Introduction

The purpose of the thesis seminar is to provide a forum to workshop and articulate your ITP master’s thesis and to receive (and give) critical feedback in a group environment. Your thesis consists of many things, and can take many forms. At its core is the thesis statement itself: a statement of belief in which you have total conviction. Surrounding this core idea is a context (both a personal statement of your approach to life and a review of the conceptual context in which your thesis lives), a poietic methodology which defines how you approach the production of your work, an actual project which you execute and document and, importantly, an aesthetic process by which you work and ideas are received by your ideal audience. All of these factors combine to make a successful thesis.

As students at ITP, you have learned to live comfortably in the seams and at the intersection of art, technology, commerce, and social activism, and you migrate constantly between the space of place and the space of flows. Your thesis work gives you the opportunity to take a stand on something you feel strongly about in any or all of these spaces, envision a way to present it in the form of a produced work, and execute that work with the full support and freedom of an academic environment. I invite you to seize the opportunity, as you’ve all worked very hard in the last two years to earn it.

Assignments and Grades

Regular deadlines will be set with regards to progress on your thesis project and paper. Your grade will be based on how well you use the class to implement your own thesis work (50%) and, just as importantly, how well you engage in and provide feedback for the work shown by your colleagues in the class (50%). As the preceding breakdown demonstrates, it is absolutely imperative that you participate as much as possible in providing feedback to your peers and engaging in class discussion. In addition, out of professional courtesy for your colleagues I’d like to request that we refrain from laptop use during class (except, obviously, when it is needed for a presentation or bureaucratic matters), and that we attempt to make a punctual start every week. For the duration of the semester you will serve as each other’s brain trust, both inside and outside the class, and your colleagues will learn to depend on you for support and honest input into their work.
Class Schedule

In addition to the class outline below (which includes two brief one-on-one meetings with yours truly), each of you will sign up for biweekly meetings with me to discuss your project and any needs you may have. You will have these meetings in the week preceding your presentation date for a specific milestone in the thesis project (e.g. if you will be presenting your methodology on Class 5, we will meet in the week between Class 4 and Class 5). Though I won’t require a formal weekly e-mail update from you with specific points (e.g. a 4x4) I would like all of you to check in with me by e-mail at least once a week to keep me posted on developments, new ideas you’ve had, things you’ve discarded, and any bottlenecks or concerns you’re having.

Class 1: Introduction. Discuss an overview of the class structure and the thesis itself. Everyone presents a 5-minute presentation of her/his thesis proposal.

Do: select one representative reading and two representative works (or documentation of such works) to assign to the class to read in preparing for your context/personal statement crit. One of the works should be from your own portfolio. Prepare a presentation on the interior and exterior contexts for your work.

Class 2-3: Context and personal statement. Everyone must present 10-minute presentations with 15-minute discussion on their creative context for their thesis work, as well as provide an understanding of their personal context. Everyone will come prepared having read and looked at the submitted works for their colleagues’ presentations for that day.

Do: select and read two previous ITP thesis papers. Submit to me a brief (~750 words for each paper) reaction critique of each work, outlining what about the project appealed to you, as well as the positives and negatives in the way in which the thesis was presented and argued in the paper. Prepare a presentation on your project methodology and how it flows naturally from the argument presented in your thesis abstract.

Class 4-5: Methodology and thesis abstract. Everyone does a 10-minute presentation / 15-minute crit on their thesis statement and proposed emanation for the work.

Do: based on class feedback, complete the draft writing of your personal statement and context (with bibliography / lit review) and submit it to the class. Begin preparing a provisional presentation (10 minutes) that will serve to explain conceptual aspects of your thesis during the mid-term critique.

Class 6: Mid-term prep (individual meetings). Run through your mid-term presentation with yours truly and discuss progress on your thesis paper.

Do: complete the draft writing of your abstract and methodology introduction (i.e. everything except the actual work documentation for the production thesis). Write a provisional conclusion to your thesis. Submit it to the class. Finalize your mid-term presentation.

Class 7-8: Mid-term (NYU internal) critique. Everyone presents their thesis work to the class and a panel of smart, nifty people from outside the class.

Do: based on mid-term crit, make any revisions necessary to your paper and e-mail your papers (minus project documentation) to your outside readers. Start building your piece. Begin documenting everything you do.

Hard deadline: submit your thesis thus far to the projects database.

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS.
**Do:** keep building your piece and document freakin’ everything. Receive feedback from your readers and make final tweaks to your paper. Write your readers a ‘thank you’ note. Leave me a voicemail on my phone telling me how you’re getting on with things.

**Class 9-10: Production critique.** Everyone shows prototypes of their work, with an emphasis on discussing and articulating the ideal audience for the project and how to reach that audience.

**Do:** fix anything with your piece that you broke during the production crit. Document some more. Make any appropriate changes to the work, and prepare your on-line and paper documentation / portfolio.

**Class 11: Documentation / portfolio critique.** Entire class does a short-round presentation of their thesis project documentation and portfolio, with an aim towards preparing for the final crit.

**Do:** insert your thesis documentation in written form into your thesis draft. Finalize your conclusion and reference listing. Make any adjustments to your documentation based on critique. Start working on your thesis presentation.

**Class 12: Final prep (individual meetings).** Run through your thesis presentations with yours truly.

**Do:** finish your thesis presentation. Walk up to four random people on the street and tell them your thesis statement. Let me know if they agree with you. If they disagree, invite them to thesis week so that you can convince them.

**Class 13-14: Final (external) critique.** Everyone presents their thesis work to the class and a panel of smart, nifty people from outside the university.

**Do:** wrap it up. Tweak your presentation, put the finishing touches on your paper, finalize your piece, fix your website, and run it all through over and over again in case you forgot something. Treat yourself to a movie.

*May 1st-5th: ITP Thesis week.*

**Do:** everyone must attend the entire thesis week presentation for her/his class. This is now an ITP-wide rule and it’s very important that you be there to support your colleagues during their presentations.

**Hard deadline:** somewhere in here (specific day/time TBD), you will give your final thesis presentation (20 minutes total, including setup and Q&A), as well as deposit your final thesis paper and documentation with the Department. Your advisor and I will confirm that your materials are complete, and you will then have a Master of Professional Studies degree. Congratulations!