

## **The PRAXIS Initiative (A Status Report)**

July, 2019

Inspired by a mission to foster “critical thinkers who make,” the PRAXIS initiative involves Critical Theory, Emergent Digital Practices, English & Literary Arts, Computer Science, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship students in the incorporation of new and emerging technologies and practices across disciplinary fields. Following CILCA’s receipt of funds from the Mellon Foundation, our initial timeline for public-facing programs accelerated significantly. Winter 2019: We dedicated much of our time to F2F meetings and asynchronous correspondence necessary for planning of our PRAXIS events for spring, summer, and fall 2019. We also worked tirelessly to build our growing cohort of DU colleagues involved in our activities, which now includes faculty and students from several departments and programs: Anthropology, Computer Science, Emergent Digital Practices, Engineering and Entrepreneurship, English & Literary Arts, Philosophy, the University Writing Program, the School of Art & Art History, and the DU-IIiff Joint PhD Program. Plus we have established working relationships with colleagues from Denver area communities, including Colorado School of Mines, University of Colorado, Denver, Metro State University, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Spring 2019: 45 students took preparatory, co-designed classes emphasizing multidisciplinary and multimodal critical theoretical practices. Those three courses (from EDP, ENGL, and PHIL) included guest presentations (featuring DU faculty from Special Collections, Theatre, and Astronomy/Physics; as well as Denver book arts specialists) plus one public-facing event (Making Media Matter) that connected all three classes to public-engagement activities and initiatives with five invited interdisciplinary speakers (DU faculty and graduate students) with an audience of about 40 faculty, students, and interested members of the public.

Summer 2019: We have spent a lot of time preparing for our Making Media Matter summer symposium where DU will host an intensive two-day workshop at the Innovation Floor—a center for experiential learning located in the Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science—consisting of a fully equipped makerspace, incubator, and event space open to all DU students, faculty, and staff. We have 2 confirmed keynote speakers, 10 confirmed presenters, and a growing list of confirmed attendees; and we have recently published the official conference program. The combination of these preparatory courses and the intensive summer workshop will prepare students for new levels of multidisciplinary and multimodal collaboration during Fall Quarter 2019, which will see the piloting of a new Keystone course co-taught by three faculty (from EDP, ENGL, and PHIL) and involving the design and creation of works that will be presented at public-facing events. Enrollment for that fall Keystone course is currently full at our targeted cap of 30 students: 10 from each of our respective departments/programs.

Fall 2019: We have also dedicated our time (during spring and summer) to the preparation of our fall syllabus, ordering our books, and planning the activities for our Keystone course, which will include two public-facing events with 6 presenters (DU faculty and graduate students) and 2 internationally renowned presenters (one from Concordia University; the other from UCLA). All student projects created throughout this PRAXIS Keystone experience during 2019 will be directly related to the critical theory methods and works studied in the preparatory courses and broadly engaged during the summer symposium. The PRAXIS program may culminate with research papers, literary/digital art, or entrepreneurial projects incorporating digital technologies and the emerging media landscape to expand ideas about what types of actions make one a “critical thinker” and how these actions relate to questions of collaboration and production. Our students will make the works they create public, accessible to a broad audience beyond DU. Along the way, we have been keeping records (on our DU Portfolio page) of our organizational process, which we hope will be helpful for the next iteration of the critical theory Keystone, <https://portfolio.du.edu/showard/page/73760>