

Civic Art & Design Studio

Fall 2016 - JR270 4 Credits

Wednesdays, 10AM - 11:45AM. Ansin Building 205.

[Course Calendar](#)

[Assignments](#)

[Course Blog](#)

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[Catherine D'Ignazio](#)

Office Hours:

- Mondays 11:45am - 1:15pm in my office in Walker 611, 6th floor, 120 Boylston St. And by appointment.

Get in touch: Outside of class please contact me via [email](#) or Twitter ([@kanarinka](#)). You can also message me on Emerson College's Slack system ([@catherine_dignazio](#)).

Course Description

Civic Media means using digital media, technology and culture to create social change. Civic Art & Design are practices that leverage storytelling and culture to generate social change, to serve the public good and/or to imagine alternate collective futures. In this class we address the shifting sociopolitical role of the artist, designer and storyteller in a world beset by crises, inequities and global concerns. This course covers theories of Civic Art and Design as well as methods for including diverse communities and audiences at various stages in the creation of a project. We review numerous cases of civic art and conduct experiments in storytelling, data visualization, community art, performance, interactive documentary and networked art in order to interrogate where, when, how and why a Civic Storyteller takes action in the world.

Throughout the class, we model a design research process that engages with a public issue and culminates in the completion of a public art & media installation. This is an introductory class to get acquainted with storytelling about important civic issues through data analysis and visualization. No prerequisites.

This Fall we will be working on the topic of the "Transportation Safety" and taking the Boylston-Tremont intersection as our specific site. Students will work together in groups to produce a transmedia intervention at the intersection that consists of a physical transformation as well as a participatory media campaign or artifact. Our partners for this course are the City of Boston's [Vision Zero](#) program and the MA State Department of Transportation's [Safety Department](#).

Course Learning Objectives

- Students will develop a working definition of what it means for art, media & design to be "civic" as well as theories of art, media and design as they relate to socially engaged practice, including sources of existing tension and disagreement.
- Students will learn methods of listening, empathy and perspective-taking in order to understand the cultural pluralism of American society and see how other artists have addressed inequity and injustice with creativity.
- Students will examine, discuss and evaluate numerous cases of civic media, art & design with a particular focus on the sociopolitical role that art plays in society.
- Students will use traditional journalistic methods of newsgathering as well as design research methods to make creative work that connects with civic issues. Methods include interviews, site studies, content analysis, data analysis and visualization.
- Students will work together to create a public art and design project and user-centered design report about a public affairs research topic. The topic will change each year depending on class partners. The topic this year is "Transportation Safety" and the site is the intersection of Tremont & Boylston street.

Course Requirements

This is a hands-on studio course and we will do a lot of peer production of knowledge, so your participation and presence is essential to making it a success. This course is designed as a 3-module arc to introduce you to theories and cases of civic media as well as to methods for connecting to people and communities that can help inform your future creative projects. One of the most unique aspects of this course is that we will engage in a project with an external partner (the City of Boston's [Vision Zero](#) program and the MA State Department of Transportation's [Safety Department](#)) about driver, pedestrian and bike safety in Boston as the culminating project of our time together, so at the end of the semester we will be engaged in design research and production itself. While the project we are doing together has a set topic (transportation and urban planning and design in Boston), I would like you to engage with the design research assignments with an eye towards using similar methods in your own creative projects in the future. More than anything else, this course is about learning ways to reach outside your own perspective and use media and culture to address the many injustices, crises and inequities in the world.

Here is a description of these three modules:

1. **Context, Theory, Cases** - In this set of classes we get acquainted with theories and case studies of civic and digital media and establish a common vocabulary for discussing cultural work that deals with social and political issues. We introduce six core concepts of the class:
 - a. Civic Media
 - b. Civic Art & Design
 - c. Civic Imagination
 - d. Transmedia Mobilization
 - e. Infinitely Small Things

- f. Tactical Urbanism
- 2. **Design Research** - In this module, we host multiple guest speakers to help us understand the history and future vision of transportation in Boston. I also introduce design research methods and exercises that will help us complete our group final project. These include interviews, site studies, content analysis and data analysis.
- 3. **Production & Evaluation** - In the final part of the course, we create sketches, prototypes and then the final products. We also evaluate the work through comparative site studies and inviting guest critics to give us constructive feedback and think together with us in the format of a design critique.

Textbooks

Gordon, E., & Mihailidis, P. (2016). Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice. MIT Press.

Laurel, B. (2003). Design research: Methods and perspectives. MIT press.

Other readings and media provided digitally.

Assignments & Grading

Assignments are weighted by group:

Group	Weight
Participation & Attendance	10.0%
Civic Media, Art & Design Case Studies	10.0%
Design Research	30.0%
Final Project	40.0%
Total	90%

See [all assignments in Canvas](#)

Policies

Communications Policy

I will use [Canvas](#) to make announcements to the group. These often include important information about assignments, field trip meeting points and more. Double check to ensure that you are receiving email notifications from Canvas announcements.

Technology Policy

Students may use laptops and tablets to review readings during class discussions. If you are Facebooking or engaging in other distractions I will ask you to close your computer. I will ask you to put it away your cell phone if you are texting or talking on it in class.

Commitment to Social Justice & Diversity

For the duration of the semester this class is a community. Our class is a space for intellectual and creative exploration and expression. Some of the topics we discuss may be emotionally charged. All students must attend class, show up on time and stay the entire time, keep up on readings, turn in assignments on time, and actively participate in discussion. But just as important, the success of this class as a whole depends on each one of us supporting, encouraging, and respecting each other people in the class. Every student is responsible for adding value to our classroom experience.

Pay attention to your personal reactions and be sensitive to yourself and your classmates. A diversity of opinions contributes to an environment for intellectual expression and exploration. However, opinions that are blatantly racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, classist, or otherwise problematic will be challenged, and we will encourage you to explore and develop your understandings of power-and-privilege dynamics in the classroom and within larger society. Continuing discussion outside of class is highly encouraged, but please be mindful of the privacy of your peers.

Emerson College is committed to fostering a climate of respect for students, faculty, and staff, as well as others who participate in the College's programs and activities. Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructors will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving that classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with the course instructors or to contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 617-824-8528 or by email at diversity_inclusion@emerson.edu.

You may also report any issues to <http://www.emerson.edu/reportaconcern>.

Student with Disabilities

Emerson College is committed to providing equal access to its academic and social activities. Students with disabilities who are seeking consideration for services of accommodations should contact that Associate Director for Disability Services: 617-824-8277-8277, dso@emerson.edu, or Disability Services Office, Emerson College 120 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. Appropriate documentation from Emerson College's Disability Services Office must be provided to your instructors.

Attendance and Participation

“We always hear about the rights of democracy, but the major responsibility of it is participation.” Wynton Marsalis

Participation is key to this class - your feedback to your peers' work and participation in group work will be key to success. **Email me as soon as you know that you will be absent for any reason.** Your participation grade will go down whether your absence is "excused" or not. If it is excused because of a documented medical emergency or religious holiday, there are opportunities to make up some lost points by doing extra credit assignments. If you miss an in-class assignment such as a presentation or group exercise you should be prepared to take a 0 for it. Attendance will be taken at the start of class—1-15 minutes late you will be counted as tardy.

Late Work Policy

Each day an assignment is late (for whatever reason, good or bad) it will be marked down a letter grade. If your assignment would have been graded an A and it was one day late it will receive a B. If it's two days late it will receive a C, and so on. Note that that means that four days late means you will receive a failing grade on the assignment.

Calendar

Module 1: Context, Theory, Cases

Wed 9/7 - Introduction

Introduce Civic Media, Art & Design & our time together. Map out skills and backgrounds in the classroom.

Mon 9/12 - What is Civic Media? What is Civic Art & Design?

Read:

- [Introduction](#) by Eric Gordon & Paul Mihailidis (CM)
- [Effective Civics](#) by Ethan Zuckerman (CM)

Watch: [Janette Sadik-Khan's TED Talk about innovation in transportation](#)

Discuss readings.

Wed 9/14 - Infinitely Small Things

Read: [Civic Imagination & a Useless Map](#) by Catherine D'Ignazio

Identifying Injustice - A walking workshop. Form groups for group assignment due next week.

Mon 9/19 - Transmedia Mobilization & Pokemon Go

Read:

- [Transmedia Storytelling](#) by Henry Jenkins
- [Transmedia mobilization in the Popular Association of the Oaxacan Peoples, Los Angeles](#) by Sasha Costanza-Chock (Note this is an academic paper and it's a little dense. Read it closely and slowly and focus specifically on pp. 1-12 where he discusses transmedia mobilization)
- Case Study: [Moving from Perceptions to Realities: Lessons Learned from Hollow](#)
- Case Study: [Pokemon Go & Big Data](#) vs [The Racial Dimensions of Pokemon Go](#).
- **Play:** Pokemon Go

Discuss readings & the transformational imperative of Civic Media projects. Discuss final project as "transmedia" across the physical intersection & the mediascape of citizens.

Wed 9/21 - Cases Studies in Civic Media, Art & Design

DUE: [Group Case Study & Response #1 \(Group Assignment\)](#)

Read: Pimp my Carroça (CM 609-611), [Binders Full of Election Memes](#), Better Reykjavik (CM 229-235), [Aliens on Campus](#), [More than a Quota](#), It Gets Better (CM 333-341), Epic Fail: #MyNYPD (513-518)

Group presentations of cases studies.

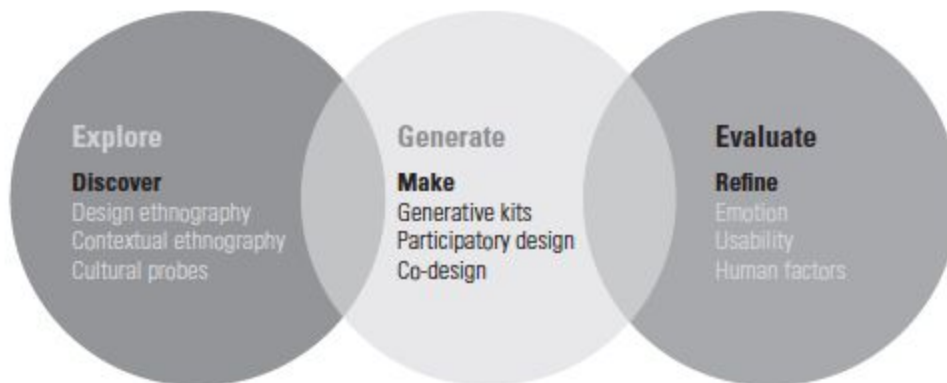
Mon 9/26 - Civic Imagination

Read: Superpowers to the People!: How Young Activists Are Tapping The Civic Imagination (CM)

Watch: [How to revive a neighborhood with imagination, beauty and art](#)

Guest: Miranda Banks

Wed 9/28 - What is Design Research?



Read:

- [Design Research: What is it and Why do it?](#)
- Muscular Design (BL)
- Qualitative Methods: From Boring to Brilliant (BL)

Discussion & practice. Create groups by mode of transportation.

Module 2: Design Research

Mon 10/3 - Field trip to Boylston-Tremont intersection to collect data

Due: [Crossing the Street: First Interview Assignment](#)

Read:

- The Changing Role of Research (BL)
- [Naturalistic Observation](#) by Edward P. Kardas

- Design Improvisation: Ethnography Meets Theater (BL)

Discuss readings. Review video footage and data logging template together. Divide into groups and assign data logging responsibilities. Field trip to intersection to observe and perform in situ.

Wed 10/5 - Our problem space: One local intersection and lots of distracted citizens

Due: Two peer reviews of the Crossing the Street assignment

Read:

- [Vision Zero Boston Action Plan](#)
- [NYC Second Year Accomplishments for VisionZero](#) (pp. 1-16 introduction and pp. 43 - 51 about Public Engagement)
- Short reads:
 - [LA Hires Artist for VisionZero](#) by Alissa Walker
 - [The Swedish Approach to Road Safety](#) by Sarah Goodyear

Presentation about Moving Together Conference by Aren

Guest Speakers: Bonnie Polin, Highway Safety Engineer for the State Department of Transportation and Charlotte Fleetwood, Transportation Planner, City of Boston

Mon 10/10 - No class, Columbus Day

TUESDAY 10/11 - A Short History of Bike/Pedestrian Advocacy Work in Boston

Guest lecture and consultation from Jeff Rosenblum

Read: [The Future of Crossing the Street](#) & [Completing NYC Streets](#)

Check out: [Livable Streets Alliance website](#)

Optionally Read: [How Cyclists Created a Political Movement](#)

Wed 10/12 - Tactical Urbanism & Design Jam I

DUE: Observation Assignment (Group Assignment, includes video, in person & performance

observations)

Read:

- Hispanic Culture in Design Research (BL)
- Browse tactical urbanism examples in: [San Francisco](#), [Kitchener](#), [La Paz](#), [Seattle](#), [Baltimore](#), [Vancouver](#), [Cambridge](#), [Boston](#)
- Browse media campaigns from: [Austin](#), [Newport](#), [Melbourne](#)

Short presentation on tactical urbanism. Discuss assignment & results. Make a collaborative map of who are the main groups of users of the intersection by mode of transport. Design Jam workshop.

Fri 10/14 - Teach-in on Race

Please plan to be on campus and participate in this important conversation from at least 10am - 11:45am. This is a mandatory class. It counts as the class on Mon 11/21 and attendance will be taken.

Mon 10/17 - Data Visualization Workshop I

Read:

- Overview of Quantitative Methods in Design Research by Stacey Purpura (BL 63 - 69)

Introductory data visualization workshop using data relevant to your mode of transportation.

Wed 10/19 - Data Visualization Workshop II & Planning Interviews

Read:

- **Install Tableau**
- **Watch:** [Lynda.com introduction to Tableau](#) (Watch Chapters 1,2,3 & 9,10,11)
- [Bus Ridership Dataset](#), [Hubway Bikerides Near Emerson Dataset](#), [Commuting Dataset](#), [Taxi Pickups & Dropoffs in August 2012 Dataset](#), [Crashes at the Intersection](#)

Data Visualization workshop with Tableau. Group work on Data Analysis Report. Planning interviews.

Mon 10/24 - The Future of Transportation in Boston

Due: Data Analysis Report & Interviews

Guest lecture from Alice Brown - 10:15 - 11:15

Kate presents

Read: [GoBoston2030 Vision Plan](#), pp. 7-30, 47-77

Wed 10/26 - Design Jam II

Based on what we know so far, what are some creative interventions we could do to promote more civil and safer behaviors at the intersection? Each group should come up with 6 ideas. At least one idea should be for something you can do in or near the intersection and one idea should be for something that you can do apart from the intersection (such as a social media campaign or video).

FRIDAY 10/28 - DUE: [6 Ideas Blog Post](#) (Group Assignment)

Mon 10/31 - Prior Work Case Studies in Civic Media, Art & Design

DUE: [Group Case Study #2](#) (Group Assignment)

Group presentations of cases studies. Your group should choose a case study in the Civic Media book or online that relates to your project.

Wed 11/2 - Paper Prototypes and Mockups Workshop

- Read: [Paper prototyping](#) (Ben O'Hear)
- Watch: [Short, funny paper prototyping demo](#)
- Watch (optional): Lynda.com [Photoshop 2015 Fundamentals - Chapters 9 & 10](#)

Workshop in paper prototypes and mockups. Crash course in Adobe Photoshop for communicating art & design ideas.

Mon 11/7 - Open Production Workshop to Assemble Your Pitch

Groups work to produce mockups/sketches of 2 of their six ideas to develop to pitch to our partners.

Module 3: Production

Wed 11/9 - Present your research and ideas to our partners

DUE: [Boylston-Tremont 2 Mockups Pitch Presentation](#) (Group Assignment)

Guest Reviewers & Partners: Bonnie Polin, Highway Safety Engineer for the State Department of Transportation and Alice Brown, Project Manager, GoBoston 2030, City of Boston

Mon 11/14 - Reflection on Critique & Production Management Workshop

Groups work together on next steps. Fill out prototype worksheet.

Wed 11/16 - Equipment Workshop

We'll learn how to use GoPros, Digital Cameras and Audio Recorders.

Mon 11/21 - No class - The teach-in on race on 10/14 replaces this class.

If you were not in attendance at the 10/14 teach-in on race you will need to do a make-up assignment.

Wed 11/23 - No class, Thanksgiving break

Mon 11/28 - Peer-to-Peer Production Workshop

Exact content TBD when groups have determined project direction and output format.

Wed 11/30 - Provide feedback to Emerson Architects (tentative)

DUE: Prototype & Documentation (Group Assignment)

Emerson's external architecture firm comes to class & we will give them feedback about their proposed changes to the Boylston streetscape.

Mon 12/5 - Rough Drafts & Final Open Production Workshop

DUE: Rough Draft Civic Art & Design Project (Group Assignment)

In-class critique of rough draft projects with an external guest critic.

Wed 12/7 - Final Project Presentations to Partners

DUE: Final Civic Art & Design Project Presentation (Group Assignment)

Present your projects to external stakeholders. Guest reviewers include Charlotte Fleetwood (City of Boston), Bonnie Polin (MassDOT), Dianne Paxton (Disability Services Office). Videos should show significant revisions based on feedback from the prior week.

Wed 12/14 - Final Reflection and Evaluation

DUE: Final Design Research Paper (Individual assignment, incorporating feedback from 12/7)

Open discussion about evaluation.
