

## **New course examines Syracuse's downtown history and revitalization efforts along the Connective Corridor**

In support of the citywide effort to revitalize Syracuse's downtown by building upon and connecting existing assets, a new course for Syracuse University students focuses on a role for art in community revitalization. Using Syracuse's Connective Corridor as a case study, students will research an array of arts and cultural institutions to understand how art can contribute to community development in Syracuse and beyond.

The students in the class will participate in at least one "Get on the Bus" project. From 5:20 p.m.-6:40 p.m., on five Thursdays and Fridays, a Connective Corridor bus will travel to two cultural venues currently operating along the Corridor—such as Light Work, Syracuse Symphony, Community Folk Arts Center, the Red House. The students have co-ordinated brief events at the sites, and will additionally, each of the five evenings, share with the bus riders one cultural richness that no longer exists there—including the 15th Ward, presence of Native Americans, the Erie Canal, active life around the mansions, and large European immigrant groups. By the end of the semester, students will present their findings and offer proposals for possible next steps in the process of Syracuse's downtown and arts revitalization. Students will also learn how to effectively communicate and publicly express an issue of public interest to draw the community's attention to an important concern or effort that requires action.

The course was developed and is being taught by Jan Cohen-Cruz, University Professor and director of Imagining America, a national consortium of colleges and universities based at Syracuse University committed to public scholarship in the arts, humanities, and design. The class inter-weaves readings about models and theories of cultural sectors situated to enhance their community's development, with particular attention to higher education's role; engages in workshops in selected methodologies of making art in public spaces; and focuses on hands-on projects on and off the Connective Corridor to highlight arts and cultural organizations in Syracuse.

Cohen-Cruz wrote "Local Acts: Community Based Performance in the U.S," edited "Radical Street Performance," and co edited "Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism" and "A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Art and Cultural Politics." As a professor at NYU Tisch School of the Arts from the late 1980s until 2006, Cohen-Cruz produced community based arts projects with students including one on community gardens and another on gentrification. In 2006-7, Cohen-Cruz co-conceptualized and co-initiated *HOME, New Orleans*, a collaboration of local universities, artists and residents of four New Orleans neighborhoods, experimenting with art's role in the revitalization of "home" as dwelling, neighborhood, and the city itself.

For more information and a schedule of events, call Imagining America at 443-8590.