

**Artistic Interventions - Creative Responses to Conflict and Crises: Japan 3/11 Disaster at a Distance**  
4.314/4.315 - Advanced Workshop in Artistic Practice and Transdisciplinary Research – Spring 2012

Class: Tuesdays 7-10p, E15-207  
Recitation: Thursdays 7-10p Room E15-207

Instructor: Jegan Vincent de Paul  
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Office Hours: TBD

Teaching Assistant: Matthew Bunza  
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4.314: Units arranged, H-Level grad  
4.315: Units: 3-3-6, Level: U, HASS Arts  
Lab fee: \$110 (charged on Add Date)  
Prerequisites: Students from various backgrounds and disciplines are welcome. No specific prerequisites.

This course seeks to develop an understanding of the role of cultural production and artistic intervention in conditions of conflict and crisis. How should one investigate or intervene in such situations through critical reflection, creative agency and participatory action?

*Artistic Interventions - Creative Responses to Conflict and Crises* will look at *disaster* as a human-made event that precedes or is continuous with conflict or crises. The course will specifically consider the notion of *disaster at a distance*: how the *location of concern being outside the location of disaster* can be an advantage to engender creative and critical responses. As a part of the multi-year *MIT Japan 3/11 Initiative*, this course is centered on the on-going crises in Japan caused by the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant failures as a real world scenario.

**1. During the first half of the course**, we will investigate how Japan's triple disaster has been understood internationally. Students will look at how various disciplines and fields, including at MIT, have approached Japan's disaster in its immediate aftermath as well as in a long term capacity. Students will then use an artistic medium, including image, video, audio and web to present a creative project to position Japan's disaster within a larger framework of the technology, culture, and politics of today's global disasters.

**2. During the second half of the course**, students will form working groups to propose an artistic intervention to the address the current conditions of Japan's historic disaster. Groups will dialogue on creative alternatives - including utopian – to institutionalized methods and plans for Japan's continued crises. Students will study the broad array of existing resources that have emerged on Japan since March 2011, including visual narratives, media reports, interviews and critical texts to conceive and develop a proposal from afar.

This seminar and workshop will contribute ideas, share resources and engage in dialogue with members of the Japan 3/11 Initiative and the ACT course Public Art, taught by Professor Antoni Muntadas. We will have weekly readings, assignments and blogging as a central component for discussion, presentation and online archiving of research and projects.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Class seminars on Tuesdays 7-10pm and recitation periods on Thursday's 7-10pm are mandatory. The Thursday period is flexible and will consist of individual meetings, attendance to outside lectures, visits to labs at MIT, project development, and other activities as necessary and determined together by the class.

Student projects and development will be presented through the following formats:

1. Mid-Term and Final-Term Presentations (March 20 and May 15, 2012)
2. Online Blog and Archive (ongoing through-out the semester)
3. Printed Book (organized as a class at the end of the semester)

**GRADING:**

Class participation: 10%

Attendance: 10%

Assignments (including research, blogging and project development): 25%

Midterm project and presentation: 25%

Final project and presentation: 30%.

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*"When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash; and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution... Every technology carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress."*

– Paul Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 1999

**WORKING SYLLABUS**

The two halves of the course are divided into quarters:

QUARTER 1: Understanding Disaster

QUARTER 2: Understanding Japan's Triple Disasters

QUARTER 3: Identifying Crises in Japan

QUARTER 4: Responding to Crisis in Japan

## **Q1: Understanding Disaster**

**Week 1: Tuesday, February 7: Introductory Class**

1. *Introduction and background of class participants*
2. Overview of class, including precedents of creative responses to conflict and crises in art  
View Minami Sanriku: An Archeology of People & Place
3. Presentation by Matthew Bunza of Japan Design Workshop project in Minami Sanriku
4. *Overview of syllabus*: Course structure, expectations and schedule of seminar/recitations

*Pre-assignment*: Your thoughts on “disaster”

Prepare a 250-word text with images on what your interests are in the class and how you understand disaster. (Due: Thursday, February 14 by 12pm on course blog.)

**Thursday, February 9** (normally Thursdays are recitation period)

Equipment demo by Chris Clepper at 7:10-7:40pm  
Group discussion of Pre-assignment: Defining Disaster

Overview of structure and use of class blog <http://disasteratadistance.mit.edu>

**Assignment #1**: Chose a specific conflict and or crises originating from a disaster that interests you and make an informative blog post, include images, other media and links you want to talk about. Keep in mind how aspects of this conflict or crises relate to Japan's 3/11.

(Due: Tuesday Feb 14, 12pm on course blog)

**Reading #1**: A reading from (will be posted on Stellar):

-*The University of Disaster*, Paul Virilio

-*Imagining Emergency: Visual Narratives of Crises in US Newsmagazines*, Telesca, E. Jennifer and Dill Nandi.

## Week 2: Tuesday, February 14: Theme

Discussion of Assignment #1: Blog posts on chosen conflict or crises  
Discussion of Reading #1  
Discussion of blog posts

Film Screening: The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom, Lucy Walker (2011, 40:00min)

**Assignment #2: Q1 Project:** Using an artistic medium, conceptually interpret and then represent your chosen conflict or crisis. What is the defining quality of this crisis?  
(use a medium such as sound, video, photo essay, book etc)  
(Due: In class Thursday, Feb 23, 7pm)

**Reading #2:** A reading from (will be posted on Stellar):  
-*Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies*, Charles Perrow

### **Thursday, February 16:**

-Tour of the MIT Nuclear Reactor Laboratory (time to be confirmed)

## Week 3: Tuesday, February 21: NO CLASS (Monday classes moved here)

### **Thursday, February 23: THEME**

Presentation by Vincent de Paul

Discussion of Assignment #2: Review of Q1 Project  
Discussion of Reading #2  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #3:** mid-term project concept and proposals – 250-word text and 10-min presentation on what aspects of Japan’s triple disasters of March 2011 you want to explore, critique or discuss.

**Reading #3:** A reading from:  
-*Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity*

# Q2: Understanding Japan’s Triple Disasters

## Week 4: Tuesday, February 28: THEME

Intro by Vincent de Paul

Discussion of Assignment #3: mid-term project concept and proposals  
Discussion of Reading #3  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #4:** Midterm project development

**Reading #4:** A reading from one of the following sources (will be posted on Stellar):  
-*Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, Luc Boltanski

### **Thursday, March 1: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

**Week 5: Tuesday, March 6: THEME**

Visit by Ian Condry, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures,  
MIT Comparative Media Studies

Discussion of Assignment #4: Pin-up and review of midterm project development  
Discussion of Reading #4:  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #5:** pre mid-term project presentations

**Reading #5:** A reading from:

*-The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and the Global Order*, Carig Calhoun

**Thursday, March 8: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

**Week 6: Tuesday, March 13**

Discussion of Assignment #5: Pin-up and review of pre midterm project presentations  
Discussion of Reading #5  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #6:** mid-term project presentations

**Reading #6:** N/A

**Thursday, March 15: RECITATION**

-Continue working on project in-class (E-15 Cube reserved)  
-Individual feed back from Vincent de Paul/Bunza/Others

**Week 7: Tuesday, March 20: - MID TERM PRESENTATIONS & REVIEW IN E-15 CUBE**

-Tentative Reviewers: Leonardo Bonnani, Azra Aksamija, Joel Lamere, Ian Condry,  
Shun Kanda, Marrika Trotter

**Day 13: Thursday, March 22: RECITATION: TBD**

**Week 8: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES**

## Q3: Identifying Crisis in Japan

### Week 9: Tuesday April 3: THEME

Presentation by Vincent de Paul  
Group formation of students based on interests  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #7:** Final-term project concept and proposals – 250-word text and images on which crisis of Japan since the triple disasters of March 2011 you would like to provide a creative response to in your final project. (Due: Tuesday April 10, 12pm on class blog)

**Reading #7:** A reading from:  
-*The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and the Global Order*, Craig Calhoun  
-*Aftershocks: Stories from the Japan Earthquake*, Eisler, Barry, Jake Adelstein, Yoko Ono, Patrick Sheriff, et al.

### **Thursday, April 5: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

### Week 10: Tuesday, April 10: THEME

Discussion of Assignment #7: presentation of identified crises  
Discussion of Reading #7:  
Discussion of blog posts

**Assignment #8:** 10-min presentation of what your artistic concept is to respond to the crises (use any media necessary)

**Reading #8:** Reading from:  
-*Art as Far as the Eye Can See*, Paul Virilio

### **Thursday, April 12: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

## Q4: Responding to Crisis in Japan

### Week 11: Tuesday, April 17: PATRIOTS DAY – NO CLASS

### **Thursday, April 19**

Introduction by Vincent de Paul

Discussion of Assignment #8: 10-min presentation of project concept  
Discussion of Reading #8

**Assignment #9:** develop project concepts into a proposal on course blog

**Reading #9:** A reading from:  
-*Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag

**Week 12: Tuesday, April 24:**

Introduction by Vincent de Paul

Discussion of Assignment #9: discussion of final project proposals

Discussion of Reading #9:

Discussion and presentation of blog posts

**Assignment #10:** Final-term project development for pin-up

**Reading #10:** A reading from:

*-Project Japan: Metabolism Talks, Koolhaas, Rem and Hans Ulrich Obrist.*

**Thursday, April 26: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

**Week 13: Tuesday, May 1: THEME**

Introduction by Vincent de Paul

Discussion of Assignment #10: Pin-up and review of final-term project development

Discussion of Reading #10:

Discussion and presentation of blog posts

**Assignment #11:** Continue final-term project development for pin-up

**Reading #11:** A reading from:

*-Hiroshima After Iraq - A study in Art and War, Deutsche Rosalyn*

**Thursday, May 3: RECITATION: TBD**

-will include visits to places at MIT, outside lectures, in-class project development or individual meetings

**Week 14: Tuesday, May 8:**

Discussion of Assignment #11: Pin-up and review of final-term project development

Discussion of Reading #11:

Discussion and presentation of blog posts

**Assignment #12:** pre-final-term project development for pin-up

**Reading #12:** A reading from:

*Reconstructing Kobe: The Geography of Crisis and Opportunity, Edgington, David W.*

**Thursday, May 10:**

Continue work on projects in-class - Cube reserved for temporary access

Individual feed back from Vincent de Paul/Bunza/Others

**Week 15: Tuesday, May 8:**

Discussion of Assignment #11: pre-finals pin-up for review  
Discussion of Reading #11:  
Discussion and presentation of blog posts

*Assignment #13:* Final presentations  
*Readings #13:* N/A

**Thursday, May 10: RECITATION:**

-Final project presentation dry-run  
-Continue working on final project in E-15 Cube  
-Individual feed back from Vincent de Paul/Bunza/Others

**Week 16: Tuesday, May 15: FINAL TERM PRESENTATIONS & REVIEWS IN E-15 CUBE**

-Tentative Reviewers: Leonardo Bonnani, Azra Aksamija, Joel Lamere, Ian Condry, Shun Kanda, MARRIKA TROTTER

**Day 27: Thursday, May 17: LAST DAY OF CLASS**

- Pizza, class wrap-up and evaluations.

☺ CHEERS AND LETS HAVE A WONDERFUL SEMESTER ☺



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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: **(J)** denotes resources that are specifically related to Japan.

**(J)** Atwater, Brian F. et al. *The Orphan Tsunami of 1700: Japanese Clues to a Parent Earthquake in North America*. U.S. Geological Survey professional paper, 1707. Reston, Va.: U.S. Geological Survey; Seattle: In Association with University of Washington Press, 2005.

Auge, Mark. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Verso Books, London, 1995.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Zone Books, New York, 1995.

Barnett, Michael and Thomas G. Weiss. "Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present." In *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, eds. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Boltanski, Luc. *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Boltanski, Jacob, Mary Jane and Christian. *Places With a Past: New Site-Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991.  
(NB198.P49 1991).

Brauman, Rony. *When Suffering Makes a Good Story*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Calhoun, Craig. *A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention, and the Limits of the Cosmopolitan Order*. Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 2004.

Calhoun, Craig. Forthcoming. *The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and the Global Order*. In *States of Emergency*, ed. Didier Fassin. Cambridge, MA: Zone Books.

**(J)** Clancey, Gregory. *Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930*. University of California Press, 2006.

De Waal, Alex. *The Humanitarian Carnival: A Celebrity Vogue*. World Affairs, 2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/humanitarian-carnival-celebrity-vogue>

Deutsche, Rosalyn. *Hiroshima After Iraq - A study in Art and War*. MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2010.  
<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/octo.2010.131.1.3>

**(J)** Edgington, David W. *Reconstructing Kobe: The Geography of Crisis and Opportunity*. University of British Columbia Press, 2010.

**(J)** Eisler, Barry, Jake Adelstein, Yoko Ono, Patrick Sheriff, et al. *Aftershocks: Stories from the Japan Earthquake*. Digital Dales Ltd. Croft House, Cumbria CA, 2011.

Helmets, Marguerite and Charles A. Hill. *In Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmets. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004.

Illich, Ivan. *H<sub>2</sub>O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of "Stuff"* The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, Dallas TX, 1985.

- (J) Karan, Pradyumna and Unryu Suganuma, eds. *Local Environmental Movements: A Comparative Study of the United States and Japan*. University Press of Kentucky, 2008.
- Kelly, Kevin. *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, & the Economic World*. Basic Books, Cambridge MA, 1995.
- Kepes, Gyorgy. *Arts of the Environment*. G. Braziller, 1972.
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- McLuhan, Marshall and Lewis H Lapham. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1994.
- McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*. Ginko Press, Berkeley CA, 2005.
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- Petryna, Adriana. "Chernobyl's survivors: Paralyzed by fatalism or overlooked by science?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 67 (2): 30 -37. 2011. DOI: 10.1177/0096340211400177. Available at <http://bos.sagepub.com/content/67/2/30.abstract>.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2003.
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- Virilio, Paul. *The Futurism of the Instant*. Polity Press, Cambridge UK, 2010.
- Virilio, Paul. *The University of Disaster*. Polity Press, Cambridge UK, 2009.
- (J) Yoshioka, Hitoshi. *A Social History of Nuclear Power: Its Development in Japan*. 1999. <http://teach311.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/book-a-social-history-of-nuclear-power-its-development-in-japan-1999/>

## JAPAN WEB RESOURCES

(see class blog at [disasteratadistance.mit.edu](http://disasteratadistance.mit.edu) for further references)

Tsunami Warnings, Written in Stone, New York Times

<http://goo.gl/ZuAV4>

Smits, Gregory. 2011. "Danger in the Lowground: Historical Context for the March 11, 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9 (20), May 16. <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Gregory-Smits/3531>

Ancient stone markers warned of tsunamis, The Archaeology News Network, April 6, 2011  
<http://archaeologynewsnetwork.blogspot.com/2011/04/ancient-stone-markers-warned-of.html>

Extract of documentary on Minami Sanriku by Takaharu Saito,  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meXuZ0JFv6Y>

Network for Historical Materials: (<http://rekishishiryonet.wordpress.com/about/>)

We, the *Network for Historical Materials*, was established on 4th February 1995, approximately three weeks after the Hanshin Earthquake, and started as an association which worked to protect the historical documents and artifacts affected by natural disasters such as floods, typhoons, and quakes.

H-Japan (<http://www.h-net.org/~japan/>)

Welcome to H-Japan, a member of H-Net Humanities & Social Sciences Online. H-Japan is an international, nonpartisan electronic discussion group. It provides scholars, graduate students and professionals a free daily forum to discuss Japanese history, culture, religion, and society, including contemporary political, diplomatic, security, and economic issues.

Teach3/11 (<http://teach311.wordpress.com/>)

Teach 3/11 is a participatory resource to help teachers and scholars locate and share educational resources about the historical contexts of scientific and technical issues related to the triple earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters in Japan.

The Digital Archive of Japan's 2011 Disasters - Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University) <http://jdarchive.org/>

The Digital Archive of Japan's 2011 Disasters project is part of a growing effort to record and archive the communications after, and responses to, the disaster. We welcome recommendations of materials for inclusion in the archive.

Social Creative Platform for Opportunity: WAWA

Its goals are to enrich the living situations in the temporary housings; support the creative industry's response by creating a transparent network among people who are using "creativity" to enhance everyday life in all the disaster areas. We have area leaders in all 3 prefectures who are actually networking with and have been identifying "creative projects" in these areas that are influencing people's lives.

## FILMS TO VIEW IN CLASS

*Waste Land*, Lucy Walker 2010 (2010)

*Foreign Parts*, Verena Paravel (2010)

*Manufactured Landscapes*, Ed Burtynsky (2007)

*Lessons of Darkness*, Werner Herzog (1992)

*The Lightning Testimonies*, Amar Kanwar (2007)

*War and Peace*, a film by Anand Patwardhan (2007)

*Black Sea Files*, Ursula Biemann (2005)

*Explaining the Nuclear Accident to Kids – Nuclear Reactor Boy's Upset Stomach* (2011)

*When the Levees Broke*

