

Master of Arts in Cultural Studies Graduate Research Conference

May 10, 2013

Presentation Abstracts (*by alpha*)

Leslie Albrecht

Beyond the Aesthetic: An Exploration of Identity and Habitus in the Arts through Oral History

How we define ourselves is more important than how we are defined by society, and should be influential in creating societal definitions. With this idea as a foundation, I examine the roles of artists in society through a video oral history project, influenced by two theories: Stuart Hall's discussion on how society creates agreed-upon definitions for identities and roles from a shared history; and Pierre Bourdieu's idea of habitus describing how society defines each role and position within its framework. I present a short film encompassing the project to examine how artists define themselves and their roles in society; why they choose to work in the arts; and their perceived societal contributions. Looking beyond the aesthetic, I suggest that these artists provide a critical role in shaping society through creative thought and new ideas, from the buildings around us to the technology and tools we use every day.

Kaelyn Caldwell

Feeling, Thinking, and Acting Beyond Liberal White Hope and Complacent Action

The community engagement literature bemoans the current state of apathy that seems to dominate the American public today. Progressive educators tend to respond to pervasive complacency by insisting on the cultivation of hope—hope for change, hope that people will start caring enough to “make a difference”—even if only a small one. Hope, then, seems to be commonly linked to action and is represented as the opposite of complacency. It is worth asking, though, what does this kind of hope do? From what does hope arise and is it possible that hope could prevent substantive structural change from happening? In this project, I rearticulate certain forms of liberal hope as complicit with the production of complacency and an assimilationist politics. Through spoken word, excerpts of an academic essay, and a zine, I present my critique and perform an emerging, alternative form of hope, one that cannot be subjected to sanitized and rationalized futures, privileged denial of the fucked up world we live in, or a liberal hope that vests its interests in complacent action while simultaneously denying complicity.

Tyrell Edwards

Establishing Student Support Services Through Community Based Action Research

Community Based Action Research is collaboration between a researcher and the community affected by an issue with the goal of devising strategies to resolve it. The primary focus of my research is institutional change, specifically in student support services for historically underrepresented student populations such as: students struggling with hunger issues, undocumented students, refugee students, and international students. I discuss my role in creating programs of support through community participation. My questions of concern are: what is the student's awareness of the resources on campus? What is their experience using these resources? How can we better support these student populations within the institution? I will be highlighting the programs of support that were established

through community partnerships with students, staff, faculty and departments at the University of Washington Bothell. The impact of these programs will be demonstrated through an audio visual production of student and staff testimonials and a view of the programs in action.

EJ Juárez, Erin Sanchez, and Jody Rauch

Everyday Experts: Cultural Studies as _____.

This presentation is committed to helping facilitate a dialogue about how each of us, everyday, engage in Cultural Studies. As experts in our own experiences and biases we are uniquely able to explore how we step out of the confines of academia and start engaging people, organizations and systems outside the institutions of primary research, non-profits or an arts-based framework. What does it look like to mobilize Cultural Studies frameworks in your everyday life? We utilize collaboration and embodiment to illustrate how the definition of Cultural Studies is not fixed, but constantly evolving. Through an interactive presentation based on our individual work, we invite you to see Cultural Studies in a broader context, one which implicates you in its application, representation and consequences. How will you fill in your _____?

Amanda Kercmar

Below the Deck: A Critical Mapping of Luxury Cruise Culture

Grounded in key concepts and problematics from Cultural Studies, Critical Tourism Studies, and Critical Geography, my capstone project considers how the luxury cruise industry is discursively produced. With reference to verbal and visual resources used in promotional materials from Seabourn Cruise Line (an industry leader headquartered in Seattle), I am specifically interested in the ways luxury is "spatialized" and the ways "ideal" luxury passengers are imagined. Inevitably, these processes privilege certain social and embodied realities while obscuring others; and while luxury travel may sometimes be marketed as "affordable," it is clearly not intended for everyone. More broadly speaking, the representational politics of this single (and locally situated) company point to the ways that ideologies of travel are globally (re)imagined and to how class status is economically, culturally, and continuously (re)organized.

Tonja Lewis

"White Trash": Classism within White Culture

"White Trash" expresses positions either of inferiority or superiority depending on the user. Whiteness studies mainly focus attention on "white privilege" and its relation to non-white cultures. However, an historical analysis reveals that "white privilege" contains a classism that is non-racial and extremely dehumanizing. By applying Edward Said's theories on Orientalism, I highlight the "other" in whiteness studies and to show how classism exists in American society through language that expresses the degrees of acceptability in human behavior by using markers such as dress, education, housing and social activities. These markers make room for traces of pejorative language as a part of everyday human discourse which rarely questions the damage the term 'white trash' does to individuals and society. The deconstruction and eventual elimination of classist terms will depend on fundamental changes in the discourse around class in American society.

Amy Patterson

Visualizing Down syndrome in Ukraine

More than sixty percent of children born with Down syndrome in Ukraine are placed into the state's institutional care system, an approach inherited from its Soviet past. A growing number of families are

choosing to raise their children with Down syndrome at home, but the existing academic literature on this population tends to focus on the poor conditions and outcomes for children living in institutions, with little focus on the lived experiences of families who decline this type of care.

This work combines participant photography and interviews to examine the experiences of sixteen Ukrainian families who are raising a child with Down syndrome at home. The project suggests that these families are critiquing the existing discourse around Down syndrome in their country by deliberately parenting their children in the community, in an effort to change Ukrainian society's view of Down syndrome. They have turned parenting into an act of resistance.

Katherine Shaw

Drawing on Memory: An Exercise in Experience and Articulation

Whenever I type the words “domestic violence” into a Google search, the images I receive are of female victims with motivational taglines such as “Reach out” and “Don’t be silenced” attached. As an individual who has experienced domestic violence, these are not images that I relate with. Rather than feeling empowered, I feel anxious...

In a 2008 report, it was estimated that between 60,000 to 120,000 adult women in the Seattle area had experienced domestic violence and there is an increasing need to assist these survivors. However, the conversation surrounding domestic violence revolves around an inherent expectation for the survivor to seek assistance and successfully leave the abusive situation. In recognizing that domestic violence is underreported and is often unresolved, there is an opportunity for local organizations to re-evaluate their practices to ensure that all survivors (such as male survivors and non-heterosexual couples) receive adequate assistance.

Jason Tentor

Artistic Relativity: Performative Activation

Mediated passivity, as a result from electronic entertainment and communication has affected the daily life of the digital consumer, or so says art critic Nicolas Bourriaud, the author of the 1998 book, *Relational Aesthetics*. As my capstone project in the MACS program, I desired to take back my performative agency by enacting relational art performances on the sidewalk before every First Thursday Art Walk located in Pioneer Square, Seattle. My first project was entitled *Inverted Panhandler*, in which I constructed a cardboard sign that read, “Anything Helps...Need a dollar?” I was distributing money rather than asking for it! Of the ten interventions I implemented in this context, some were playfully political while others were meant to contradict the first assumptions of the audience/participants. I worked in the temporal/transient space of the public sidewalk where my projects commenced unannounced to explore the regulative social structure of the site.

Cora Thomas

Creating Innovative Spaces for Student Success: The Story of a Student Driven Peer Mentorship Pilot Project

A peer mentorship pilot project was designed and implemented by a small team of undergraduates collaborating to envision, explore, and take part in peer mentorship (seniors and juniors mentoring sophomores). This project aimed to create an innovative space for students to learn-by-doing, build supportive relationships, collaborate with peers, connect with campus resources, and use self-reflection

techniques to understand their own learning and development of their peer-to-peer relationships. This pilot acts as a catalyst in creating a sustainable program driven by STUDENT VOICES.

The project is part of a larger research study to explore how UW Bothell can better support sophomore students via peer mentorship. This research could reveal reasons behind high sophomore attrition rates while discovering through firsthand accounts how the university can support sophomore (and all student team members) success.

The project is conveyed through use of metaphor, spoken word, poster representation, and the student team sharing their experiences.

Rachel Tomczek

Who's Invited to the Table?: An Exploration of Food Access, Food Spaces and Food Justice

Food insecurity abounds in Washington; for example, one in four children lives in food insecure households. Since the beginning of the recession, the number of Washington state families struggling with hunger has almost doubled. Since 2008, the number of households experiencing hunger rose from 88,000 to 160,000, or 6.1 percent of total households. Washington has the 11th highest rate of hunger in the nation and is 18th in food insecurity. In a state rich in agriculture, why do we have people going hungry?

I researched the barriers, real or imagined, that would cause someone to not participate in a local food production site. I also looked at the structures of power surrounding food spaces and the affects power has on inclusivity and exclusivity. I designed a blog at foodspaces.blogspot.com to create conversations within these food spaces addressing the issues of food access and ways to change these barriers.

Brandon Yost

The Epistemologies and Reflexive Practices of "Googling"

Under the sway of what is typically characterized as Web "2.0" we have a number of conflicting ways of talking about web-based knowledge and information seeking: on the one hand, we praise online spaces as egalitarian and democratizing; on the other, we are concerned about the complacency of public users in the face of gatekeepers like corporate search engines and we worry about the reliability of information. In considering how knowledge is produced online, however, it is also important to recognize the role of individual agents and their everyday information-seeking practices. In this regard, my research looks at "Googlers" and some of the ways they engage information seeking technologies as examples of community-driven knowledge production. Through this kind of "ground-up" approach, I suggest that we all play an important part in not only challenging problematic knowledge, but also in its' production.

Michelle Zebrowski

Personal Narrative: The Stories That We Tell

Personal narrative has much power. It has the power to give voice to embodied experiences and to create a space for healing. It also has the power to be silencing and oppressive. In this workshop, we will explore the power of personal narrative. We will consider how power relations and our social location impact the way that we frame our own stories. We will also consider how these dynamics impact the stories that we tell or do not tell about ourselves and each other. We will also consider how we are impacted by the stories that others do or do not tell.

