traditional and digital media. It will be the reverse of the previous sensibility; students will first create work digitally this time and will later render and treat it manually/ outside an interface/ in the traditional media

Materials Used:

Optional digital media: Computers, Scratch software, computers, Apple, Flash, Dreamweaver, iMovie, Scanner, Adobe Photoshop, digital still camera, video camera, music/ songs, CSS, tumblr, vimeo, Hex Fiend, HTML, Text Wrangler,

Optional traditional media: tempera, acrylics, charcoal, clay, fiber, plasticine, play dough, bubble wrap, cardboard, packing material, found objects, toys, dolls, materials from popular culture, acrylics, magazine cuttings, light box for tracing, construction paper, printmaking, pastels, printmaking, sculpture, collage, glue, brushes, and a variety of paper, tissue paper, construction paper and magazine/ newspaper clippings, clay, cardboard, found objects, toys, dolls or any other materials

Other mediums of expression: Performance, dance, music, play, theater, poetry, narrative, story

Activities and goals:

1. Discuss the cultural object, ritualistic object, popular/ material cultural icon, toy, or anything from your material, visual and popular culture that has a personal, communal significance in your life.
2. Respond to it.
4. Discuss and see Artists' works El Anatsui, Rishan Syed, Faith Ringgold, Laylah Ali in "Power", Pepon Osorio in "Place: No Crying in the Barber Shop", Susan Rothenberg in "Memory", Sarah Khan, Rashaad Newsome, Stephen Wilson, Amra Khan "Paint My World", Ferwa Ibrahim (after sharing ideas and feeding off from each others thought processes)
5. How might you visually or verbally (poem, narrative, phrases) articulate your cultural object/s (or anything else you wish to work with or include) that have cultural significance for you? They could be celebratory customs, rituals, traditions, religious events and practices or ceremonial activities.

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6. How might you visually articulate your thoughts and concerns by photographing, printing digitally in 3-D or 2-D, making a video, taking a piece of music/ song, dance, documentary, film, drama, website, code poem, animation, stop motion or gifs etc. that relates or responds to your cultural object?

7. Learn to make connections across different mediums.
   After creating their digital forms, they will render and visually articulate those works to create an installation, a stop motion video by physically manipulating the 3-D printed objects, a performance piece, a performative space, zines, text based installations, bricolage, sculpture, illustration, an object of utility (a dress, a curtain, a chair, table etc.), a collage with the physical 'you' in it (like a projection onto yourself), printed images, quilt, curtain, mat, rug, altar (or anything hanging, floating, standing, moving on the wall/ floor/ ceiling) or a series of photographs that convey personal narrative or a celebration.

8. Curate, document, display, critique and reflect on works

9. Official display in campus space if possible

Transition to Unit 4:
Handout readings for the next Unit.

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UNIT 3
NETWORKS AS METAPHORS

Main Objectives:

1. Think about 'Networks' as an abstract concept (digital, social and biological networks)
2. Learn and create with an open-ended, student-centric and broad based approach to art making and art education
3. Encourage critical thinking, independent decision making
4. Allow to chose their own nature/ track of projects
5. Advocate for social justice; students cultivate perspectives about the power of digital media to address social issues
6. Address issues of social justice or injustice with the featured artists. Students to investigate the goals of the artists listed in lessons to reflect on the sociopolitical context of their art making.

Materials or mediums used:

Optional digital media: Computers, Scratch software, computers, Apple, Flash, Dreamweaver, iMovie, Scanner, Adobe Photoshop, digital still camera, video camera, music/ songs, CSS, Hex Fiend, HTML, Text Wrangler

Optional traditional media: tempera, clay, fiber, plasticine, play dough, bubble wrap, cardboard, packing material, found objects, toys, dolls, materials from popular culture, acrylics, magazine cuttings, light box for tracing, construction paper, printmaking, pastels, printmaking, sculpture, collage, glue, brushes, and a variety of paper, tissue paper, construction paper and magazine/ newspaper clippings, clay, cardboard, found objects, toys, dolls or any other materials

Other mediums of expression: Performance, dance, music, play, theater, poetry, narrative, story

Activities and goals:

1. This is an very open-ended and broad based approach to learning where students will have the option to create a project; a space, object, form installation, performance, music, dance from a variety of media/ medium or just one medium alone. They may also choose to work independently, in groups or in groups across disciplines.
2. Discuss, elaborate and have a dialogue about individual student interest/ inclination to trigger off, instigate and generate ideas
3. Curate, document, display, critique and reflect on works
4. Official display in campus space if possible

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Themes for open-discussion:

1. Deconstructing the meaning of networks as metaphors
   1. What is a metaphor?
      Discuss our usage of traditional/ tangible technologies in everyday lives (pencil, chair, zipper)
   2. What are networks? Think about and discuss digital, social and biological networks
   3. Rethink of contemporary social networks through collective, emergent artistic activity
   4. Discuss 2 readings (given prior to the class session)
      a.*Prolegomenon: We're tired of tress,* Galloway & Thacker (2007)
      - Sovereignty and networks
      - Sourcing the nonhuman within the human, connectivity as a threat
      - Topology
      Topology (from Greek "place" and "study") is the mathematical study of surfaces. A major area of mathematics concerned with the most basic properties of space, such as connectedness. It is the study of properties that are preserved under continuous deformations including stretching and bending, but not tearing or gluing. The exact mathematical definition is given below. Topology developed as a field of study out of geometry and set theory, through analysis of such concepts as space, dimension, and transformation. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topology)
      - Möbius strips, which have only one surface and one edge, are a kind of object studied in topology
      - A three-dimensional depiction of a thickened trefoil knot, the simplest non-trivial knot

      b. *A Critical Digital Pedagogy for an Age of Social Networks*
      - Freewayblogger - Robert W. Sweeny

   5. Exploring urban spaces/ public places as networks
   6. Online social networking: Facebook, YouTube and Flickr, Social media as networks
   7. Biological networks: neurons, epidemic
   8. Metaphors of remixing (from last two units)
   9. Pencil as a networks, gossip as a networks, talking/ hearing, body gestures as networks
   10. Chinese whispers (activity)
   11. Will discuss a few artists' works: El Anatsui, Risham Syed, Faith Ringgold, Laylah Ali in "Power", Pepon Osorio in "Place: No Crying in the Barber Shop", Susan Rothenberg in "Memory", Sarah Khan, Rashaad Newsome, Stephen Wilson, Amra Khan "Paint My World", Ferwa Ibrahim, Rashid Rana in

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"Desperately Seeking Paradise" (after sharing ideas and feeding off from each others thought processes)

Rabeya Jalil is currently a Printmaking instructor at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan.

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Suggested readings

Castro, J. C. (2012). Learning and Teaching Art Through Social Media. *Studies in Art Education. (53)*2. 152-169.

Galloway, Alexander & Thacker, Eugene (2007), Exploit: A Theory of Networks , "Prolegomenon: We're Tired of Trees" pp. 1-22. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2007)

Lai, A. (2012). Culturally Responsive Art Education in a Global Era. *Art Education. 65*(5). 18-23.

Lankshear, Colin & Knobel, Michele (2006), New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning , 2nd Edition (New York: McGraw Hill/Open University Press 2006).

Lee, N. (2012). Cultuturally Responsive Teaching for 21st-Century Art Education: Examining Race in a Studio Art Experience. *Art Education. 65*(5). 48-53.

Peppler, K (2011), New Opportunities for Interest-Driven Arts Learning in a Digital Age: A literature review, commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, 2011

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Sweeny, R. (2013). A Critical Digital Pedagogy for an Age of Social Networks. In K. Tavin and C. Morris [Eds.]. *Stand(ing) Up, for a Change: Voices of Arts Educators.* (pp.128- 136). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Some Blogs and websites:

http://www.patriciaanders.com/?category_name=art-dolls

http://www.alteredbarbie.com/users/candi33

http://www.alteredbarbie.com/artwork/saddle-barbie-campaign-trail

http://www.freewayblogger.com/

http://www.chinh.in/

http://scratch.mit.edu/

http://scratched.media.mit.edu/

http://vimeo.com/19408116

www.w3schools.com/html/html_intro.asp

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