



SCHOOL OF ART

SART6101: EXPERIMENTAL ARTS

SEMESTER 1, Summer school 2015

Students should read this Outline in conjunction with the COFA 2011 Student Information Guide which provides essential information and is available from the COFA Document Library <http://docs.cofa.unsw.edu.au/>

### **COURSE STAFF**

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**Course Coordinator:** Associate Professor Paul Thomas

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Consultation times:

### **Other Teaching Staff:**

Room:

Phone:

Email:

Consultation times:

### **COURSE INFORMATION**

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Units of Credit: 6

Teaching Times and Locations: F202 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm

Parallel Teaching: none

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

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### **COURSE SUMMARY**

Experimental Arts will provide an intensive experience of the nature and potential of an experimental and transdisciplinary practice art, design or digital media.

It will explore the wide variety of experimental art practices as creating a range of new conceptual, linguistic and philosophical problems requiring solutions that draw upon the expertise and experience of curators, media practitioners, creative artists, visual thinkers, hardware and software engineers, architects and mathematicians.

Experimental Arts will facilitate students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds to develop practice-led research within the areas of emerging technologies. The course will enable students to combine the creative ideology associated with the arts with the immersive aspects of new technologies, to develop a basis for research into areas of experimental art.

“We have entered the experimental age...Experiments are no longer conducted just in the laboratory. They have become collective experiments that concern each and every one of us.” Bruno Latour, 2004

Key questions will be explored through the project include:

What is experimentation? What makes art ‘experimental’? What are the results of aesthetic experiments and why do we need them? What is revealed through the process of experimental practice? Could artists invent new modes of experimentation with/for science? What are the differences between experiments and inventions; experiments and failures; experiment and innovation?

### **COURSE AIMS**

This course will:

- 1) enable students to understand the nature and role of experimentation and the experimental in contemporary practice;
- 2) enable students in art, design or media to construct models of their own practice in their fields which are experimental; and
- 3) enable students to explore and gain an understanding of transdisciplinarity in contemporary cultural practice.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the conclusion of Experimental Arts students will be able to:

1. Investigate notions of experimentation in art, design and media
2. Develop a practice of experimental research that allows for the potential of new models of creativity and innovation
3. Visualise and present the outcomes of experimental research

## **GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES DEVELOPED IN THIS COURSE**

Experimental Arts will assist students in developing the following capabilities and attributes:

1. Scholars' who understand their discipline in its inter/transdisciplinary context
2. Scholars who are capable of instigating independent and collaborative enquiry
3. Professionals who are capable of independent, self-directed practice led research

## **TEACHING STRATEGIES & APPROACH TO LEARNING**

This course is taught in an intensive mode and is designed to challenge student preconceptions as to the nature of their discipline and the ways in which experimental practice is undertaken. The focus of teaching is on guided group and individual experimental practice where the outcomes are less important than the exploratory research.

Experimental art is often achieved independently of what is explained, reviewed, or talked about in class. Often these solutions are based on lectures and demonstrations. Experimental outcomes are the result of "problem finding" rather than "problem solving".

The best creative solutions extend the given assignment into another area or level of exploration.

Good creative solutions combine other people's discoveries in the solution that does not present a new problem.

Ordinary creative solutions dilute ideas into a simple component of what is required, and do not explore problem finding.

Poor creative results are obvious attempts to exploit the easy solution to an assignment already discovered by the student.

## **ASSESSMENT**

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The project will be broken into three parts with the total weighting of 100%. Failure to present the projects will constitute failure to meet course requirements. Students must be punctual and participate in all activities. Students must complete all set work, which is to be submitted on time. The student will be expected to show evidence of the achievement of the course objectives. Assessment will be carried out with a final day of presentation in the mid-semester break. All experimental work produced must be presented along with research journal and a 300-word statement for each of the three experimental concepts.

Assessment will be based on:

- Teaching and learning activities stated in the course schedule.
- Innovation and quality of experiments undertaken.
- Commitment to experimental research practice.
- Attendance, attitude and participation in all course activities.

As an intensive course, the progress of the work will be evaluated in day four. The purpose of this evaluation is to inform students of their progress and assist them to

address problems that, if left unaddressed, may result in failing the course. An indication will be given to the student by grade.

**There will be one major thematic project:**

***Assessment Task***

***Title: "SERENDIPITY" - Project in 3 parts.***

***Weighting: 100% overall***

***Assessment Brief:***

***In this project you are required to conceive, produce and present a body of experimental art or design work in relation to the notion of "Serendipity".***

***Definitions:*** Serendipity is "a natural gift for making useful discoveries by accident". What is often missed in modern discussions of the word Serendipity is "sagacity" which means being able to link together apparently innocuous facts to come to a valuable conclusion.

Experimental science defines itself as being based on systematic observation of phenomena for the purpose of learning new facts or testing the application of theories to known facts

***Approach:***

***Progressive assessment is used to evaluate your engagement with and development of experimental abilities regarding:***

***Part 1: Innovative and conceptual progress,***

***Part 2: Independent progress,***

***Part 3: Skillful progress,***

***Prepare a Final Visual Presentation as a fully formed proposal demonstrating three self-determined experimental concepts, each accompanied by a 300 statement of meaning.***

***Part 1 Assessment activity:***

***Initiate physical experiments and collect documentary evidence of random processes used to identify and generate data on a physical location.***

***Your aim is to*** create a mechanism as a random process to help you identify a physical location then use any materials and means to document that location. Take a container and collect things that catch your eye. It is important to gather as much data of the location in as many forms as you can.

***Due:***

***Weighting: 20%***

**Assessment Criteria:**

Assessment Criteria:	GOOD ✓	AVERAGE ✓	VARIABLE ✓	POOR ✓	MARK Out of 10
1. Problem finding initiated					
2. Experimental data collected					
<b>TOTAL MARK Out of 20</b>					
<b>FEEDBACK:</b>					

**Part 2 Assessment activity:**

**Visualise your experimental investigations in a Research Journal, online Journal and contribute to the online critique of process and discussion of ideas.**

**Bring back** collected evidence from the random process to form the basis for your conceptual and material experimentation. You are encouraged to actively use the experimental process to help explore, develop or extend beyond the basic requirements in order to increase the possibility of serendipitous discovery.

**Due:**

**Weighting: 30%**

**Assessment Criteria:**

Assessment Criteria:	GOOD ✓	AVERAGE ✓	VARIABLE ✓	POOR ✓	MARK Out of 10
1. Independent experimentation and analysis evident					
2. Research visualized in Journal					
3. Online contribution engaged and constructive					
<b>TOTAL MARK Out of 30</b>					
<b>FEEDBACK:</b>					

**Part 3 Assessment activity:**

**a body of work resulting from individual research and experimentation.**

Test your experiments against various spatial constructs. Consider how the

experimental art concept is described by the space?

When a work is constructed then the space it exists within is part of that experiment as is the observer.

Document their physical attempts to explore the spatial relationships needed to construct meaning. How the experiment is observed and exists in the world leads to further discovery and experimentation.

**Due:**

**Weighting: 50%**

**Assessment Criteria:**

Assessment Criteria:	GOOD ✓	AVERAGE ✓	VARIABLE ✓	POOR ✓	MARK Out of 10
1. Three experimental concepts visualized in final presentation					
2. Coherent 300 word statement of meaning synthesised for each experimental concept presented					
3. Experimental ideas constitute a informed proposal					
4. Command of experimental research strategies skillfully demonstrated					
5. Potential for further creative experimentation in practice-led research is acknowledged in presentation					
<b>TOTAL MARK Out of 50</b>					
<b>FEEDBACK:</b>					

**Experimental art in relation to the notion of “Serendipity”**

*Serendipity is “a natural gift for making useful discoveries by accident” what is often missed in modern discussions of the word Serendipity is “sagacity” which means being able to link together apparently innocuous facts to come to a valuable conclusion.*

Experimental science defines itself as being based on systematic observation of phenomena for the purpose of learning new facts or testing the application of theories to known facts;

- a) Create a mechanism to develop a random process that can identify a physical location then use any materials and means to document that location. Take a container and collect things that catch your eye. It is important to gather as much data of the location in as many forms as you can.

- b) Collected evidence from the random process will be brought back to form the basis for the conceptual and material experimentation. The experimentation should encourage the student to explore, develop or extend beyond the basic requirements to increase the possibility of serendipitous discovery.
- c) The students will undertake activities to test their experiments against various spatial constructs. How is the experimental art concept described by the space? When a work is constructed then the space it exists within is part of that experiment as is the observer. The students will need to document their physical attempts to explore the spatial relationships needed to construct meaning. How the experiment is observed and exists in the world leads to further discovery and experimentation.

For this project the students or groups are expected to visualise and present their research in the form of a research journal and physical experiments with documentation.

The final project presentation will be in the form of three visual presentations of their experimental concepts, each with 300 words statements. The presentation will contain the research materials, and all corresponding experiments. (Presentation of concepts in this course means the demonstration of idea as a fully formed proposal.)

Final mark will be made on the following activities

- Participation (20%)
- Research journal and online contribution (30%)
- Final presentation (50%)

Assessment Criteria used for marking:

- Evidence of problem finding. (Innovative progress)
- Evidence of experimental exploration. (Conceptual progress)
- The ability to work independently. (Independent progress)
- Presentation of exploratory research. (Skillful progress)

Learning Outcomes & Graduate Attributes assessed in this task:

- Capacity to understand the role of experimentation.
- Ability to be able to develop multiple solutions
- Ability to document experimental research methodologies

Feedback strategy:

The students will be given regular feedback sessions within the intensive program. Follow up information can be provided online.

<http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

Successfully completing the project will demonstrate that the student is be able to:

- Present material, theoretical and contextual research via a series of concept sketches, PowerPoints or Maquettes that materialize the ideas.

- Work independently.
- Develop research skills for ideation

The students' work produced during the intensive will be evaluated for feedback.

The projects will be documented and experiments placed online for an ongoing evaluation of the online contribution.

The final assessment will be physically presented in Week 7.

### **CONTINUAL COURSE IMPROVEMENT**

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This is a new course. Student feedback will be critical in developing the course for future years.



## **DAILY COURSE SCHEDULE**

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Please note that at the beginning of each day there will be a short session that deals with various topics that relate to 'What makes art 'experimental'? Exhibitions, Artists or Art issues, be prepared to contribute to the discussion.

### **Day one Monday 19/01/2015**

**10 – 1pm Location: F 202: Introduction**

**2 - 5pm - Location: F 202: Experimental art in relation to the notion of "Serendipity" (Random devices)**

Lecture on experimentalism 12pm – 1pm

- A group discussion will look at the definitions of the key project.
- Explore the experimental arts website.
- Students will create a device to generate a random interface with an archive, maps or set of instructions.
- Build a prototype that demonstrates the feasibility of the random device to define a series of outputs.

Readings and links can be found at;

<http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

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### **Day two Tuesday 20/01/2015**

**10 – 1pm Location: F 202:**

**2 - 5pm - Location: F 202**

Lecture on experimentalism and theory 12pm – 1pm

- Discuss and identify what needs to be done in order to initiate your experimental research project by drawing up a mind map and timetable of activity.
- The students will gather the material/immaterial evidence from the outcome and instruction of their random device to locate a place or a thing.
- Record and gather material with as many means possible. Video, still photography, sound, (most of these options can now be found on mobile phones) notes, copy, emulate, drawings, collected samples and rubbings.
- Students will place selected gathered material online via photographs, scans, audio and video through various social next work media sites.

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**Day three Wednesday 21/01/2015**

**11 - 1pm Location: F 202**

**2 - 5pm Location: F 202**

(Presentation of information generated from Random Device)

- Students will present their/groups device coordinates and how that links to a location, archive or thing.
- In class we will evaluate outcomes of field research.
- Discuss in small groups various methods for concept development based on the research materials gathered.
- Distillation of the ideas to create contextualising frameworks that enrich the meaning of research material.
- Students will upload relevant information to the experimental art online website. The structural constraints of uploading the students work should be seen as part of the experimental process.

Readings and links can be found at;

<http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

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**Day four Thursday 22/01/2015**

**10 - 1pm Location: F 202**

**2 - 5pm Location: F 202**

(Practical experimentation of ideas)

- Create a series of experimental works not limiting your self to any particular medium.
- The experimental works should be based on problem finding not problem solving.
- Work on the methodology and conceptualization of experiments based on data collected
- Gather all material, theoretical and contextual research to present a series of concept sketches, PowerPoint's, visualizations, audio, video or machetes that materialize the ideas.

Readings and links can be found at;

<http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

## **Day Five Friday 23/01/2015**

**11 - 1pm Location:** F 202

**2 - 5pm Location:** F 202

Lecture on scientific experimentalism  
Spatialising experimental arts

Students are expected to develop a series of presentation of at least three concepts that are derived from but not illustrative of the individuals or groups located material research. Students will present their experimentation for review and feedback. Group participation in discussing research methodologies and recognition of 'apparently innocuous facts' required

- Students will be required to spatially test out their experimentations through a physical and virtual exploration of concepts.
- Students will develop innovative spatial relationships extending the agency and meaning of the concepts.
- Document all spatial experiments to place for review.
- Time will be made to demonstrate spatial testing of ideas inside the classroom. Students will prototype ideas made in the classroom that is then tested in their own time.
- How innovative is this new interpretation of space?
- Reference other artworks and concepts related to your assignment

Readings and links can be found at;

<http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

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## **Assessment Friday 30/01/2015**

**11 - 1pm Location:** F 202

**2 - 5pm Location:** F 202

Final Assessment will take place as part of a series of student presentations.

Final mark will be made on the following activities

- Participation (20%)

- Research journal and online contribution (30%)
- Final presentation (50%)

Assessment Criteria used for marking:

- Evidence of problem finding. (Innovative progress)
- Evidence of experimental exploration. (Conceptual progress)
- The ability to work independently. (Independent progress)
- Presentation of exploratory research. (Skillful progress)

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## **RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

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Resources will be available through the course website at <http://experimentalart.unsw.wikispaces.net/Home>

Please be aware of other resources including:

- Common information e.g. UNSW Library website: <http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html>
- Relevant COFA facilities: <http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/about-us/facilities/>

## **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS IN THIS COURSE**

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An integral part of this course is engagement in class activities. Consequently you may fail the course if you do not attend regularly even if you complete all assignments. You must actively participate in classes and complete all set work to a satisfactory standard as discussed in class.

Where, because of illness or misadventure, you cannot hand in an assignment on time, or your work has suffered to a substantial degree, you can apply for Special Consideration. Please note that you must apply no later than 3 days from when the assessment is due. For information on Special Consideration see: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

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