

# ART 4899.001 IADS Capstone Seminar: Radical design and the politics of failure

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Christina Donaldson (she/her/hers)

Email: Please contact via Canvas Inbox Messages

Office: 212

Office hours by appointment: Tuesdays, 12pm – 1:45pm

Additional virtual appointments via Zoom available. Please email to schedule an appointment.

**Communication expectations:** I will do my best to respond within 24 hours Monday - Saturday between the hours of 8am and 7pm. Please do not expect to receive a response on Sundays.

This class meets weekly in ART 181: Thursdays 11am – 1:50pm

## Course Description

ART 4899. *Special topics course for interdisciplinary art design studies majors. Advanced interdisciplinary study of art and design.*

*“Utopias have always entailed disappointments and failures.”*

— Saidiya Hartman

*“Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world.” — Jack Halberstam*

## Course Structure and Content

This semester, we will study failure as a conceptual and practical framework for understanding contemporary creative and institutional life. The course examines scholarly and cultural perspectives on failure, with particular attention to how economic and organizational structures shape norms of success and productivity. We will analyze how meanings of failure differ across social and disciplinary contexts and explore how creative industries engage failure in comparison with other fields. Through a series of practicums, readings, guest lectures, and group discussions this class will explore various aspects of failure.

**IMPORTANT:** Please note, content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. As the College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and it is not the college's practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who may feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should consider withdrawing at the start of the term and seek another course.

This course embraces active, reflective, and collaborative learning. This course includes a combination of student-driven and faculty-mentored formats and activities, including group discussions, readings, small group work, and individual exercises. Outside-class sessions may include readings, writings, studio observations, interviews, and hands-on work. Keep in mind there is an experimental aspect to this course, and we may change course along the way.

Students will be evaluated on:

- Attendance and active participation in discussions, lectures, and presentations
- Engagement with non-traditional topics, discussions, and research
- Quality of projects in terms of research, production, and presentation

## Course Goals

- Understand the cultural and ideological constructions of success and failure
- Examine how failure can lead to innovative outcomes, new ways of thinking, and alternative modes of existence
- Investigate how failure can disrupt and disorient dominant narratives
- Reimagine failure as a (non)productive force
- Explore practical strategies for integrating radical design practices into everyday life and work
- Work both individually and collaboratively to produce works and projects that ask critical questions

## Course Prerequisites

ART 1600, ART 1700, ART 1800, ART 1900, ART 2350, ART 2360, ART 2370 all with a C or better; IADS major, junior standing.

## Required Texts and Resources

There are no required texts for this course. Assigned films, digital content, and articles/chapters/essays will be posted on Canvas. Students are also encouraged to bring additional materials that align with their interests and contribute to the course discussions.

## Minimum Technology Requirements

To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System as well as the items listed below. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

- Computer, laptop, or tablet
- Camera, speakers, and microphone
- Microsoft Office Suite
- Adobe Creative Suite (or similar)

## Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

### *UNT IT Help Desk*

**Email:** [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

**Live Chat:** <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/chatsupport> (Links to an external site.)

**Phone:** 940-565-2324

**In Person:** Sage Hall, Room 330

**Hours and Availability:** Visit <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk> (Links to an external site.)

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328) (Links to an external site.)

(<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

## Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation so we will work as a class to collaborate in ways that encourage inclusivity.

## Assignments and Course Requirements

### Assignments

While you will receive parameters for each of your major assignments, you will have significant leeway in how you choose to respond to them. As such, a portion of your grade for each of these assignments will depend on your choice of appropriately challenging subject matter. The remainder of your grade will depend on how well you meet the conceptual challenges you have set out for yourself.

#### Reflection Journals (10 Total)

You are asked to write a (appx. 350 words) journal entry reflecting on the readings/lectures/discussions for each week. Consider this a forum for you to write down your thoughts as they occur to you in dialogue with the readings, and to begin to achieve a personal synthesis of ideas springing from multiple sources – readings, lectures, class discussions, projects, and/or your research and experiences.

#### Leading a Discussion

You and your assigned group will present a reading and lead a class discussion and will include a written analysis (450 – 500 words) of your assigned presentation. Your class discussions should encourage creative and critical engagement with the topic. The instructor will mentor before, during, and after the discussion presentations. Additional assignment details will be posted on Canvas.

#### Mid-term Group Project: What's the Use?

You and your assigned group will design and produce a useless product. Responding to failure in your chosen context, demonstrating understanding of course concepts. Additional assignment details will be posted on Canvas.

#### Final Group project: Radical Design

You and your assigned group will create a comprehensive project exploring failure, presented in the final week of the semester. The project can address the historical, current, or speculative notions of failure. You may wish to include prototypes, artwork, performative events, research papers, or presentations. These projects are deliberately left open - the output is up to you and your group and what you collectively feel best expresses your intent. Additional assignment details will be posted on Canvas.

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Participation

Students should be prepared to engage in class discussion by viewing and reading all assigned course presentations and readings, and engaging with respect and insight in lectures, class discussions, presentations, and all course activities. It is important that you communicate with your professor prior to being absent, so you can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform your professor if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community. **IMPORTANT: Do this in advance, meaning more than one hour prior to the start of class.**

Additionally, this course heavily depends on your attendance and participation. Most of your work will be done in groups, so your group will also be depending on you and your engagement.

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class, and the calendar is subject to change, please see UNT's webpage for the [Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy \(PDF\)](#) ([https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.049\\_Standard%20Syllabus%20Policy%20Statements\\_supplement.pdf](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.049_Standard%20Syllabus%20Policy%20Statements_supplement.pdf)).

## Attendance

Class attendance is a **requirement** and use of the full class period is expected. You will be allowed **(3)** sick, personal, physical, or mental health days without grading consequences. **A 4th absence will result in the lowering of your overall final grade by (1) letter grade.** Arriving to class more than 30 minutes late or leaving class more than 30 minutes early **will constitute an absence.** Additionally, arriving 15 minutes late to the start of class will constitute a tardy. Leaving class before being dismissed by your professor will constitute an early departure. (3) occurrences of late arrivals/early departures = (1) absence. Absences, tardiness and/or early departures beyond this could result in course failure. If a serious medical or personal situation occurs affecting attendance, please discuss it with your professor ASAP.

## Participation

Your participation is an extremely important component of the class and a significant part of your overall grade. Your awarded points are based the following expectations: Coming to class meetings on time and with your supplies, being prepared to discuss materials from your coursework, completing other occasional homework, and actively participating in class discussions, group activities and critique.

## Assignments and Projects

Students must submit all assignments by 11:59 pm on the due date. Instructions for all assignments can be found on Canvas under each specific module. All assignments must be submitted online via Canvas in the assignment drop box.

- Attendance, participation, and engagement (20%)
- Reflection Journals (20%)
- Leading a discussion (10%)
- Mid-term project (20%)
- Final project (30%)

## Assessing Your Work

A: 90% course average or above. Excellent work produced throughout the semester

B: 80% course average or above. Good work produced throughout the semester

C: 70% course average or above. Fair work produced throughout the semester

D: 60% course average or above. Passing work produced throughout the semester

## Late Policy

All work should be turned in on time according to the due date specified on the syllabus. For **each day** late, the grade will drop by 10%. Thus, a 100% assignment will be dropped to a 90%, a 90% will drop to an 81% - and so on and so forth **unless prior arrangements with the instructor are made.**

## Grading Policy

Grades are based on mastery of the content. As a rule, I do not grade on a “curve” because that is a comparison of your outcomes to others. I do, however, encourage you to find opportunities to learn with and through others. Explore [Navigate's Study Buddy](https://navigate.unt.edu) (<https://navigate.unt.edu>) tool to join study groups. Maximize your learning with our coaching staff at the Learning Center.

## Academic Integrity

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of [guidelines for your academic success](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

## Generative AI

Generative AI may be used **with prior instructor permission** and **appropriate attribution**. You may use Generative AI tools for selective aspects in this course. Assignments for which you may use Generative AI will be discussed in class. Each assignment using Generative AI must be submitted within these parameters:

- a) You are responsible for the integrity of the content** (e.g., written and digital/interactive media assignments, and projects). AI can produce content that contains inaccurate information, offensive language/images, and biased or unethical representations. What you submit is fully your responsibility across these dimensions.
- b) You must provide clear attribution of your sources AND:** (1) explanation of **how you used Generative AI** and (2) clear citations using a format such as this example: [Chat-GPT-3. (YYYY, Month DD of query). Text of your query. Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/>].

**IMPORTANT: Any assignments that utilize Generative AI without permission or attribution can be seen as potential academic dishonesty and will be treated as such.**

## Syllabus Change Policy

The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to the course schedule, assignments, and information throughout the semester.

## UNT Policies

### Student Academic Integrity Policy

The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.

### Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

## ADA Accommodation Statement

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](http://www.unt.edu/oda) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

## Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct).

## Access to Information

Eagle Connect Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: Page 3 of 4 [my.unt.edu](http://my.unt.edu). All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: [eagleconnect.unt.edu/](http://eagleconnect.unt.edu/)

## Student Evaluation Administration Dates

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" ([no-reply@iasystem.org](mailto:no-reply@iasystem.org)) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will

receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at [spot.unt.edu](http://spot.unt.edu) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto:spot@unt.edu).

## Survivor Advocacy

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [eo@unt.edu](mailto:eo@unt.edu) or at (940) 565 2759.