



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled* (1991)

A public is a relation among strangers... The address of public speech is both personal and impersonal.

Michael Warner

The art audience is the worst audience in the world.

David Hammons

Making Publics

Graduate Seminar | ART6933

Spring 2026 | Wed, 11:45 am – 2:45 pm

FAC, Room B1

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INTRODUCTION:

When Mierle Laderman Ukeles shook hands with 8,500 sanitation workers over eleven months, she wasn't greeting an audience that already existed. She was making a public — one that could recognize maintenance as cultural work and see sanitation workers as essential infrastructure. That public didn't exist before *Touch Sanitation*; Ukeles made it.

This graduate seminar challenges a foundational assumption: that audiences pre-exist the work. Instead, we examine how artists *make* publics through strategic decisions about description, documentation, framing, and circulation. Building on Michael Warner's analysis of publics as relations among strangers constituted by attention and Andrea Fraser's mapping of multiple art worlds with distinct economies and values, we re-examine three devices often taken for granted: *format* (how work is described and documented), *genre* (what kind of culturally classifiable practice it is), and *frame* (where work lives institutionally).

Positioning is not an accidental outcome or a mere question of identifying historical lineage; it is a *live analytical and ethical practice*. This course mobilizes theory and practice together accordingly. Weekly sessions combine critically self-reflective exercises, discussions of relevant readings, case studies of how artists have positioned their work, workshops producing materials you can actually use, and engagement with real, publicly oriented opportunities.

COURSE ARC:

This course moves through four sections:

1. **The Problem of Positioning** (Weeks 1–4): What is a public? How is it different from an audience, a market, or a demographic? There is no "the" art world. Andrea Fraser recently mapped five subfields operating with fundamentally different economies and values. Most artists work across several simultaneously. Before you can articulate your positioning challenge, you need to understand the terrain.
2. **Format as Argument** (Weeks 5–8): Statements are performative: they produce the practice they describe. Documentation is never neutral. This section examines format as a conceptual instrument: artist statements, documentation, grant proposals. How do you write for an audience that has no reason to care, or an audience whose primary disciplinary language is fundamentally different from those of art worlds?
3. **Genre and Frame** (Weeks 9–11): What is a genre, really? Genres standardly operate as expectation-setting devices: when you claim a genre, you invoke conventions and evaluative criteria. Practitioners often self-apply artist hyphenates — “artist-curator,”

“artist-researcher,” “artist-writer” — that are in fact *positioning claims*, not titles. What evidence does each hyphenate require? Where does work belong, and what responsibilities come with it?

4. **Stress Tests** (Weeks 12–14 + Final): Test with actual publics. Report on real applications. Refine your strategy. Show us the cumulative results of your semester-long engagements with self and publics.

When people say “successful artist,” they almost always mean successful in the mainstream art world: blue chip galleries, major museums, art fairs, auction records. But this is one art world among many, and for most artists, it is not the relevant one. Art worlds include: commercial galleries, alternative/artist-run spaces, academic circuits, community-based practices, regional scenes, online/internet art, discipline-specific circuits (e.g., ceramics, textiles, sound), non-art contexts (e.g., science, policy, activism), and DIY networks. Each has different economies, values, formats, and publics. Not everyone wants to operate across all worlds. Some of you are painters who want to show in galleries; some of you work within specific material traditions; some draw on cultural lineages with their own circuits. This seminar provides tools to make sense of many different trajectories.

Most artists figure out positioning years after grad school, if at all. This seminar compresses that learning into fifteen weeks. It will be uncomfortable. If engaged, you will articulate things you don't yet understand. You will apply to opportunities and get rejected. You will test publics and have the test fail. The point is not to get it right the first time but to iterate until you understand something new. By the end, you should be able to answer: Where am I positioned now? Where do I want to be? What moves will get me there? These are questions you'll keep asking after grad school. This gives you a head start — and a cohort of peers who understand what you're trying to do.

SCHEDULE:

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC: REQUIRED READINGS, AGENDA ITEMS, CASE STUDIES
SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM OF POSITIONING		
Week 1	Jan 14	What Is a Public?: Warner, <i>Publics and Counterpublics</i> (2002). Fieldwork sign-up. Opportunity Tracker introduction. Case study: Ukeles, <i>Manifesto!</i> (1969).

		READ FOR NEXT WEEK: Andrea Fraser, “The Field of Contemporary Art: A Diagram” (2024); Ben Davis, <i>9.5 Theses on Art and Class</i> (2013)
Week 2	Jan 21	Multiple Art Worlds: Fraser, “The Field of Contemporary Art: A Diagram” (2024); Ben Davis, <i>9.5 Theses on Art and Class</i> (2013). Where are you positioned? Case studies: Theaster Gates, David Hammons. DUE NEXT WEEK: Knowledge Inventory READ FOR NEXT WEEK: Frances Whitehead, “What Do Artists Know?” (2006); Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” (1984).
Week 3	Jan 28	What Do You Know?: Whitehead, “What Do Artists Know?” (2006); Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” (1984). Claims to knowledge acquisition vs knowledge production in art. Knowledge Inventory sharing. DUE NEXT WEEK: Positioning Statement v1 and 3 chosen opportunities
Week 4	Feb 4	A First Pass at Positioning: Workshop: articulating positioning challenges. READ FOR NEXT WEEK: Adrian Piper, "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists" (1990); Tania Bruguera, “Reflexions on Arte Útil” (2012)
SECTION 2: FORMAT AS ARGUMENT (w/ visiting artist workshop)		
Week 5	Feb 11	Statements as Performative: Piper, "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists" (1990); Bruguera, “Reflexions on Arte Útil” (2012).” Workshop: writing for different audiences. DUE NEXT WEEK: Three Artist Statements
Week 6	Feb 18	Multiple Statements Workshop and Opportunity Tracker Check-In (for Real Application I): Live presentation of statements with work. Workshop with intensive peer feedback.

		READ FOR NEXT WEEK: Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981).
Week 7	Feb 25	Documentation + Grant Writing: Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981). Documentation as argument. Proposal strategies, in particular the grant as aspirational document. DUE NEXT WEEK: Real Application I
Week 8	Mar 4	Real Application I Workshop: Feedback on applications. READ FOR NEXT WEEK: Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility" (2009), Miwon Kwon, <i>One Place After Another</i> (2002).
SECTION 3: GENRE AND FRAME		
Week 9	Mar 11	Genre as Expectation-Setting: Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility" (2009), Kwon, <i>One Place After Another</i> (2002). Hyphenate identities. Case study: Walid Raad / The Atlas Collective. DUE WEEK AFTER SPRING BREAK: Genre Map + Positioning Statement v2 READ FOR WEEK AFTER SPRING BREAK: Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique" (2005); Helen Molesworth, "How to Install Art as a Feminist" (2010)
Spring Break: March 14–21		
Week 10	Mar 25	Frame and Institutional Position: Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique" (2005); Molesworth, "How to Install Art as a Feminist" (2010). Case study: Forensic Architecture. DUE NEXT WEEK: Documentation as Argument
Week 11	Apr 1	Documentation as Argument Workshop
SECTION 4: STRESS TESTS		

Week 12	Apr 8	Opportunity Tracker Check-In (for Real Application II) + Public Test Prep DUE NEXT WEEK: Real Application II
Week 13	Apr 15	Real Application II Workshop + Continued Public Test Prep
Week 14	Apr 22	Prep for Final Public Strategy + Positioning DUE NEXT WEEK: Public Strategy + Positioning Statement v3
Final Exam	Apr 30, 12:30– 2:30 pm	Final Presentations + Synthesis: Live presentation of positioning statements with work; public strategy should be <i>enacted through</i> presentation. Compare three Positioning Statements. Celebration. What happens next?

KEY AGENDA ITEMS:

ITEM	DEADLINE	GRADE PERCENTAGE
1. Fieldwork Reports	ongoing	10%
2. Opportunity Tracker	ongoing	2.5%
3. Participation / Discussion	ongoing	15%
4. Knowledge Inventory	due Week 3	2.5%
5. Positioning Statement v1	due Week 4	5%
6. Three Artist Statements	due Week 6	10%
7. Real Application I	due Week 8	5%
8. Genre Map + Positioning Statement v2	due Week 10	10%
9. Documentation as Argument	due Week 11	10%
10. Real Application II	due Week 12	5%
11. Public Test	TBD	10%

12. Public Strategy + Positioning Statement v3	due by Final Exam	15%
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1. Fieldwork Reports require you to observe how publics are made *outside the art world*: political campaigns, subcultures, scientific communities, religious groups, brands, fandoms, mutual aid networks. Each student presents 2–3 reports (5–7 minutes each) during the semester.

2. Opportunity Tracker require you to research and share opportunities relevant to your practice: shows, residencies, grants, publications, commissions, jobs. We maintain a shared document. You are responsible for finding opportunities that fit your practice and sharing at least 3 with the group by Week 4.

3. Participation includes seminar discussion, reading discussion, peer feedback, and workshop engagement.

4. Knowledge Inventory requires you to map your knowledges (subject matter, technical, research methods, lived experience, disciplinary training), capacities (what you can do that others can't), and networks (who you have access to). This is not an artist statement; it's a map of what you have to offer.

5. Positioning Statement v1 will be your first attempt at articulating your positioning challenge (500–750 words). What art worlds are you operating in? What publics are you addressing? Where's the friction? *This is a first attempt. You're not expected to have it figured out.*

6. Three Artist Statements require you to write three artist statements (400–600 words each) for three different publics: (1) a Fraserian art world of your choice other than academia, (2) art academia, and (3) an audience that has no prior reason to care. Submit the three statements plus a 750-word analysis: What does each produce? What public does each address?

7. Real Application I requires you to develop an application package for an actual, high-level show, residency, grant, publication, or fellowship with a deadline during or shortly after the semester. This is not hypothetical; you aim high and submit a real application to a high-level opportunity, even if you think that opportunity is out of reach. We workshop materials before the deadline.

8. Genre Map + Positioning Statement v2 requires you to map the genres you're claiming, the evidence supporting each claim, and how genre shapes reception. This new statement (750–1000 words) incorporates genre and frame analysis into Positioning Statement v1, along with any clarifications or revisions to your description of your practice.

9. Documentation as Argument requires you to revise professional documentation of one body of work shot/edited to address a specific public. Include 500-word analysis of what argument the documentation makes and what public it addresses.

10. **Real Application II** requires you to apply to a second real, high-level opportunity. The mode of opportunity must be different, strategically chosen to align with your goals. What did you learn from Application I that shapes this one?

11. **Public Test** requires you, with your peers, to present work or materials to an audience outside the art world. Design, engage, and then document the encounter. What happened? What did you learn about what your work communicates?

12. **Public Strategy + Positioning Statement v3** requires you to revise and synthesize Positioning Statements v1 and v2 into an accurate, insightful, richly written whole (1000–1500 words). Public Strategy identifies target publics, moves you'll make, and what happens next. In your Public Strategy document, you will also compare all three Positioning Statements to map your trajectory of self-understanding throughout this course. The Public Strategy document will also provide a forward-looking, strategically structured plan for the remainder of your time in grad and three years after grad school — a plan to which you can refer at any time in the future.

READINGS:

Listed below are all the readings, optional and mandatory, that have most directly informed the arc of this course. For convenience, they are grouped by topic. It is by no means exhaustive. Only the readings mandatory for you to read are listed in the syllabus schedule.

ON PUBLICS: Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Zone, 2002); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," *Social Text* (1990); Lauren Berlant, "The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times," *Environment and Planning D*

ON ART WORLDS: Andrea Fraser, "The Field of Contemporary Art: A Diagram," *e-flux Notes* (2024); Becker, *Art Worlds* (UC Press, 1982); Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class* (Haymarket, 2013); Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter* (Pluto, 2011)

ON ARTIST KNOWLEDGE AND FORMAT: Frances Whitehead, "What Do Artists Know?" (2006); Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," *Theatre Journal* (1988); Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," *Sister Outsider* (1984); bell hooks, "An Aesthetic of Blackness," *Lenox Avenue* (1995)

ON OPACITY AND REFUSAL: Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan, 1997); José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications* (Minnesota, 1999); Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago, 2016); Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke, 2017); Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons* (Minor Compositions, 2013)

ON DOCUMENTATION AND ETHICS: Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981), Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image" (2009), Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* (2008); Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Zone, 2008); Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* (1986); Adrian Piper, "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists" (1990)

ON INSTITUTIONS AND SITE: Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," *Artforum* (2005); Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another* (MIT, 2002); Helen Molesworth, "How to Install Art as a Feminist" (2010)

ON GENRE AND PERSONA: Tania Bruguera, "Reflexions on Arte Útil" (2012); Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* (2009); Shannon Jackson, *Social Works* (Routledge, 2011); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (Verso, 2012)

ARTIST REFERENCES:

These artist references, grouped by topic, are provided as a resource to refer back to as we move through particular subject matters. A handful are treated as case studies.

ON PUBLICS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Suzanne Lacy, Allan Kaprow, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Hélio Oiticica, Rick Lowe, Theaster Gates, Tania Bruguera, Black Quantum Futurism (Rasheedah Phillips, Camae Ayewa), Frances Whitehead, Mel Chin, WochenKlausur, Park Fiction, Ala Plastica, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Assemble, Futurefarmers, Fallen Fruit, Candy Chang, Fritz Haeg, Mary Mattingly, J. Morgan Puett, Jackie Sumell, Temporary Services, Machine Project, Ultra-red, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Thomas Hirschhorn, Christine Hill, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Superflex

ON COUNTERPUBLICS AND OPACITY: Gran Fury/ACT UP, General Idea, Group Material, Fierce Pussy, Dyke Action Machine!, LTTR, David Hammons, Adrian Piper, Pope.L, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Zoe Leonard, AA Bronson, Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, Dread Scott, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Nao Bustamante, Ron Athey, Vaginal Davis, Juliana Huxtable, Tourmaline, Sondra Perry, American Artist, Lorraine O'Grady, Howardena Pindell, Senga Nengudi, Lorna Simpson, Kerry James Marshall, Adam Pendleton, Rashid Johnson, Mark Bradford, Ellen Gallagher, Wangechi Mutu, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Simone Leigh, Cameron Rowland

ON FRAME AND INSTITUTION: Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, Louise Lawler, Renée Green, Mark Dion, Cameron Rowland, Park McArthur, Maria Eichhorn, Tino Sehgal, Hasan Elahi, Walid Raad/The Atlas Group, Yael Bartana, Sanja Iveković, Carrie Mae Weems, Hito Steyerl

ON GENRE AND GENRE-CROSSING: Martine Syms, Cauleen Smith, Wu Tsang, Paul Chan, Arthur Jafa, Kahlil Joseph, Garrett Bradley, Sky Hopinka, Shirin Neshat, Steve McQueen, Isaac Julien, Hito Steyerl, Harun Farocki, Rabih Mroué, Walid Raad, Moyra Davey, Sharon Hayes, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Chris Marker, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Kevin Jerome Everson, Ja'Tovia Gary, Tourmaline, Sondra Perry, Evan Ifekoya, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Forensic Architecture

ON DOCUMENTATION AND ARCHIVE: LaToya Ruby Frazier, Forensic Architecture, Taryn Simon, Trevor Paglen, An-My Lê, Zoe Leonard, Dawoud Bey, Carrie Mae Weems, Lewis Baltz, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Alfredo Jaar, Susan Meiselas, Wendy Red Star, Will Wilson, Kali Spitzer, Dana Claxton, James Luna, Erica Lord, Nicholas Galanin

ON PUBLIC SPACE: Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, Ana Mendieta, Agnes Denes, Maya Lin, Doris Salcedo, Rachel Whiteread, Olafur Eliasson, Ai Weiwei, Amanda Williams, Nick Cave, Nari Ward, Leonardo Drew, Sam Durant, Oscar Tuazon, Postcommodity, Allora & Calzadilla, Francis Alÿs, Cai Guo-Qiang

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Distinguish between publics, audiences, markets, and demographics
2. Map your positioning across multiple art worlds
3. Articulate your knowledges, capacities, and networks in terms legible beyond the art world
4. Write statements and proposals calibrated to specific publics
5. Produce documentation that functions as argument for specific audiences
6. Analyze genre claims and institutional frames as positioning strategies
7. Identify and competently apply to strategic, high-level opportunities
8. Test materials with non-art publics and analyze the gap between intention and reception
9. Develop, revise, and execute a long-term strategy

POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE: This is a graduate seminar that meets once weekly and takes you seriously as an active practitioner, with real, publicly oriented opportunities calibrated accordingly. Your presence and your completion of the coursework is not optional, unless there is a documented standard excuse (illness, religious reason, family emergency, etc.) or there is a strategic

opportunity with real benefits to you. If you must miss, contact me in advance and make up all work.

WORK SUBMISSION: Agenda items must be submitted on Canvas before or by the start of the class on which the deadline falls. Real Applications I and II must have actual deadlines during or shortly after the semester; if you can't find appropriate opportunities, we'll problem-solve together.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS: You are expected to above all engage actively, generously, and civilly with others' work and ideas. *Learning to articulate and fully occupy your positioning (current or desired) requires that you be an active conversationalist and maker.*

RESOURCES: I take issues of mental and physical welfare extraordinarily seriously. As a graduate student, you are expected to be communicative about issues that might affect your course performance. In such cases, I do not need to know *what* details comprise the issue at hand, but I do expect to be kept informed *that* there is an issue at hand. For information on UF academic policies and student support resources, please visit <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>. Should you require accommodations, please register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) and provide appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to give the instructor. For mental health support, contact the Counseling & Wellness Center at 352-392-1575 or visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu>.

AI USE:

This course recognizes that AI is ubiquitous now. I implement no prohibition or grade penalty on the use of AI assistance. However, AI should be used only as an aid, not a *substitute*; your ideas, your choices, and your understanding of course materials must ultimately come from you. *You are expected to be fully honest about when and how you've used AI*; lack of transparency will be treated as a breach of academic honesty (<https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>).

Note that there are significant portions of this course's work — particularly the writing portions — that seem like they can simply be fed to an AI chatbot. This is not the case. Nearly every written agenda item in this course also requires that you present the item in class. Competence in your presentation of agenda items requires that you fully inhabit and are able to reasonably explicate and justify your decisions in live time — something AI cannot do for you. Part of what is being trained here in your practice is a nuanced recognition of when AI use *is* and *is not* appropriate as a part of your practice.