

ART 4908: Senior Thesis



CSUB Art & Art History Dept.
Spring 2026 • M/W 2:30–3:45am
Media Art Center 112

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www.billkelleyjr.net/csub.html

Office Hours CB 110D
Monday: 1-2:30pm / 4-4:30pm
Tuesday: 10-11am (via zoom)
Wednesday: 1-2:30pm / 4-4:30pm

This course is designed to assist both art education and art history students conceptualize and structures their final thesis project or paper. In doing so, this course is also meant to fulfill the role of professionalizing your final presentations and open a space for discussion on your future, whether it be professional development, furthering your education in graduate school, or personal fulfillment.

The university experience asks that you spend a great deal of time thinking and producing work. This conceptual work, if done rigorously will lay a foundation for your future cultural production, but it rarely prepares you for your professional development. In my experience, most art historians and art educators do not get the conceptual support in defining their practice and research methodologies until they arrive in graduate programs. By definition, this implies that professional advice about how your current research will define you professionally is also absent until after post-graduate studies.

The structure of this course will be primarily based on individual meetings, conversations and assignments to better assist you in defining your research and project objective. Those conversations and expectations will bend and adapt to your individual projects. I expect students to take notes during our private sessions and to complete homework assignments on the schedule we agree upon. But we will also have periodic moments where we meet as a class to go over issues such as grad school applications, have professionals in the field speak to us, and discuss the practical and institutional relationships and distinctions between art history and art education.

Students will be introduced to a variety of practical and complex concerns around being a professional in the art world. The field is developing and professionalizing rapidly around the non-profit sector, the art market and educational institutions, both within and without art. The question of what direction you might want to take will be upon you shortly. Will you go to grad school, like many of your professors are suggesting? If so, are you prepared for those applications? Or will you begin your career immediately after graduating? There are some skill sets you will need in either case. The first one involves being able to “talk” about your work. This involves writing skills as well as the emotional distance to be able to have a conversation about your research. You will need these skills to do everything from grant writing for projects and research statements for grad school applications, or simply to have a conversation with an artist. Being concise and precise about how you speak about your research will go a long way in how quickly you can develop your thesis/project.

The second skill I want to develop with you is the ability to develop a professional document or project. This should serve your ability to enter the job market, write a grant, or apply for grad school. Art Historians will either produce a research paper or curatorial proposal and Art Educators will produce either a research paper or lesson plan. Alongside these documents is an ever-evolving thesis statement that will frame and guide your work.

- Development the skills to discuss or present your research
- Research or Teaching Statement both written and oral (optional)
- Development of your Senior research project and presentation

Developing the skills to discuss or present your work is the most underrated of these two skills sets. Being able to handle a theoretical critique and engage in discussing ideas adjacent to your research and practice is fundamental. We will have numerous exercises where you will be asked to discuss your work orally and visually. The short summary of your research/project is called a thesis statement.

A teaching statement for art educators, or research statements for art historians, are essential for getting grants and submitting applications museums or graduate school. While I do require these statements for this class, the practice of developing a thesis statement in this class for your paper/project will serve as a foundation for their future development. We will have periodic reviews of your evolving thesis statement, and subsequent teaching/research statements in class, including my written feedback. Grammar here is essential. No fluff allowed.

The first part of the course will be frontloaded with student's working on their current projects and regular conversations and research assignments with the professor. This will assist in developing the language for your thesis statement. By the end of this course students will have these documents, be able to address these questions and have a better understanding of where you need improvement. Students should also be able to analyze other's work and writing and learn from those examples.

Pre-requisite:

Senior status and completion of two of UDB, UDC, UDD and must be a major in Art History or Art Education. It is expected that students attend all classes as information will be presented that is not in the reading, take thorough notes, participate in class discussions and complete the required reading and assignments. It is imperative that you stay current with the reading and videos as the class will be moving very quickly. Because our time is limited in class, students will have to work on assignments outside of class and work collaboratively with peers. Students will need to complete a Mid-term of assigned writing and presentation and a Final Presentation which includes your written thesis and visual presentation. We use Word and PowerPoint for all documents.

Please be aware that some of the content we will be discussing in class may provoke strong emotions and may make you uncomfortable. Art is inherently challenging to our faculties and we must be open to that which questions our understanding of things. Part of the purpose of this class is to create a space where we can have an open, equal and honest exchange of ideas – we must be mindful that, even when disagreeing with classmates, one needs to always be respectful of differing opinions. Please feel free to stop by my office during office hours. If you are experiencing a personal issue that is affecting your ability to do well in the course, please come talk to me – it is best to discuss these things early. Do not wait for a failing grade.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

- There is no required textbook for this class, but there will be assigned readings depending on your research plan.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

(for students interested in pursuing topics in greater depth)

- Bill Kelley Jr., *Personal Website*, www.billkelleyjr.net
- Laurie Rozakis, *Schaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Research Papers*, (McGraw-Hill, 2007)
- Sylvan Barnet, *Short Guide to Writing About Art*, (Pearson, 2014)
- Anne D'Alleva, *How to Write Art History*, (Laurence King Publishing, 2020)

GRADE BREAKDOWN

40% - Midterm Documents	A+: 100-98	A: 97-93	A-: 92-90
40% - Final Presentation	B+: 89-88	B: 87-83	B-: 82-80
25% - Final Paper	C+: 79-78	C: 77-73	C-: 72-70
25% - Participation	D+: 69-68	D: 67-63	D-: 62-60
F/I: 59 and below			

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Your participation grade is a combination of attendance at visiting artist talks, contributions to class discussions, group work, and pop quizzes. It is expected that students attend all classes as information will be presented that is not in the texts. Regular attendance is key as there will be a great deal of material covered in class that is not in the textbook. Two classes can be missed without an excuse. Every absence after two will cause one point to be deducted from your final grade. Habitual tardiness will also affect your final grade (each late arrival after two will count as half an absence). If you are absent for a family emergency or extended illness, come talk to me to arrange for making up the material missed.

Because nonverbal feedback is helpful in human interactions, **I expect students in this class to keep their cameras on during synchronous portions of online instruction**. With this in mind, please plan where you will be during class time so you can participate in a setting that is free from visual distractions. If you believe you have a legitimate reason not to have your camera turned on, please consult with me well in advance of the class period, and I will make a determination.

EXAMS

The two exams will not be cumulative. Students are encouraged to study together outside of class. Missed deadlines will count as an "F" unless the student has a valid excuse, cleared in advance, in which case a make-up exam will be arranged..

- **Midterm Documents / Presentations: 3/4, 3/19, 3/11**
- **Final Documents / Recorded Presentations: Mon, 5/18**

VISITING ARTIST LECTURE SERIES REQUIREMENT

As part of your participation in this class you are required to attend one Visiting Artist Lecture Series talk this semester organized by the Art & Art History Department (if you're unable to attend, please let me know as soon as possible to arrange an alternative assignment). They are all on Zoom and you will be required to turn in a 250-word reflection on that presentation.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have any needs or require accommodations related to a disability or learning difference, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). You can reach them by calling 661-654-3360 / TDD 661-654-6288 or visiting SADM 140. Once you have your accommodations letter, please schedule a time to meet with me during office hours to coordinate your accommodations.

RESPECT FOR THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Please show courtesy to your peers and instructor through:

- Coming to class on time and not leaving early.
- When speaking, turning off or silencing cell phones and no text messaging.
- Refraining from carrying on private conversations or sleeping/eating in class.

TECHNOLOGY FOR ONLINE COURSE & EMAIL USE

To assure your ability to benefit from all of the resources available in this class, please be sure you have a computer that meets or exceeds the following standards:

- A PC or Mac laptop with at least an i5 processor or equivalent
- 8 GB of RAM / 256 GB hard drive
- A web camera (built in or stand-alone)
- High speed internet access

Please also check your CSUB email regularly, at least once a day, as faculty use it to communicate important information about class and assignments. The instructor will only check his CSUB email during working hours (M-F 8am-6pm) and will not be checking phone messages during this semester.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments and exams will not be accepted unless prior arrangements are made (i.e. a legitimate, justifiable reason is needed for me to consider granting a student extra time, so plan ahead and budget your time) or if you have a justifiable illness with a doctor's letter. If you have an excused absence and your assignment is late, send it to me as an e-mail attachment as soon as it is complete and then check with me to see if you need to follow up with a hard copy. It is your responsibility to follow up when an assignment is late. We use Word and PowerPoint for all documents.

PLAGIARISM

I use TurnItIn software on all exams and papers (www.turnitin.com). It checks for AI use and all forms of plagiarized material. Don't tempt fate. Plagiarism is generally an automatic failing grade on the assignment. Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or words without proper acknowledgement. Two of the most common forms of plagiarism are defined by Diana Hacker in *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* (1994) as: "1) borrowing someone's ideas, information, or language without documenting the source and 2) documenting the source but paraphrasing the source's language too closely, without using quotation marks to indicate that language has been borrowed" (477). I regularly check to see if material has been plagiarized. Please ask me if you are unsure of when you should document a source (see Hacker 477-78) or what is meant by paraphrasing too closely (Hacker 467-79) and read CSUB's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Since production in art making and writing require analytical and critical thinking skills and are central to the learning outcomes of art courses, all art and writing assignments should be prepared by the student. The development of strong competencies in these areas is critical to preparing yourself for both class discourse and the creative workplace. Therefore, AI-generated or assisted submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT) on assignments.

SCHEDULE

Changes may be made to the schedule if necessary and will be announced at the beginning of class

❖ **WEEK 1**

- Jan 21: Introduction to class
 - Introduce yourselves and summarize your planned research project.
 - Cover Canvas, Box and Zoom and how the class will be structured.
 - Professor will model mind mapping project for homework assignment.
 - Review Thesis Statements for your project
 - Complete: Thesis Statements and Mindmap to upload to your Box folder.

❖ **WEEK 2**

- Jan 26: Personal Mind Maps and Thesis Statements
 - Upload mind maps to Box folders and present in class
 - Begin discussion on writing a thesis statement for your project
 - Draft/share thesis statement in class
 - Complete: draft thesis statement and all materials uploaded to Box folder
- Jan 28: Individual work sessions #1 (individual Zoom conversations)
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement ready in Box to review

❖ **WEEK 3**

- Feb 2: Individual work sessions #2
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement ready in Box to review
- Feb 4: Individual work sessions #3
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement ready in Box to review

❖ **WEEK 4**

- Feb 9: Professional development
 - Dr. Kelley interviews CSUB Art Ed Lecturer Ryan Rickard. Ask questions!
 - Introduce Research and Teaching statements
- Feb 11: Research Statements and Teaching Statements
 - Discussion on what makes a good Research and Teaching statement
 - Draft/share Research and Teaching statement in class
 - Complete: thesis statement and all written materials uploaded to Box folder

❖ **WEEK 5**

- Feb 16: Individual work sessions #1
 - Zoom meeting in studio space for individual studio crits, take notes

- Have your updated thesis statement and writings ready in Box to review
- Feb 18: Individual work sessions #2
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your updated thesis statement and writings ready in Box to review

❖ WEEK 6

- Feb 23: Individual work sessions #3
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your updated thesis statement and writings ready in Box to review
- Feb 25: Writing your CV
 - Write a draft CV, bring it to class and share
 - Read pgs 39-51 of GYST pdf [online](#)

❖ WEEK 7

- Mar 2: Professional development
 - Dr. Kelley interviews BMOA Art Program Coordinator Maria Ornelas
- Mar 4: **Midterm Presentation**
 - Mid-term presentation of your thesis research, group 1

❖ WEEK 8

- Mar 9: MIDTERM DOCUMENTS DUE & **Midterm Presentation**
 - Turn in your thesis research documents in Box
 - Mid-term presentation of your thesis research, group 2
- Mar 11: **Midterm Presentation**
 - Mid-term presentation of your thesis research, group 3

❖ WEEK 9:

- Mar 16 – Individual work sessions #1
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review
- Mar 18: Individual work sessions #2
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review

❖ WEEK 10

- Mar 23: Individual work sessions #3
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review

- Mar 25: Discussion regarding Graduate School
 - The particularities of different grad programs and their applications

❖ **WEEK 11**

- Mar 30 – Apr 1: Spring Break, No Class

❖ **WEEK 12**

- Apr 6: No Class, Professor at a conference
- Apr 8: Professional development
 - Dr. Kelley interviews Art Educator/Historian TBD

❖ **WEEK 13**

- Apr 13: Paper presentation tune-up Part 1
 - Present your Senior thesis presentation, with class feedback.
- Apr 15: Paper presentation tune-up Part 2
 - Present your Senior thesis presentation, with class feedback.

❖ **WEEK 14**

- Apr 20: Paper presentation tune-up Part 3
 - Present your Senior thesis presentation, with class feedback.
- Apr 22: Individual work sessions #1
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review

❖ **WEEK 15**

- Apr 27: Individual work sessions #2
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review
- Apr 29: Individual work sessions #3
 - Individual Zoom meeting for writing/research crits, take notes
 - Have your thesis statement/paper ready in Box to review

❖ **WEEK 16**

- May 4: Professional development
 - Dr. Kelley interviews Art Educator/Historian TBD

- May 6: No Class

❖ **FINAL EXAM**

- May 18: Final Senior Thesis presentations DUE in Box by 4:30pm
 - 15-minute recorded presentations
 - PowerPoint presentation file
 - CV, Thesis Statement, Teaching/Research Statement
 - Art Historians turn in 15-page paper
 - Art Educators turn in Lesson Plan