We need to talk, and write, and question, and call out, and analyze, and read, and interrogate, and rethink, and pull apart, and remake, and hold to account, and intervene, and reimagine, like never before.
The aim of his argument is the deconstruction of the colonisers’ (and more generally Western and modern) essentialist claims of an inherent purity of culture. Bhabha also describes the process of creating culture by debunking the idea of a nation or people as being holistic and pure. He says:

Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other. […] The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself is that the act of cultural enunciation—the place of utterance—is crossed by the difference of writing. It is this difference in the process of language that is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures, at the same time, that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent. (Location 36)

In other words, a national culture can never be holistic and pure because its meaning, like other products of language, is open to ambivalence, open to interpretations by the audience which is different from the originator’s intent. So, in the postcolonial discourse, the Colonizer’s culture, far from being the simple, oppressive force upon the Colonized culture, is open to ambivalence. In explaining Edward Said’s description of Orientalism, Robert Young states that “Bhabha argues that even for the colonizer the construction of a representation of the Other is by no means straightforward” (Young, "Ambivalence," 143).

The Colonizer, in trying to objectify the Colonized, creates a stereotype of the Colonized in order to reject it as inferior: “Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (Bhabha “Other Question,” 93). The Colonizer creates an image of the Colonized and thinks that this image is holistic and pure, i.e., not open to ambivalence. But confrontation with the Colonized causes the Colonizer to see that this stereotype, which Bhabha says “dramatizes the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin” is “an impossible object” (“Other Question,” 103).

The Colonized culture’s difference displaces the Colonizer’s own sense of unity and makes the Colonizer aware of its split self, which desires the Colonized to validate the created stereotype in order that it may see the Colonized as a fixed object.
The MA in Critical Studies claims critical theory as a creative project of analysis and exposure radically interested in accountability and the material effects of ideas. The two-year program combines the study of critical theory with the practice of creative research, so students learn not only to critique but also to intervene, reimagine, and remake. The program is designed to help students develop modes of thinking, writing, and making that cross disciplinary boundaries.

Critical theory emerged with the Frankfurt School, and due to those thinkers’ commitment to knowledge that emancipates, critical theory now includes all theories that expose, critique, and transform oppressive ideologies. The Critical Studies program adopts this broader view. Coursework includes seminars in Critical Race Theory, Feminist Theory, LatCrit Theory, Queer Theory, and other emancipatory projects. Critical Studies also offers seminars in creative research that claim research as a form of intervention and making. The program culminates in a thesis project so students can make a contribution to the field based on their own interests and commitments.

Situated in the context of a 21st-century art school, Critical Studies pays particular attention to images, examining overlaps and tensions between critical theory and visual studies and investigating the role critical theory and art can play in transforming institutions and ideologies. The Critical Studies program explores how human beings engage language and images to make and unmake worlds.

The two-year required course sequence builds from identifying key questions and issues in critical theory to providing students with the methodological, research, writing, and professional skills they need to ask good questions and to investigate those areas of inquiry in a thesis project of their own design. The thesis research occurs during the first year; the thesis writing occurs during the second year, resulting in both an academic research paper finished in the third semester and a work of publishable writing based on the student’s professional interest in the fourth semester.

Allotting two years to complete the 45-credit MA program provides time for students to take electives that support their research interests, to work at jobs that sustain their professional and financial needs, and to complete thesis projects in a timely manner. In addition, should students wish to apply to doctoral programs, the two-year timeframe will allow them to apply in the third semester of the program rather than at the start of the first year, making them stronger candidates with better letters of recommendation and more focused research interests. The two-year program also allows students to have the summer off for independent research, work, fellowships, travel, or internships.
Shawna Lipton
Chair, MA in Critical Studies

We look forward to introducing you to the new Chair of the MA in Critical Studies program, Dr. Shawna Lipton. Shawna has a dynamic vision for the program, its urgency, and its presence in the world. She brings a strong background in critical studies and a pointed emphasis on expanded emancipatory projects including gender studies and queer theory. In Shawna’s own words, her teaching style provides students, “with the tools to balance an intersectional analysis of power with concrete coalitional outreach.”

Shawna holds a PhD in English from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, with a dissertation entitled ‘Queer Literary Criticism and the Biographical Fallacy’. She has presented papers at conferences ranging from the Modern Languages Association to the Biographical Fallacy. She has been published in New Cinemas and QED: A Journal in Librarianship and Librarianship. Shawna's scholarly writing has been presented in New Cinemas and QED: A Journal in Librarianship and Librarianship.

Aeron Bergman

Aeron Bergman is Chair of the Low Residency MFA in Visual Studies program at PNCA. Bergman holds an MA in Studio Art from New York University, an MA in Art History from University of Toronto, and a BA in Art History from Michigan State University. Bergman was most recently faculty in Interdisciplinary Arts and the low-residency MFA at the University of Washington, Bothell. He has taught internationally with positions including a professorship at the Oslo National Academy of Fine Arts and as guest professor at Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, and Trondheim Academy of Art. He was the founding chair of Intermedia at the Oslo National Academy of Fine Art from 2007 to 2013, a supervisor of the National Norwegian Artists Research Fellowship, and a faculty liaison between the International Academy of Art Palestine in Ramallah and the Oslo Academy of Fine Art. Aeron served as an advisor and professor in a low-residency MA program in Scandinavia called the Nordic Sound Art MA.

Taylor Eggan

Taylor Eggan received his PhD in English from Princeton University in 2017. His research interests are broad, and include African literature and culture (Anglophone, Francophone, Swahiliphone), postcolonial literature, global modernisms, ecophilosophy, and theories of the novel. He has published and presented on writers as diverse as Samuel Beckett, Brins Ondiri, Willa Cather, Joseph Conrad, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Mibogo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Ferdinand Oyono, and Sa’d Abd Alla Ahmed Mohamed. In addition to his scholarly work, Taylor is also a practicing artist. As a performer and dance maker, his artistic practice integrates improvisational investigation, collaborational movement, and broader-ranging research. Over the past decade, he has performed extensively in Portland and Minneapolis, working in the fields of dance, theater, film, and music.

Taylor’s current projects include a book titled The Ecological Unconscious and a new dance-theater work titled Abominable.

Gitti Salami

Brigitte Salami is Associate-Professor of Art History. Prior to joining PNCA in 2012, she taught at Southern Methodist University, Dallas (2000), DePaul University, Chicago (2002-04), the University of Illinois, Chicago (2004), and the University of Kansas (2004-11). Her specialization is in African Art. She has conducted extensive field research in the Middle Cross River region of Nigeria (1999, 2001-02, 2006, 2011), where Yakurr and their neighbors celebrate elaborate new yam festivals. These give rise to performances practices, processions, masquerades, body arts, etc. Her interests further span modern, contemporary, and transnational African art. Much of her thought is rooted in postcolonial theory.

Salami is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) Fellowship (1999), the Distinguished Master Thesis Award of the Midwest Association of Graduate Students (2000), a Fulbright-Hays DRDA Fellowship (2001-02), a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institute with residency at the National Museum of African Art (2010), and a National Research Council Visiting Fellowship at the University of East Anglia (2011). Her coedited Wiley Blackwell volume (2013), A Companion to Modern African Art received ACaza’s Arts Council of the African Studies Association Honorable Mention for the 2014 Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publication Award.

Walidah Imarisha

Walidah Imarisha is an educator, writer, public scholar and spoken word artist. She edited two anthologies, Octavia’s Broad: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements and Another World is Possible. Imarisha’s nonfiction book Angels with Dirty Faces: Three Stories of Crime, Prison, and Redemption won a 2017 Oregon Book Award. She is also the author of the poetry collection Scars/Stars. She is currently working on an Oregon Black history book, forthcoming from AK Press. Imarisha has taught in Stanford University’s Program of Writing and Rhetoric, Portland State University’s Black Studies Department, Oregon State University’s Women/Gender Sexuality Studies Department, and Southern New Hampshire University’s English Department.

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Visiting Lecturers
Visiting artists, writers, and scholars enrich the conversation around our work. Each of these visitors delivers a public lecture, and Critical Studies students spend additional time with them in studio visits, seminars, and casual conversation. Past visitors to the school include Jacques Rancière, W.J.T. Mitchell, Art Spiegelman, James Turrell, Heike Kuehn, Ellen Dissanayake, Sue Coe, Susan Szenasy, David Shipley, Kurt Andersen, Joe Sacco, Laurie Anderson, Lewis Hyde, and Mel Chin.

Featured Invited Speakers 2017-2018:

Sarah Schulman
Sarah Schulman is a novelist, playwright, screenwriter, nonfiction writer, journalist, and AIDS historian. Her most recent books are the novel The Cosmopolitans, selected by Publishers Weekly as one of the best American novels of 2016, and Conflict is Not Abuse, winner of the Publishing Triangle Nonfiction Award. Schulman is co-founder, with Jim Hubbard, of MIX: NYC Queer Experimental Film Festival, the ACT UP Oral History Project (www.actuporalhistory.org) and co-producer of Jim’s featuring documentary film United in Anger: A history of ACT UP. Schulman is on the advisory board of Claudia Rankine’s The Racial Imaginary, and Jewish Voice for Peace. She is faculty advisor to Students for Justice in Palestine at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, where she is a Distinguished Professor.

Maggie Nelson
Maggie Nelson is a writer forging a new mode of nonfiction that transcends the divide between the personal and the intellectual and renders pressing issues of our time into portraits of day-to-day lived experience. Nelson’s five book-length works of nonfiction are grounded in experiences and topics with which she is struggling. She invites the reader into her process of thinking through and making sense of her unique concerns with the help of feminist and queer theory, cultural and art criticism, philosophy, and psychology.

Publishing
Publishing is a priority for the Critical Studies program. Launching in 2017, a new online journal featuring creative non-fiction, art criticism, and cultural theory, will welcome student submissions. A print anthology will be published annually.

Study Abroad
Students have the option to participate in study abroad experiences, including, in summer of 2018, a trip to Berlin Biennale with art historian Gitti Salami.

Caldera Retreat
Annually, the Critical Studies cohort enjoys a collective retreat at the Caldera Arts Center in beautiful rural Oregon.
Critical Studies Curriculum

SUMMARY OF COURSES:
Critical Theory = 9 credits
Creative Research = 6 credits
Ethics & Visual Culture = 3 credits
Creative Non-Fiction Writing = 3 credits
Professional Practice = 3 credits
Electives = 6 credits
Internships = 3 credits
Thesis writing = 12 credits
Total Credits = 45

COURSES BY SEMESTER:

Fall Semester 1 = 12 credits
3 credits Critical Theory 1: Introduction
3 credits Research for a Creative Practice 1
3 credits Ethics & Visual Culture
3 credits Elective (from existing PNCA courses in graduate or undergraduate programs)

Spring Semester 1 = 12 credits
3 credits Critical Theory 2: Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, Gender, and Sexuality
3 credits Research for a Creative Practice 2
3 credits Creative Non-Fiction Writing
3 credits Elective (from existing PNCA courses in graduate or undergraduate programs)

Fall Semester 2 = 12 credits
3 credits Critical Theory 3: Critical Race Theory and Postcolonial Theory
6 credits Thesis Writing 1 (complete thesis)
3 credits Professional Practice

Spring Semester 2 = 9 credits
6 credits Thesis Writing 2: Preparing for Publication
3 credits Internships

Critical Theory Seminars (9 credits): In three critical theory seminars, students learn to read and write carefully and critically; to express ideas clearly; to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously; and to analyze ideas based on their material effects. The critical theory seminars form the intellectual foundation of the program and constitute the students’ shared texts. The seminars introduce students to major concepts and questions in critical theory—and, as the seminars build on one another, they become more focused on particular lines of thought within critical theory. The seminars approach critical theory as epistemological and methodological approaches to the study of structural inequalities and as tools for questioning power and analyzing the construction of difference. Because the courses are taught in the context of an art school, particular attention is paid to exploring overlaps and tensions between critical theory and visual studies and investigating the role of critical theory and the image in transforming institutions and ideologies. In each seminar, students will be exposed to a required set of texts and will also have the opportunity to connect the assigned topics to their own area of expertise and interest. Courses will combine both requisite content and opportunities for intense engagement with specialized topics in which the student chooses to read more deeply.

Research for a Creative Practice Seminars (6 credits): The seminars in research for a creative practice provide framework for students to pose questions and incorporate qualitative research methodologies into ongoing inquiry. The emphasis is on research as a process of critical engagement for observing connections between seemingly disparate ideas, planning future actions and strategies, and asking better questions. The seminars introduce students to a range of qualitative research methods and examples of creative inquiries that cross the boundaries of discipline and genre. The seminars also prepare students to write their thesis projects. By the end of the second seminar, students pose their research question; by the end of the second seminar, students write a literature review of relevant theorists, artists, and creative practices that inform their thesis work and are well prepared to transform core concepts and questions into a novel, researchable project that will make a contribution to the field. In addition, students develop professional skills for clearly communicating research ideas with theoretical and methodological rigor to various audiences.

Thesis Writing Seminars (12 credits): Students in the Critical Studies program complete and defend a master’s thesis (30-50 pages), which is both critical and constructive. In the first seminar, with support from a mentor, the thesis writing professor, and in-class workshops, students complete the thesis. In the second seminar, students complete their academic thesis work for publication so the research project is outward facing and makes a contribution in the world. The form of publication depends on the student’s area of interest and professional practice plans.

Ethics & Visual Culture Seminar (3 credits): This seminar explores critical theory and the image can play in the critical studies. Because the courses are taught in the context of an art school, particular attention is paid to exploring overlaps and tensions between critical theory and visual studies and investigating the role of critical theory and the image in transforming institutions and ideologies. In each seminar, students will be exposed to a required set of texts and will also have the opportunity to connect the assigned topics to their own area of expertise and interest. Courses will combine both requisite content and opportunities for intense engagement with specialized topics in which the student chooses to read more deeply.

Professional Practice (3 credits): In this seminar, students develop effective professional strategies to successfully pursue a chosen career path upon completion of the Critical Studies program. The course helps students identify opportunities for achieving meaningful career objectives and for making a contribution as a critical citizen. Students learn concrete professional skills: curriculum vitae formatting, email and communication etiquette, letter writing, interviewing, public speaking, job search resources, portfolio development, and how to apply for opportunities which may include PhD programs, teaching positions, publications, grants, fellowships, internships, residencies, or exhibitions. The objective is to prepare the future Critical Studies graduate to identify, plan, and pursue a strategy for meaningful career development and a rewarding professional life in which their talents translate into a significant critical cultural contribution.

Internship (3 credits): Internships provide opportunities for students to translate their academic research interests into real-world professional experience.

Electives (6 credits): Students take additional courses in graduate or undergraduate programs at PNCA that support their creative, research, and intellectual interests and prepare them to complete their thesis project.
Portland, Oregon

Portland is an ideal city for making, living, and playing, where graduate students can take advantage of a range of cultural and natural resources. Ecologically minded, environmentally progressive, Portland is flanked by the Columbia River to the north, Mt. Hood to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Willamette Valley to the south. Local cultural institutions such as Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland Art Museum, Center for Contemporary Art & Culture, Yale Union, and Northwest Film Center present important contemporary art programming.

And Portland is home to numerous creative industries and a thriving community of artists, designers, musicians, and writers with independent spirits and innovative mindsets. Portland’s cultural and environmental richness is enhanced by personable neighborhoods, an efficient public transportation system, delicious food offerings, and a temperate climate. This eminently livable city provides an ideal backdrop for a graduate education.

Facilities and Resources

Pacific Northwest College of Art’s campus is centered on the tree-lined North Park Blocks in downtown Portland in a neighborhood that is home to most of the city’s art galleries and a concentration of design studios. PNCA’s Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Art and Design is a 100-year-old former federal post office renovated with a striking, contemporary design that brings natural light into nearly every working space in the building.

Our print studio is one of the most comprehensive and dynamic print labs in the country. Every door is open to you: print studio, large format digital labs, a digital fabrication lab, wood, ceramic, and metal facilities to support your practice.

Centered around the glass-roofed atrium of our main building are galleries and common spaces: the Mediatheque theater for projection and performance; an elegant library; the New Commons flex space which hosts exhibitions, conferences, projects, and events; plus six floors of classrooms, labs, and studios.

PNCA Albert Solheim Library’s core collection consists of materials essential to the curriculum and new materials selected by the librarian to mirror the PNCA curriculum. The library provides coverage of all subjects and viewpoints, with the majority of materials concerning the history and current practice of Fine Art.
The Center for Contemporary Art & Culture at PNCA

The Center for Contemporary Art & Culture brings influential artists and curators to PNCA to make exhibitions, lecture, critique, and participate in studio visits and workshops with students. In addition The Center is the steward of the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Craft, with over 1,000 works of craft.

The Center has recently shown new work by Cauleen Smith, Letha Wilson, Bruce Nauman, and David Horvitz.

Graduate Visiting Artist Lecture Series

A dynamic and essential part of the curriculum in each graduate program, The Graduate Visiting Artist Lecture Series brings artists, scholars, designers, curators, and critics from around the globe to engage with students and the wider community in a variety of formats, including lectures, conversations, panel discussions, group critiques, workshops, and studio visits. These visiting art practitioners contribute to, challenge, and expand the academic and artistic discourse at PNCA, extending the opportunities for instruction and learning.

ARTISTS

Kris Cohen
Anna Craycroft
Sarah Crowner
Michele Fiedler
Juni Figueroa
Michelle Grabner
Brian Holmes
Jibade-Khalil Huffman
Amanda Hunt
Walidah Imarisha
Josh Kline
Wayne Kinney
Maxwell Klotz
Maggie Nelson
Bob Noakes
Saul Ostrow
Sarah Schulman
A.L. Steiner
Adriana Lara
Irene Morell
MFA
Wangechi Mutu
Maggie Nelson
Bob Noakes
Saul Ostrow
Sarah Schulman
A.L. Steiner
Martine Syms
Storm Tharp

Exhibitions

Admissions
pnca.edu/grad/admissions

PNCA accepts competitive candidates representing a wide range of disciplines and distinctly diverse backgrounds. Details regarding specific application requirements for each program can be found at pnca.edu/grad/apply. All materials must be received by the applicable deadline to be considered for admission. Interviews take place roughly one month after the admissions deadline for each program. Applicants may apply for only one graduate program. All accepted candidates must submit a $350 tuition deposit to secure enrollment and eligibility for class registration.

Application
Application Requirements

DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1
Application form
Application fee
Résumé
Two letters of recommendation
Official transcripts from all colleges attended
Statement of purpose
Portfolio with image index

Application requirements vary by program. Please see pnca.edu/grad/apply for specific requirements.

Financial Aid
pnca.edu/financialaid

Graduate students apply for aid through our FAFSA in the same manner as undergraduate students. PNCA offers Federal Stafford Loans, Graduate PLUS Loans, and institutional aid. All enrolled graduate students are eligible for merit scholarship funds, which are awarded based on the strength of the application. There is no separate application for scholarships.

The MA in Critical Studies offers research assistantships, writing fellowships, and travel awards.

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Visiting The Campus

Graduate tours are by appointment only. Please call 503.821.8972 or email admissions@pnca.edu to schedule a campus visit and learn more about our graduate offerings.

Accreditation

Pacific Northwest College of Art is a co-educational, non-denominational, independent college, providing professional education in the visual arts and granting the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Arts, and Master of Fine Arts degrees. It is the oldest independent college of art in the Pacific Northwest. PNCA is an accredited institutional member of both the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Council on Postsecondary Education and the U.S. Department of Education recognize both institutional accrediting bodies. PNCA is a member of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (acad.org).

Nonprofit Statement

PNCA is a nonprofit corporation authorized by the State of Oregon to offer and confer the academic degrees described herein, following a determination that state academic standards will be satisfied under OAR 583-20. Inquiries concerning the standards of school compliance may be directed to the Oregon Office of Degree Authorization, 1501 Valley River Drive, Suite 100, Eugene, Oregon 97401.

Non-discrimination Policy

PNCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, physical disability, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs. The college admits qualified individuals without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, physical disability, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

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PNCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, physical disability, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs. The college admits qualified individuals without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, physical disability, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

Financial Aid
pnca.edu/financialaid

Graduate students apply for aid through our FAFSA in the same manner as undergraduate students. PNCA offers Federal Stafford Loans, Graduate PLUS Loans, and institutional aid. All enrolled graduate students are eligible for merit scholarship funds, which are awarded based on the strength of the application. There is no separate application for scholarships.

The MA in Critical Studies offers research assistantships, writing fellowships, and travel awards.

Accreditation

Pacific Northwest College of Art is a co-educational, non-denominational, independent college, providing professional education in the visual arts and granting the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Arts, and Master of Fine Arts degrees. It is the oldest independent college of art in the Pacific Northwest. PNCA is an accredited institutional member of both the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Council on Postsecondary Education and the U.S. Department of Education recognize both institutional accrediting bodies. PNCA is a member of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (acad.org).

Nonprofit Statement

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