

Concept Studio 1 – The Self and the Human Being

Fall 2015

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Tuesday/Thursday 8:30am to 11:20am

CFA 307/CFA 310

Course Description and Some Guidelines

Concept Studio 1 is the first in a series of studio/concept experiences that you will have during the next four years, culminating with Senior Studio. This course is the first semester in College for most students and has all of the attendant adjustments and stresses. (This is College - NOT High School, You, yourself are totally responsible for what you do and don't do! Your health is absolutely critical to success. Regular rhythms of rest, nutritious food (avoid high glycemic, sugary, fatty foods) and daily physical exercise are central to this NEW life!

The purpose of Concept Studios is to address the generation of ideas and feelings outside the boundaries of specific media – to think and feel beyond previous experience – to stretch outside all former artistic constraints. The foundation idea of the Concept Studios is creative exploration and experimentation fired by curiosity and supported by research.

This course is designed to foster each student in developing personal and individual approaches to creating art. The Concept Studio is structured to address the integration, expansion and deepening of conceptual and behavioral skills with studio practice, academic histories, combined with visiting artists and other cultural institutional exposures (i.e. museums, theater and concerts).

The specific topics in each Concept Studio are addressed through a sequence of structured assignments that are media independent or nonspecific, in other words, we work with different 2D, 3D, and 4D media as well as your body as a medium. Each assignment is general -- a variety --of responses to the same general assignment is expected.

The primary focus of Concept I is the 'Self' and the human being. Within that framework is the exploration of identity formation, fantasy, desire and the power of storytelling, the stories we inherit and tell, in the construction of the "realities" we find ourselves being, creating and living in.

The secondary focus is the practice of the expansion of perception, abilities in analysis, communication and collaborative dialogue, the building of analogies, and the capacity to undertake specific research. You should reduce your inhibitions, expand your verbal presentation and listening abilities along with your ability to improvise resources for your artworks.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the clear communication of your ideas verbally, both in spoken and written form. As an artist you will write and speak to others your whole life and these skills are central to your success. (We will conduct an all-out

extermination of 'like', kind-of', sort-of' – or too rapid, mumbling, hedging or inaudible speech!) Group skills and communication skills will be an important part of your evaluation.

By the end of the Concept Studio 1 students should have developed journal/sketchbook skills and understand the basic nature of a 'critique' as a method of learning.

The purpose of Concept Studio 1 is to provide a platform on which to establish questions about the nature of art and your specific making relationship to it. It asks the questions about what is art and particularly what is your art.

We will explore autobiography, narrative, the role of fantasy, fact and fiction, memory; social and cultural ideologies and practices play in the construction and articulation of the Self. Our exploration will include a series of studio projects and readings through a wide variety of media and in different physical contexts.

Evaluation (grading) is based primarily on attendance and participation. (I am nearly obsessed with everyone being in class on time. I do not repeat assignments if you are not there!) Second, I expect all assignments to be done and presented in class on time, -- period, period, period! (The art world does not accept excuses! You either do it superbly or you don't exist.) Lateness or lack of attendance WILL result in lower grades. I am extremely impatient with any form of irresponsibility for yourself or your irresponsibility to and with other classmates. Self-responsibility and accountability to others is paramount.

It is really IMPORTANT to understand that this is NOT High School. It is over! You are beginning a lifelong set of commitments and behaviors for which YOU are completely responsible. Your good health is primary. DO NOT DO THINGS THAT YOU KNOW WILL MAKE YOU SICK.

In this version of Concept Studio 1 we will be time traveling and head-tripping through Ovid's long narrative poem *Metamorphoses*. It was completed probably around A.D 8 and contains the stories of more than 250 Greek and Roman myths. It is one of the greatest sources of stories for and one of the most influential works in western culture.

Trigger Warning

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains accounts of rape, murder, incest, infanticide, patricide, bestiality, flaying and many other things that you may find offensive.

By having you read this long narrative poem, that is more than two millennia old, I do not advocate or defend any of these acts. However, I do believe it is better to talk about bad things that have happened historically and that continue to happen rather than to live in denial. For all the bad behavior and sex and violence in *Metamorphoses* there is comedy and joy in the telling of the tales and Ovid does not express a dismal view of human life.

We will often critique these tales from Ovid using an intersectional framework. One that "considers how various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systemic injustice and social inequality.

Intersectionality holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society such as racism, sexism, biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, belief based bigotry, do not act independently of one another. Instead these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination."

Assignments/Projects

Your Garden of Earthly Delights – Your Golden Age (DUE Thursday, September 17)

In the medium of your choice create your version of a paradise on earth, your version of a vanished golden age.

Self-Portraiture and Narcissus (DUE Thursday, October 8)

In the medium of your choice create a self portrait or a series of self portraits that take into consideration the story of Narcissus in The Metamorphoses and in the influence of this theme on visual art.

Metamorphosis/Disguise (DUE Thursday, October 29)

Using a transformation from The Metamorphoses as inspiration, create a costume/disguise that completely alters your appearance.

Sequential Story (DUE Thursday, November 19)

Create a sequence of images (at least 10) alone or images with text that tell a story about love, desire and the difficulties therein.

Talking without Speech (Due, Thursday, December 10)

Using the stories of Arachne and Philomela as inspiration, create a work of art in any medium that "talks without speech."

Additionally you will **read** and be prepared to **discuss** in class one book from Ovid's **Metamorphoses** every week.

You will keep an **Artist's Journal/Sketchbook** that will be turned in twice during the semester, right before mid-semester and again at the end of the semester. Record your reflections on Metamorphoses, inspirations for art and life, observations of the world around you, and your process for each of the assignments.

You will do a final self-evaluation and self-grade which I will review with you, and, in some cases, modify up or down based on my evaluation. We will review this several times in class.

Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate creativity, curiosity, experimentation and invention, in the development and realization of artwork
2. Integrate form and content utilizing appropriate technical skills and contexts

3. Develop critical and analytical skills in relation to your work and the work of others
4. Use historical, contemporary, theoretical and practical research to inform your art practice
5. Effectively communicate in visual, written and oral forms
6. Develop organizational skills to work independently

Please check out the course calendar on Blackboard to see what's going on in class so you can be prepared!

Grading/Evaluation

Attendance/Participation	30%
Sketchbook/Journal	20%
Project Assignments	50%

Finally, I am your general advisor for your first semester at CMU. If you have non-class questions, please ask me. Usually others share such questions and problems - so it is good to discuss them among our group. If we cannot solve them, we can probably point you to individuals or resources that can help. We will spend some time in class on planning your life ahead: summers, study abroad -- health and study skills.

You are required to attend all the visiting artist and related lectures.

Additionally you must attend at least three off campus cultural events during the course of the semester. Keep an eye out on the Concept Studio Calendar for upcoming events of interest.

Generally, other than when we use them in a project, cell-phones, tablets, and computers, etc. are not to be used or even looked at during class. (I have and WILL take them if there is inappropriate behavior.)

Lastly, I do NOT do lengthy or last minute emails. Emails are for the purpose of short messages and necessary communication. I am NOT continuously on line! I do not text with students. My cell phone number listed above is for emergencies only.

Please Note:

No student may record any classroom activity without express written consent from me. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape classroom activities, you should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity Services, Disability Resources to request an appropriate accommodation.