Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
FACS3: Critical Discourses and Research Methods for Writing



Cameron Rowland, *Attica Series Desk* (2016)

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
UFACS		**2026-27**

Course Title	**Critical Discourses and Research Methods**
Course Contact	**Dr Neil Clements**

Credits	**20**
SCQF Level	**9**
When Taught	**Stage 3, Semester 2**

Associated Programmes	**BA (Hons) Fine Art**
Lead School	**School of Fine Art**
Other Schools	**N/A**
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2024

Course Introduction

This course supports you in building your knowledge, understanding, critical reflection, and research methods within Fine Art Critical Studies. As part of the course you will sign up for one of a range of elective-strands, which examine a specific critical discourse that is contextualised within relevant approaches, issues, ideas, and debates. These strands allow you to follow study routes connected to themes and conceptual approaches, and each strand cohort brings together students from different studio disciplines. The range of elective strands covers themes such as postcolonial theory, visual art and digital culture, art and anthropology, curating and curatorial thought, art and psychoanalysis, and queer theory.

The information available within each specialist area of critical discourse takes many forms. This course supports you to make informed judgements about the usefulness of these different forms of information, or sources. You are introduced to research methods, including selecting and applying sources, to support you to undertake subsequent research on a subject of your choosing.

All students share an assessment brief. The assessment consists of a Source Review that asks you to critically appraise a focused selection of sources relevant to a topic, within the scope of your chosen elective strand. The assessment approach enables you to enhance your understanding of the nature of sources and how to use them as research tools. It helps inform your approach to source gathering for the self-directed research proposal at the end of Stage 3, Semester 2.

Course Aims

This course aims to:

1. Develop informed knowledge and understanding of a range of critical discourses and research methods relevant to your own interests
2. Support the application of existing discourses and research methods best suited to a specific area of enquiry
3. Recognise the geographical and historical specificity of discourses, artistic and writing practices
4. Facilitate ability to independently locate, evaluate and synthesise the findings of a diverse range of sources, academic or otherwise
5. Enhance confidence to present an open-minded appraisal that avoids bias or unfounded assumptions in your own critical thinking

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an informed understanding of critical discourses and research methods that advances individual perspectives and interests
2. Analyse critical discourses using appropriate methods, in challenging and innovative ways
3. Communicate a critically informed evaluation of discourses and methods, in relation to the historical and global dimensions of contemporary art
4. Use selected research methods to build a critical approach that insightfully and ethically substantiates an argument
5. Present an effectively written argument, using textual and visual resources in a structured form to accepted academic standards

Indicative Content

The course will introduce students to:

1. Discourses that convey a multiplicity of perspectives about contemporary art, as well as culture more broadly
2. Critical research methods for planning, conducting and presenting research
3. Ways to evaluate the contextual origin of sources and their credibility/reliability
4. Approaches to present and synthesis information from a variety of sources
5. Methods to form a personal area of research from existing scholarship or commentary

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

This course uses a range of learning and teaching methods to inspire ideas central to creative criticality and artistic practice. Differing points of entry into the material being delivered is encouraged through the individual approaches introduced by the FACS teaching staff. This supports students to learn actively and engage in an explorative and individual approach to learning.

Students will engage in small and large groups as well as lecturer-supported self-directed study through:

- Lectures – a combination of whole year cohort and elective-strand lectures, employing a range of pedagogical techniques

- Seminars – a combination of whole year cohort and elective-strand sessions take various forms including collective close-reading, discussions, student-led provocations and/or presentations
- Group Feedback session - guides students on how best to improve and build upon their work to date through verbal feedback from lecturer and peers
- Drop-in Hour – Year Leader is available for one-on-one questions and discussion at this time

Digital resources and online workshops are signposted on Canvas to support student independent learning, engagement with the curriculum and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
20	**200**

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods
You will engage with meaningful and authentic assessment to support your learning and undertake self-evaluation to help build a reflective and evaluative approach to your learning. Formative feedback supports you in developing and refining your project work towards submission for summative assessment. Learning is supported through a range of formative activities with staff and peers, such as crits and tutorials offering ongoing formative feedback as you progress through the course. Formative assessment will take the form of a group feedback session. Formative feedback offers you the opportunity to present the progress of your project work to staff and/or peers, receiving feedback to support the development of their work towards submission for summative assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements
The Summative Assessment brief is available on Canvas and provides guidelines for the Summative Assessment, which is a Source Review (word count: 3,000 words). Summative Assessment is designed to support students to reflect on and communicate work produced in response to the assessment brief and learning and teaching activities associated with the course. Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment, which outlines reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Source Review	100	Week 12

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No

Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
If yes, then please provide the names of the other teaching institutions	

Reading and On-line Resources

The course indicative reading and online resources lists are accessible via Resource Lists. The list is reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.

Elective-Strand specific indicative reading and online sources are also available:

- Postcolonial Theory
- Visual Art and Digital Culture
- Anthropological Imaginations: Perspectives on Art and Visual Culture
- Curatorial Thinking
- Art and the Afterlife of Psychoanalysis
- Queer and trans otherwise