

Evaluation, Sustainability Research Paper in Art 355, Intermediate Textiles

Overview:

The course in which I chose to apply a new sustainability project is Art 355, Intermediate Textiles, which is an upper-level art studio course, but also an upper-level writing emphasis course. The students write three documents for this course: an artist's statement; a research paper on a historical movement in Textiles; and a paper on a contemporary or modern artist working with Textiles as the primary medium. I adjusted the last paper to aim the focus on how an artist applies sustainability in their art practice.

This worked very well. In the past, the student papers lacked focus and included a lot of dry, and often rather irrelevant "filler" about the artists to make the five page writing goal. By asking the students to focus their research not only on one artist, but on one aspect of that artist's studio practice, the papers were much more cohesively written and organized. My students were able to apply the notion of sustainability in artwork in multiple ways, from the way an installation team actually worked with environmentalists on their large scale work, to the way an individual artist chose low-impact recycled/upcycled materials to reduce waste and landfill fodder.

I felt the focus on sustainability in their research also affected their studio work. The students this semester did consider things like whether or not to make, remake or make-do on the materials they used. The students working with natural dyes were interested in growing their dyestuffs rather than paying shipping to get materials that may have been unsustainably grown or harvested in parts unknown. Their conversations also centered on where their clothes came from, and more students than ever learned how to sew this semester.

Overall, this was highly productive and I will continue to implement the sustainability feature in the second research paper, as it raised awareness overall for what other artists are doing, and how these emerging artists can conserve their own resources for longer-lasting or even perpetual results.

355 Research Paper Sustainability Theme– Due May 4, 2015
Instructor: Alison Gates

Choose a contemporary textile artist whom you admire OR a contemporary movement in textiles/ textile design that is important to you. Write a 5-page research paper on your chosen topic, focusing on the aspects of the artist or movement that relate directly to sustainability in art practice.

“Sustainable art may be understood as art that is produced with consideration for the wider impact of the work and its reception in relationship to its environments (social, economic, biophysical, historical and cultural).” (From Wikipedia.)

Paper will be typed, double-spaced, side margins no more than 1.25” top and bottom, 1” either side (standard new document settings for a Microsoft Word document).

- Include a bibliography of at least 5 sources.
- Use no more than 3 Internet sources for your research.
- You do not have to footnote, simply include this bibliography.
- Spelling and grammar count. Please take time to actually read your paper before you hand it in.

Some guidelines for researching textiles:

Textiles are notoriously difficult to research. Talk to the librarians and find periodical literature to assist in learning about your subject matter. Magazines are the best resources for materials on contemporary artists. Plan ahead: you may need to obtain materials for your research through interlibrary loan, and that may take extra time.

Books on textiles and fiber arts are found in the N section as well as the T section at our library. Those books will be on floors 5 and 6 of Cofrin Library.

Be sure to choose something you’re actually interested in. Clear your subject with the instructor before you start (we have to make sure you can actually get 5 pages out of it.)

Local artists generally are poor choices for research because so little has been published about their work, and your sources will be limited. Look at the “Gallery” section of your textbook, *The Textile Artist’s Studio Handbook* for some good ideas for people or projects to write about. Our Textile Pinterest boards are also a good resource.

Remember you need FIVE sources, and only 3 can be from the Internet at most.

Hand in, DOC or DOCX format to the Dropbox on D2L before 10:30 a.m. on day due.