

Do It Yourself: The Theory and Practice of Art and Social Engagement

(CEH-GA 3048)

Course Description:

Instructor

Dr. Ceci Moss
cecimoss@usc.edu

Time and Location

Tuesdays and Thursdays
5:30-8:30pm EST
Zoom

Office Hours

After class and by
appointment

The course will engage students in a critical discussion of alternative organizational models, social justice, and feminism in the context of nonprofit organizations. Some questions this course poses include: how do you start and run your own independent initiative, whether it's a publication, an art gallery, a music venue, or a filmmaker's co-op? What are the ideas that inspire such initiatives and how are they channeled or reflected in practice? Throughout the course we will look at models of such organizations, and discuss the challenges they face, both theoretically and practically, ranging from strategic planning and project management, to enacting activist politics and feminist principles. The course features guest lectures by leading figures in various creative industries who will reflect on their own experiences. By the end of the term, students will have a basic framework for starting their own initiative, as well of a sense of the broader creative landscape in which they might engage.

Note: This course is intended as a general overview of issues involved in starting your own project, and is not intended to provide you with specific legal advice. This course should not be construed as all-inclusive nor as the provision of legal services to any individual or entity.

Course Objectives:

- Familiarize students with the history and theory of artistic and socially-minded organizations.
- Empower student awareness of more equitable, inclusive, and transformative structures and practices for creative work.
- Provide students an opportunity to create a blue print for an independent initiative of their choosing.

Course Requirements:

You are expected to attend each class on time, prepared, alert, and ready to engage actively in discussion and activities.

You need to complete all of your assigned readings before class.

You are expected to fully engage in the discussions during class with questions and comments for the reading, assignments, and your fellow classmates.

Given the intensive and interactive format of the course, you are allowed one absence. **Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the drop by a letter grade.**

Phones should be turned off during class time. Respect the space and your peers, and refrain from texting, tweeting, etc. during class time.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Written Assignments:

Brainstorm: What do you want to create? In the form of a free write, describe your ideal initiative in detail, identifying location, audience, experience, etc. (1000 words)

Case Studies: Building off the case studies discussed in class, you will be tasked with selecting two to three organizations or businesses on your own, providing examples that you personally admire and want to emulate in your own work. What is the history and mission of each entity? What is its legal or organizational structure? Why, in your estimation, is this entity a model for success? Name two to three strategies, ideas or qualities demonstrated by this entity that could be helpful for your own project. (Up to 2000 words)

Two-Year Plan This will provide a two-year road map for your creative entity. This will include five separate sections that will be due over the span of the class: Mission Statement / Five Key Ideas / Institutional Goals and Strategic Initiatives / Three Benchmark Projects / Sample Projected Annual Budget. (no maximum word limit)

Presentation:

In the spirit of a Pecha Kucha, each student will do a **10-15 minute presentation with 3 slides** on the main concept behind their project. Slide 1 should include the project's name and its mission, Slide 2 presents a benchmark project, Slide 3 is open/wild card. **A PDF of the presentation must be uploaded to the specified "PRESENTATIONS" folder in Blackboard by 5pm on the day before the last day. No late presentations will be accepted. Each PDF should be titled "LAST NAME_FIRST NAME". We will organize the presentations alphabetically by last name in the class.**

Note: While presenting, it is best to know your material very well so that you can make contact with the audience rather than reading directly from notes. Please be clear and concise. Do not meander and keep your presentation to the 15 minute maximum. You are expected to time your presentation in advance to allow for class feedback.

Other:

In light of the enormous impact of COVID, students are invited as collaborators to the following Are.na channel to share articles, interviews, reflections, writing, etc. related to the future of nonprofit institutions in light of this crisis:

<https://www.are.na/ceci-moss/do-it-yourself-the-theory-and-practice-of-art-and-social-engagement>

Grading Policy

30%: Participation and attendance

20%: Brainstorm and Case Study

30%: Two-Year Plan

20%: Final Presentation of Project

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 59 and below

Grading Scale: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; and F indicates inadequate work.

Course Materials:

All course readings are posted on NYU Classes.

Course Schedule

| Week | Subject | Assignments/Reading |
|--------|---|--|
| Week 1 | | |
| 5/26 | <p>Imagine the World You Want to See – and then Create It</p> <p>RuPaul once said, “Find out what it is <i>you</i> have that <i>makes you unique</i> and <i>special</i>, and cultivate that. And <i>bring</i> that out and then <i>bring that to the party</i>.” In this first session, we’ll engage in activities to distill your vision for a project. What do you want to bring into the world? How is that vision distinct? Why is it important? We will also situate your vision within the reality of a COVID landscape.</p> <p>Exercise (in class): First day check-in, where we ask: What are your objectives for taking this course? What would you like to take away from it? What action items do you anticipate after taking this course? In other words, what are you interested in doing or working on after you leave this class?</p> | <p><i>Read:</i></p> <p>Women’s Center for Creative Work, <i>A Feminist Organization’s Handbook</i>, pp. 4-24</p> <p>Terry Wolverton, “Introduction” in <i>Doin’ It In Public: Feminism and Art at the Women’s Building</i> Eds. Meg Linton and Sue Maberry, (Los Angeles: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011)</p> <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <p><i>Taking Residence: A History of A.I.R.</i> (Directed by Meredith Drum)</p> <p>https://vimeo.com/27435656</p> <p>Organizational Case Study: <u>The Women’s Building (1973-1991)</u></p> <p><u>Women’s Center for Creative Work (2013-Present)</u></p> <p><u>A.I.R. Gallery (1972-Present)</u></p> <p>.....</p> |
| 5/28 | <p>Evaluating Your Resources and Your Approach</p> <p>Resources come in all shapes and sizes, from friends with a woodshop to an extra nook in your apartment. In this session, we will ask, what do I need to start my project and what do I have? What can I build with what I have? How can I best build it? Where can I best build it? How will that form accurately realize your intentions?</p> | <p>DUE:</p> <p>BRAINSTORM ASSIGNMENT</p> <p><i>Read:</i></p> <p>Women’s Center for Creative Work, <i>A Feminist Organization’s Handbook</i>, pp. 38-64</p> <p>Common Field, <i>The Machine Project Guide to Starting Your Own Art Space</i>, pp. 1-31</p> |

Exercises (in class):

Women's Center for Creative Work, A
Feminist Organization's Handbook,
Exercises 2-5

Kimi Hanauer, *Blobwork: A Vision
of Contemporary Art Practice*,
(Baltimore: Press Press, 2015)

Kunsthal Gent, *User's Manual*
(2019)

Organizational Case Studies:
Machine Project (2003-2018)
Black Cube (2015-Present)
Living Room Light Exchange
(2014-Present)

Week 2

6/2

**Non-Profit, For Profit, and Everything In
Between**

There are a million ways to start and sustain a project. We will walk through different types of entities, from non-profit models (such as fiscal sponsorship, 501c3, etc) to for profit (LLC, sole proprietorship, etc) models, demystifying along the way. Further, each of these entities contain within them complex political realities, tied to tax law, income inequality, etc. This session aims to clarify how organizations are typically financially structured, while also attempting to dream outside of those models.

Read:

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, "Introduction" in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)

Alexis Clements, "It Is Broke: We Should Probably Fix It: The Nonprofit Model and the Arts" in *Hyperallergic* (September 4, 2012)

<https://hyperallergic.com/56248/it-is-broke-we-should-probably-fix-it-the-nonprofit-model-and-the-arts/>

Anthony Mancuso "Is Nonprofit Incorporation Right For You?" in *How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation: A Step-by-Step Guide to Forming a 501c3 Nonprofit in Any State* (NOLO, 2017)

Organizational Case Studies:

6/4

Guest Lecturer: Casey Summar, JD.

Casey Summar is an attorney and national consultant working with organizations and artists on organizational strategy, planning, and board development. She serves as Of Counsel with the Law Firm for Non-Profits and is an adjunct Professor of Law at Vanderbilt University. Prior to relocating to Southern California, Casey founded the Tennessee Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in 2005 which grew to become the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville, an arts service organization dedicated to ensuring a thriving arts community, for which she served as Executive Director for over a decade. In that role, she advised the boards and staff of over 400 nonprofits at all stages of organizational lifecycle from formation to operations to transition. Casey was recognized for this work as the 2016 Nonprofit CEO of the Year for Middle Tennessee. Casey serves on the boards of the national Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF+), the Carpinteria Arts Center, and the Lois & Walter Capps Project. Casey received her J.D. with honors from Vanderbilt University Law School and graduated magna cum laude from Belmont University with a B.F.A in Photography. Casey is based in Carpinteria, CA.

<https://www.caseysummar.com/>

6/9

Feminist Business Practice 101

Taking a cue from feminist business consultant Jennifer Armbrust's proclamation that "a business can be a model for a new social and economic order," we will take a moment to ask how our emerging ideas for a project connect to a more just and equitable world

Watch:

Jennifer Armbrust "Proposals for the Feminine Economy"

<https://youtu.be/i7kl7Bsa56g>

Read:

Jennifer Armbrust *12 Principles for Prototyping a Feminist Business* (Self-Published)

<https://sister.is/12-principles>

James McAnally *The Work of the Institution in an Age of Professionalization* (Temporary Art Review, 2016)

<http://temporaryartreview.com/the-work-of-the-institution-in-an-age-of-professionalization/>

Carla Cruz "Practicing Solidarity" (Common Practice: 2016) pp. 1-15

Paper Monument, Ed. As *Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* (Brooklyn: Paper Monument, 2018) pp. 1-50.

Organizational Case Studies:

[NAVEL](#) (2014-Present)

[EVERYBODY](#) (2015-Present)

[The Luminary](#) (2007-Present)

Collaboration, Community, and Self-Organization

Who are your collaborators or the people working with you to create your project? Who is your community or those will engage with what you have to offer? Who benefits? This session will look towards structures built to create greater equity, with special consideration of alternative models of self-organization.

Guest Lecturer: J. Rivera Pansa, artist and collective member of CTRL+SHFT Collective (Oakland, CA)

J. Rivera Pansa is an Oakland-based artist working in sculpture, installation, and performance. They work in mythologizing material ability for autonomy augmenting the embedded histories beyond utilitarian functions and rigid expectations. Through objects, they narrate the potential agency of the inanimate and those predominantly seen as a secondary or the often overlooked. Their work seeks to showcase the possibilities of individual authority for actions through spaces. They received their B.A. in Art Practice at University of California, Berkeley. They have shown work Rhythmix Cultural Works, Kearny Street Workshop at Arc Gallery, AS Gallery at San Francisco State University, California Center for the Arts and a collaborative piece in the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Rivera Pansa is a member of CTRL+SHFT Collective in West Oakland.
<http://www.jeromeriverapansa.com>

DUE:

CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Reading:

Stine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen (Eds.) "Foreward" and "The Inner and Outer Form of Self Organization" in *Self-Organized* (London: Open Editions, 2013)

Paper Monument, Ed. As *Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* (Brooklyn: Paper Monument, 2018) pp. 50-110.

Organizational Case Study:

CTRL+SHFT Collective (2015-Present)

6/16

Strategic Planning 101

What, precisely, is your project? Where will your project be in 1 year, 2 years, or 3 years? How do you define sustainability and put it into practice? What is a benchmark, and how is it useful? This session will provide an overview and breakdown of a basic strategic plan: Mission Statement / Five Key Ideas / Institutional Goals and Strategic Initiatives / Three Benchmark Projects / Sample Projected Budget.

Exercises (in class): Reviewing student examples of organizations from the Case Study assignment, we will closely read into their work through the lens of a strategic plan, identifying their Mission Statement, Five Key Ideas, Institutional Goals and Strategic Initiatives, and Three Benchmark Projects.

Read:

Michael M. Kaiser “Introduction” and “The Cycle and Strategic Planning” in *The Cycle: A Practical Approach to Managing Arts Organizations* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013)

Donald C. Hambrick and James W. Fredrickson “Are you sure you have a strategy?” in *Academy of Management Executive* (2005, Vol 19, No. 4)

6/18

Project Management 101

In other words, getting it done. How do you manage your time? How do you make things happen, and whose help do you need? Imagining your first public launch as a test case step-by-step, this session will review the basics of project management, from tools to effective communication strategies.

Exercise (in class): Identify three benchmark projects (i.e. exhibition, film screening, clothing collection, public launch, etc.). What is needed to pull these off, in terms of labor, lead time, etc? How do these benchmark projects align with your “Mission Statement” and “Five Key Ideas”? How do these

DUE:

- **MISSION STATEMENT**
- **FIVE KEY IDEAS**

benchmark projects align with your overall strategic ambitions?

Week 5

6/23

Income 101

If you're starting a non-profit venture, what available funds exist to start your project? Where can you find out about grants? How do you write a proposal? For a for-profit project, how do you get seed funding for an initiative? How do you manage various income streams?

Exercises (in class):

- Name one income stream for your project – it can be anything from selling movie tickets to your screening, to a relevant grant for your project.
- Create sample projected budget for one benchmark project.

DUE:

- **INSTITUTIONAL GOALS**
- **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**
- **THREE BENCHMARK PROJECTS**

Read/Watch:

Non-Profit:

Ellen Karsh *The Only Grant Writing Book You'll Ever Need* (New York: Basic Books, 2014)

Available through NYU:

https://bobcat.library.nyu.edu/permalink/f/1c17uag/nyu_aleph005878863

Fractured Atlas Webinars

Budget Building for Fiscally Sponsored Projects

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNQAVT7GCFM>

Introduction to Fundraising: Individual Donors and Online Campaigns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcewnb11Jc8>

Proposals and Grants for Fiscally Sponsored Projects

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf2AvZ6cdV4>

For-Profit:

SCORE Webinars

Simple Steps to Choosing the Right Financing

<https://www.score.org/event/si>

[mple-steps-choosing-right-financing](#)

Start a Successful Business on a Small Budget

<https://www.score.org/event/start-successful-business-small-budget>

Financing Tips to Help Your Small Business Grow

<https://www.score.org/event/financing-tips-help-your-small-business-grow>

6/25

Marketing 101

Marketing is a medium to develop your larger vision, but its means and ways can also be flawed. How do you message your project? How do you connect and build an audience? How do you connect and build a community? How can a marketing campaign be creatively adapted to reflect, build and illuminate the values driving your project in an authentic way? This session will cover marketing plans, graphic identity, website development, and a social media profile for your project.

Exercise (in-class):

Identify 1-5 marketing campaigns (commercial or noncommercial) that you find persuasively exemplifies the values of your project. What made these campaigns unique?

Exercise (in class): Step-by-step marketing plan for first public launch

Guest Lecturer: Sarah Hromack

Sarah Hromack is a media strategist

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DUE:

SAMPLE ANNUAL PROJECTED BUDGET

Read:

Brian Droitcour, *Open Channel: Commoning Institutional Voices* (Temporary Art Review, 2018)

<http://temporaryartreview.com/open-channel-commoning-institutional-voices/>

Sarah Hromack, *The Museum Interface* (Art in America, Sept. 2014)

<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/the-museum-interface-63033/>

Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron "Rethinking Blue Oceans" and "Cultural Innovation Theory" in *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

with over 15 years of experience working in the cultural sector. She is currently building and leading a new Digital Communications team for the Pratt Institute. Sarah has spearheaded thinking around digital platforms and interface design first as an early-adopting art blogger and editor and eventually as the founding director of the Whitney Museum of American Art's Digital Media Department, where she led the creative and technical development of the museum's digital channels. With a consistent focus on this growing field—developing radically new, insightful, and informed ways of engaging audiences with art and visual culture while maintaining an understanding of the technologies and platforms involved—Sarah regularly writes on the topic for publications such as Frieze, Artforum, Art in America, Mousse, and Rhizome. She has taught about the strategic relationship between digital media and arts organizations in the MA Art and Art Professions program at New York University Steinhardt School; she has also served as a visiting critic and writing mentor in the MFA Graphic Design program at the Rhode Island School of Design. Sarah's recent work, which actively engages questions of equality and representation in the digital space, is supported by a 2016 Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. Sarah holds an MA, with honors, in Visual and Critical Studies from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, California (2007) and a BFA, with honors, in Fine Arts and Art History and Theory from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland (2002).

<https://sarahrhromack.net>

Chantal Mouffe “Institutions as Sites of Agonistic Intervention” in *Institutional Attitudes in a Flat World* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013)

**Abundance: Rethinking Success
Outside of Scarcity**

Now that you've created a pathway for your future project, how do you create space and opportunity for others? How can your project's success be reimagined outside of capitalist models of competition and scarcity?

Exercises (in class):

Adrienne Maree Brown *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chicago: AK Press, 2017) (Excerpts)

Guest Lecturer: Tatiana Vahan

Tatiana Vahan, an LA-based artist, creates works at the intersection of research, activism, and community organizing. Her work analyzes and critiques existing social and economic systems. Currently this work focuses on the lack of infrastructure supporting the basic needs of local visual artists. Do artists have healthcare? Affordable housing? Sufficient grant opportunities? How can we realize these needs and collectively re-imagine a framework that supports artists? Vahan's work explores how economic and cultural value are created, how these processes create systems of power and hierarchy, and how this impacts our bodies as well as our individual and collective consciousness.

Vahan received an MA in Aesthetics and Politics from CalArts and a BFA in Visual Art from New World School of the Arts. She also has a professional bodywork practice, where she has been exploring the materiality of the body since 2002.

Read:

Adrienne Maree Brown *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chicago: AK Press, 2017)

Available through NYU:

https://bobcat.library.nyu.edu/permalink/f/ci13eu/nyu_aleph005687375

Danielle Jackson, "Art Spaces Can Bridge Social Divides – But First You Need to Know Your Neighbor" in *Artsy* (August 21, 2018)

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-art-spaces-bridge-social-divides-first-neighbor>

Organizational Case Study:
[Bronx Documentary Center](#)

Her artwork has been exhibited at 356 Mission Road, ICA LA, MDC Museum of Art + Design, Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Bass Museum of Art, Miami Art Museum, and Monte Vista Projects among others. Her work has been written about in Hyperallergic, LA Weekly, Los Angeles Magazine, and the Long Beach

<http://tatianavahan.com/>

7/2

Class Presentations of Final Projects and Group Feedback on Final Projects

Each student will present their final project, with a power point, in a 3 minute presentation. The class will be tasked with identifying helpful and inspiring ideas from each presentation during feedback, in order to compile a running list for the benefit of everyone.

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DUE:

- **FINAL PRESENTATION**

Assignment Due Dates

| Dates | Assignments |
|--------------------------|--|
| Thursday, May 28 by 5pm | Brainstorm Assignment |
| Thursday, June 11 by 5pm | Case Study Assignment |
| Thursday, June 18 by 5pm | Mission Statement Five Key Ideas |
| Tuesday, June 23 by 5pm | Institutional Goals Strategic Initiatives Three Benchmark Projects |
| Thursday, June 25 by 5pm | Sample Annotated Budget |
| Thursday, July 2 by 5pm | Final Presentation |