Graduate Praxis: Recursive Colonialisms (Rotating Topics) - Photo/ New Media
Instructor: Assistant Professor Christopher Meerdo (he/him)
Meeting Time: Tuesday & Thursday 8 am – 10:50 am
Spring Semester 2022
Classroom Meeting Place: CVAD, 3rd Floor, Room Number ART 356
Course Number: ASTU 5001 - 504
Contact: christopher.meerdo@unt.edu

UNT CATALOG DESCRIPTION
5001. Praxis: Rotating Topics. 3 hours (3;3). Readings, discussion, and/or studio exploration of various art issues. Praxis graduate seminars are intensive topical or single discipline-based courses which encourage innovation, the development of a new method, idea and results. Seminars vary in structure offering a blend of reading/writing/presentation/discussion and studio practice/group critique. Prerequisite(s) : Must be a current Studio Art MFA student.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
As technology challenges our notions of justice in our contemporary moment through pre-crime predictive analytics, racially biased AI, local police forces subsidized by military equipment, and social media spaces that harbor and protect ultra-right nationalism and white supremacists, we are faced with the implications of state techno-totalitarianism and unchecked neoliberal growth in the private sector, steered by vision machines we no longer understand.

As artists, we are tasked with finding a space within this framework to respond, reflect, and resist as the consequences of late capitalism delivers not the promise of a better world, but the singular catalyst for
the global mass extinction event. In this interdisciplinary course, students explore the history of art and theory as a space for détournement, afrofuturism, transhumanism, cyberfeminism, xenofeminism, social and environmental justice, and metaphysics.

Participants in this course will read, reflect, and steer their practices in new directions through a series of self-directed projects and critiques with a focus on expanded-photographic discourse, media theory, and technology. Open to all studio art graduate students.

CLASS OBJECTIVE

A larger understanding of one’s practice will be considered and how your specific voice contributes to visual culture at large. This is a research and production oriented class in which graduate students will explore various technologies and techniques for achieving a heightened range of outputs to enrich their intellectual pursuits. Your research should engage with historical precedents, challenges assumptions about the medium, and reflect the time period in which we live. Active participants will develop a diverse portfolio of works through the hands-on experience of combining formal techniques with contemporary Photographic and New Media discourse. Additionally, you will garner a new vocabulary and agency to speak about your practice, as well as the art world at large, through the rigor of looking into emerging and canonized philosophers, theoreticians, and practitioners of art.

METHODOLOGY

In class demonstrations, lectures, classroom critiques, field trips, guest critics, and group exercises. Outside class work will require production, fabrication, and reading and writing assignments.

GRADING/REVIEWS

Being enrolled in this course is not a guarantee of a passing grade. You must attend all classes in entirety and complete all required work for the course. Late work is not accepted. Rescheduling your critique is not permitted without my approval and arrangement with another student.

Your grade in the course is calculated based on the percentages below:

- Reading Summaries & Discussion – 30%
- Professional Documentation (cv, artist statement, annotated bibliography) - 10%
- 3 Critique Presentations (20% each) - 60%

Projects are assessed based on their technical, formal, and conceptual merit. All work in this class must demonstrate a high level of engagement. This course assumes you are an artist on a studio trajectory with an interest in making a unique contribution to your field. Your practice should be in dialogue with your contemporaries on a national and international level.

PRODUCTION/FABRICATION

As this is a graduate-level course, all work in this class is self-directed. There are no assignment-specific prompts. This class is designed with your personalized artistic studio practice in mind. Challenge yourself to move beyond the strict confines of your specific discipline. Consider the following list to guide your explorations:

- 3D Print / Resin Print
- Wood/Metal/Ceramics/Cement/etc (sculptural materials)
- Re-composed found objects
- Fabric print
- 3D Scan
- Monitor
- Projection
- Projection Mapping
- Custom electronics / motors / robotics etc
- Performance / Time-based / Durational work
- Light Installation
- Photographic / Inkjet Print
- Physical Painting / Drawing (hand drawn or plotter)
● Fabric Print / Embroidery / Weaving / other fibers techniques
● Laser cutout materials
● CNC cutout materials
● Sound equipment (amps, microphones, MIDI, mixer, etc)
● Legacy equipment (VHS, CD Players, etc)

This list will necessarily expand given the trajectory of the course and your own personal interests.

CRITIQUES

60% of this course revolves around critiques. This is an opportunity to formally install your work in a meaningful and rigorous way. This should be gallery-ready work, not sketches. Please consider the space that you will show your work in and reserve the room. Reservations can be made online at the CVAD reservations dashboard.

You will each be given the opportunity for 3 critiques this semester – each approximately 45 min. I welcome and encourage you to invite other students, faculty, staff, and outside individuals to join us in conversation. Your critique sessions are listed in this document but any changes will be made available on canvas. Always refer to canvas for the most up-to-date information.

The crit locations available are: New Media Classroom, CAVE space, Alcove space (if available), Critique Space 7 (4th floor cvad), your personal studio, and the various crit spaces in the grad studio building.

Bring a notebook the day of your critique to write down artist suggestions and other ideas provided to you during your review.

STUDIO VISITS:

Throughout the semester, I will be meeting with you one-on-one for studio visits to see how you are progressing with your research and production. It is my expectation that you will be able to show the progress you are making. Consider this as an opportunity to discuss other topics like grants, residencies, or jobs that you are applying to, or discuss things you are reading relative to your research. The studio visit schedule will be made available on canvas.

Studio Visit Sign-Up Sheet can be found at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dYuuDOSqF1LYDHVEt2nlHH4jLG0ouB-4FsiRS0uwZfo/edit?usp=sharing

COMMUNICATION

My Office Location: CVAD, 3rd Floor, Office Number 345H
In-Person Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. & by appointment
Virtual (Zoom) Office Hours: by appointment
Zoom Number: 283 597 0912
Email: christophermeerdo@unt.edu

I am always available to be reached by email or office hours but I ask that you are respectful and professional in your communication. I typically read email between normal business hours 9-5 M-F with the exception of teaching times and personal studio times. Please do not expect a response over the weekend.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

All students will adhere to rules of attendance and punctuality. Attendance and punctuality is strongly considered and counts towards your class standing. Attendance will be noted at the beginning and end of each class.

● 3 Unexcused Absences = Failure of the course
● 3 Times Tardy = 1 Absence.
● Leaving class early counts as an Unexcused Absence.
● Missing a critique counts as 2 absences and failure of the course.
● Refrain from walking out of class in the middle of activities. We have a break in the middle of class – schedule yourself accordingly.
An unexcused absence is any missed class without a doctor’s note. Simply emailing if you are sick is not an excused absence. In the case of any type of emergency, I also require official documentation. Laptops, cell phones, iPods, and other personal electronics are not to be used for personal use during class times. If you do not follow this classroom policy, you will be asked to leave and given an unexcused absence.

Class Participation Expectations

I expect you to attend every class. You are responsible for completing all of the required assignments. I expect all students to participate in class discussions, contributing ideas and perspectives on reading topics or crits. All your work should incorporate aspects or issues addressed in class in relation to your personal or professional interests.

COVID POLICIES

This class is listed in the course catalog as 100% in person and you are expected to participate in this capacity. Considerations will be made for individuals who have a confirmed positive covid test. If you are interested in participating in this semester from home, contact your academic adviser who can assist you in enrolling in an online course.

UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of your vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines may change throughout the semester based on updated guidelines.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be made available if you forget your own mask and there are hand sanitizing stations throughout the CVAD building.

Emailing me telling me that you aren’t feeling well is not an excused absence. Makeups and extensions will only be provided for individuals that have tested positive for COVID. If you have symptoms of COVID and are unsure what to do, testing is available free on campus. If you have not been vaccinated and would like to prevent the virus, vaccination is available free on UNT’s campus. More information: https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/covid-19-vaccine-information

REQUIRED READING:

As there are no specific projects or technical demonstrations in this seminar, reading and reflecting will be the major component of the course. Pdfs will be provided throughout the semester as we move through discussions. Each reading will require a written response (uploaded to canvas) and in-class discussion of the main conceptual points the author was evoking. As graduate students, I have a very high level of expectation that you will complete the readings in entirety and will provide thoughtful insights into the material you engage with.

The course moves through five distinct topics:
1. From Film to Aggregations
2. Recursive Colonialisms
3. Being in (Virtual) Time
4. The Great Resignation
5. Beyond Empiricism: Metaphysics

With readings from: Ariella Azoulay, Lev Manovich, Joanna Zylinska, Hito Steyerl, Nina Canell, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Donna Haraway, Helen Hester, Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Gordon Hall, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Achille Mbembe, Nina Power, Boris Groys, et cetera...

Reading is an essential component of understanding our place as makers. It offers context, history, theory, and new ideas that will incorporate into your overall practice as an artist. You may choose to print the readings if you work more efficiently by noting or highlighting the physical pages. The readings have been specially selected to coincide with the theme of the course and will help us think about making artwork and the vocabulary to do so. A summary response is required for each of the readings and will be turned in before class starts on canvas. Each reading section will have a corresponding discussion day in class. Be prepared with your thoughts to contribute to these conversations in a meaningful way.
**CONTENT DISCLAIMER**

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 might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

**CANVAS**

This course is integrated with UNT’s Canvas learning management system. It is your responsibility to check our class page regularly to keep an eye out for announcements, communicate with the professor and fellow students and keep track of your overall class standing. This is also where each assignment must be handed in and where you have access to readings.

**CLASS TIME COMMITMENT**

This class will require a full intellectual and time commitment from you in order to pass with full marks. There are 6 class hours per week that you must schedule for yourself. You should expect to have a comparable amount of time outside this window to complete homework assignments (an additional 6 hours). Realistically, you should budget between 10-20 hours per week on this class. Make sure you are mindful of this as you begin the semester so that you stay on track throughout and are successful in the end.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Tentative and subject to revision.

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<tr>
<td>Tue Feb 15</td>
<td>Reading discussion: From Film to Aggregations Pt. 2</td>
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### WEEK SIX
**Tue Feb 22**  | Zoom Studio Visits - Professor Meerdo in Columbus For Install
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**Thurs Feb 24**  | Zoom Studio Visits - Professor Meerdo in Columbus For Install

### WEEK SEVEN
**Tue Mar 1**  | Reading discussion: Recursive Colonialisms
  | Individual studio visits
**Thurs Mar 3**  | Screening: All Light Everywhere directed by Theo Anthony
  | Film discussion
  | Individual studio visits

### WEEK EIGHT
**Tue Mar 8**  | Reading discussion: Being in (Virtual) Time Pt. 1
**Thurs Mar 10**  | Individual studio visits

### WEEK NINE
**Tue Mar 15**  | **NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK**
**Thurs Mar 17**  | **NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK**

### WEEK TEN
**Tue Mar 22**  | **M I D R I F F - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Lauren Elaine Allen
  | Nathan Harper
**Thurs Mar 24**  | **M I D R I F F - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Kim Eagan
  | Kate Enoire
  | Diana Rojas-Ponce

### WEEK ELEVEN
**Tue Mar 29**  | **M I D R I F F - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Daniel Manning Pope
  | Christine Drake-Thomas
  | Saxon Martinez
**Thurs Mar 31**  | **M I D R I F F - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Erika Jaeggli
  | David Scott
  | Emmeri Bock

### WEEK TWELVE
**Tue Apr 5**  | Reading discussion: Being in (Virtual) Time Pt. 2
**Thurs Apr 7**  | Individual studio visits

### WEEK THIRTEEN
**Tue Apr 12**  | Reading discussion: The Great Resignation
**Thurs Apr 14**  | Individual studio visits

### WEEK FOURTEEN
**Tue Apr 19**  | Reading discussion: Beyond Empiricism: Metaphysics
**Thurs Apr 21**  | Individual studio visits

### WEEK FIFTEEN
**Tue Apr 26**  | **T E R M I N U S - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Lauren Elaine Allen
  | Nathan Harper
  | Kim Eagan
**Thurs Apr 28**  | **T E R M I N U S - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Kate Enoire
  | Diana Rojas-Ponce
  | Saxon Martinez

### WEEK SIXTEEN
**Tue May 3**  | **T E R M I N U S - C R I T I Q U E**
  | Daniel Manning Pope
  | Christine Drake-Thomas
  | Erika Jaeggli
**Thurs May 5**  | **T E R M I N U S - C R I T I Q U E**
  | David Scott
  | Emmeri Bock
Academic Integrity

According to UNT Policy 18.11a, 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

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu

Health and Safety Program

Students are required to follow the Department of Studio Art Health and Safety guidelines and are required to complete training for each studio course. The goal of the Studio Art Health and Safety Program is to protect the health and welfare of all faculty, staff, and students and to cooperate with the University of North Texas’ Office of Risk Management. Please visit the website for details and the departmental handbook: https://art.unt.edu/healthandsafety

Health & Safety

Health & Safety Area Specific Information: Photography

1. Hazards of Materials

There are many hazards associated with photographic materials. An effort to minimize the hazards associated with photographic chemicals begins with the understanding and following of darkroom rules and procedures, and with familiarity with the Material Safety Data Sheets and proper handling and disposal of these chemicals.

Stop Baths: The acetic acid commonly found in stop baths can cause dermatitis and skin ulceration and can severely irritate the respiratory system. Contamination of the stop bath by developer components can increase inhalation hazards.

Fixers: Fixer contains sodium thiosulfate, sodium sulfite and sodium bisulfite. It may also contain potassium aluminum sulfate as a hardener and boric acid as a buffer. Fixer solutions slowly release sulfur dioxide gas as they age. However, when these solutions are contaminated with acid from the stop bath, the gas sulfur dioxide is released at a more rapid rate.

Hardener: In most darkrooms, hardeners are added to fixer for use in film processing. Although we do not use hardeners at this time, we do use hardeners at times this you should be familiar with the hazards. They often contain formaldehyde, which is poisonous, very irritating to the eyes, throat, and breathing passages, and can cause dermatitis.

Fixer Removers: Also known as Hypo Clear or Perma Wash. Many hypo eliminators are skin and respiratory irritants. Some are corrosive to skin, eyes, nose and throat.

Toners: Toners usually involve the replacement of silver with another metal such as gold, selenium, uranium, lead, cobalt, platinum or iron. These highly soluble toxic compounds are more dangerous since they can be readily absorbed in the body and immediately affect internal organs. We do not use toners of any kind.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the types of chemistry that is used in darkroom work, nor does it cover all of the risks. Please familiarize yourself with the chemistry you will be using by reading all instructions associated with their use, and their corresponding MSDS sheets.

2. Best Practices

The darkroom is a shared workspace filled with expensive, sensitive equipment and corrosive chemicals. How you conduct yourself directly affects both you and your fellow students. It is very important to take care of equipment, and safely handle chemicals for both your safety and the safety of others. This is a lab and cleanliness is important for safety. This includes keeping darkroom equipment and finishing areas separate from chemicals hence designated dry and wet areas. Different chemicals have different ways they are handled and disposed of, and these are clearly outlined on signs in each area.

The following points are a guide to basic darkroom safety and etiquette. To use these facilities, you must adhere to these safety guidelines and always leave the darkrooms clean and orderly.

● Know the locations of all exits, emergency eye and body wash stations, fire extinguishers, MSDS sheets, emergency spill kits and the H&S safety station. A first aid kit is available in the H&S station.

● Never place trays or chemistry on enlarger stations or on dry areas. Dry areas include enlarger stations, drying racks, cutting areas, finishing areas, light tables, and worktables.

● Never place darkroom equipment, paper, negatives, or personal belongings on wet areas. Wet areas include the stainless sinks in the darkroom, the counter and sinks in the film processing/print washing room, and anywhere chemistry is used. It is important that you do not place any wet materials in the dry area.

● Do not leave your equipment or university equipment unattended.

● Wear nitrile gloves, chemical aprons, and safety goggles when using hazardous materials. Nitrile gloves are recommended for film processing and printing.

● Tong use is mandatory for printing. Be sure that you are using the properly labeled tongs for each tray and rinse if you contaminate them.

● Avoid splashing or spilling chemicals. Immediately wipe up any spills, splashes or drips. Chemicals dry into a powder and become airborne, contaminating all areas of the darkroom and may get on your clothes, shoes (in which case you will carry the chemicals home) or in your lungs.

● Always use a plastic tray to transport wet prints, and avoid dripping chemicals on the floors, if your print has not been washed for 30 minutes, then it is contaminated with chemicals. Wet floors mean you may get chemicals on the soles of your shoes and transport chemicals to your home.

● If a splash occurs and affects you bodily, flush affected areas (15-20 minutes for eyes) immediately with water using the eyewash station.

● The following may not be poured down the drain: fixer, potassium bichromate. Both have specific waste collection containers and policies.

● Rinse all lab ware and trays before and after use with hot water. Return items to their proper place, and invert to dry.

● Keep the darkroom uncluttered and free of chairs, backpacks and stools to avoid tripping hazards in the dark.

3. Links for Safety

MSDS sheets can be found here. https://untphotolab.wordpress.com/msds/

4. Area Health & Safety Rules

All users of the studio classrooms are expected to follow studio area rules at all times. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

● Follow all CVAD Health and Safety handbook guidelines (the handbook should be reviewed by your instructor and can be found here: https://art.unt.edu/healthandsafety)

● Follow the CVAD Waste Management Chart in the classroom and other health & safety guidelines posted

● In case of emergency, call campus police at (940)565-3000 or call 911

● File an incident report (forms may be found in the CVAD H&S handbook and in the main
SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help. Their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources. UNT's Student Advocate can be reached through e-mail at survivoradvocate@unt.edu.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their specific needs. These resources include counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or are unsure of proper procedures, please ask someone.

Do not use force on any piece of equipment. Clean up after yourself—wipe down surfaces. Do not block doorways or block access to lights. Do not remove furniture from rooms or borrow furniture from rooms without permission. If something breaks, please tell the lab worker or a Faculty member immediately. You must leave enough time at the end of open lab or class time to properly wash your prints, clean up, and return equipment. Do not create "daisy chains" with multiple electric cords. No hazardous materials down sinks. Store all flammables in the flammable cabinet. Keep flammable cabinet closed at all times. First aid kits are found in each studio. Notify your instructor or technician if supplies are low. Report any safety issues IMMEDIATELY to your instructor. All courses must engage in an end of the semester clean up.

Lighting Studio
The lighting studio is a shared space with its own set of rules. It is most important that you respect the time you have signed up for, especially during the busy hours. It is also important to keep the area clean and orderly. If you take an item from the closet, you want to make sure you return it to the same place. You also want to create a space for yourself to work in that is not cluttered with cords.

- If anything breaks for any reason, please let the lab worker on duty know immediately.
- While the studio is a space that can be used by many people, there are some pieces of lighting equipment reserved for students who are enrolled/have completed the Advanced Lighting Techniques. It is always better to ask if you are not sure if you can use a piece of equipment or not.
- All lighting that needs to be plugged in must be plugged into one of the power strips in the studio. Never plug anything but a power strip into the wall.
- When using the C-Stands it is important to understand how heavy the equipment is and you want to make sure you are using the sandbags to weight the stand down.
- Make sure you are keeping the cords clear.
- Never mix water and electricity. If you are photographing a liquid, make sure you are careful to keep it away from the equipment.
- When you are changing the light modifiers, be careful of the flash tubes.
- Do not put heavy objects on the cyclorama.
- Leave the studio cleaner than you found it.

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.

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 and 14 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) 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 www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Incomplete Grade
An Incomplete Grade ("I") is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a student (1) is passing the course and (2) has a justifiable and documented reason, beyond the control of the student (such as serious illness or military service), for not completing the work on schedule. In consultation with the instructor, complete a request for an Incomplete Grade from the department website and must be turned into the department chair prior to the last day of classes (not the exam date). Note: A grade of Incomplete is not automatically assigned to students.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment & Assault
UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or are unsure of any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources. UNT's Student Advocate can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.