**ARTH 420/868 3.0**

**Art and Activism**

**Description**

This seminar asks questions about the relationships between art, activism, and our everyday lives. To do so, we will simultaneously: 1) revisit and reactivate art-activist strategies from the past; and 2) use critical theory as a tool to unpack, clarify, deepen, and/or expand our own (shifting) positions within this triad. The specific content of the syllabus will be based on your interests and investments and will be determined collaboratively during the first weeks of the term (more on this below). The goals of the seminar are inspired by *Blueprint for a Counter Education,* a 1970 “counter-university,” which took the form of a poster series and accompanying publication mapping the lines of mutual influence between radical political thought, activism, and artistic practices from modernism to the present. As a class, we will produce our own updated/reimagined *Blueprint* for the contemporary moment, which will be exhibited at Union Gallery’s Project Room (in an exhibition that we will curate) in April.

***Blueprint for a Counter Education*, 1970 and today…**

Within the context of the countercultural, decolonial, and anti-war movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, art and arts education were reimagined as sites of radical politics and worldmaking. Sociologist Maurice Stein and Larry Miller’s *Blueprint for a Counter Education* (1970) is an artifact of that moment that might still have some use in our own. Blueprint’s main component was a series of three posters that charted multiple possible relationships between radical political thought and art from the modern avant-garde to the present day. These posters were conceived of as a portable “counter-university,” an art-activist curriculum that could be adapted to different contexts and learning communities, including the new, experimental, and politically engaged California Institute of the Arts.

From today’s perspective, *Blueprint* has some major oversights, including the feminist, post-colonial, and critical race theories that were emerging at the time. And the artists it represents are disproportionately white and cis male. However, the methodological questions it raises are still important: How can connections between art and activism be mapped in a visually compelling, accessible, and generative way? How can critical theory be used as a tool for helping explain these connections? These questions will guide our effort over the course of the term to create a revised /reimagined *Blueprint* posters that reflect your ideas about art and activism in the present moment.

**How will this course be organized?**

The first seven weeks of the course will be dedicated to identifying, learning about, and discussing the social issues, artistic practices, and critical theories that you think should be included in your reimagined *Blueprint*. Weeks 8-12 will be dedicated to designing the Blueprint and curating the exhibition in which it will be displayed. As such, weeks 1-7 will be more reading/writing intensive. In the second part of the term, more time will be dedicated to the practical design, curatorial, and programming activities required to make the *Blueprint* and exhibition. You should expect to spend at least 10-12 hours a week on this course (this number includes the three-hour seminar on Mondays).