

# *Co-Evolution: Art and Biology*

**UHON 402-004 | T | 12:00-12:50 | CTRART | 37533**

Joseph Cook (UNM-Biology) and Szu-Han Ho (UNM-Art)

As collaboration and communication between fields becomes increasingly prevalent within scientific research as well as artistic practice, there is a greater need for interdisciplinary exchange between biologists, artists, historians, and other researchers to share resources and methods for building collective knowledge. This form of collaboration can help researchers to see the intersections between cultural history and natural history, to pose new questions, and to foster a more expansive approach to answering these questions in a way that connects their diverse histories. This course aims to bridge the gap between traditionally segregated disciplines, in order to develop the creativity, generative thinking, and rigorous inquiry required of future leaders in research and practice.

“CO-EVOLUTION: Art + Biology in the Museum” consists of a 1-hour seminar each week and a series of three 2-day intensive workshops, to take place throughout the semester. During the weekly seminar (Tues. 12-12:50pm), we will hear from a variety of perspectives in both the arts and sciences on the relationship of form to place, centering on the theme of “Morphology and Geographic Variation.” We will address such questions such as: How has geography affected the ecology and evolution of species? How can we understand the relationship of animal appearance and behavior within an environmental gradient? Why do some bird species sing in local ‘dialects’ and what are the parallels between human and non-human communication? How have artists engaged with and intervened in natural systems through a place-based understanding? The workshops, which will take place during three weekends throughout the semester (Fri-Sat; 10am-4pm), will be led by invited artists who are renowned in their field and working at the intersection of science and contemporary art. Students will have the opportunity to work with the Visiting Artists through hands-on workshops to explore various themes in relation to the collections at the Museum of Southwestern Biology, one of the foremost natural history collections in the country.

## **Requirements**

Students will develop a hands-on study or project that may result in one of the following: a public presentation or exhibition highlighting aspects of the collection; a web-based tool for activating data in a visual or aural format; a printed book or catalogue for dissemination; a curricular module for a hybrid lab/studio.

## **About the Instructor**

Szu-Han Ho is Assistant Professor of Art & Ecology in the Department of Art and Art History. Szu-Han is an interdisciplinary artist whose work addresses the intersection of spatial practices, material culture, and affective knowledge. Her research interests have revolved around the shared metaphors of economics and ecology. After receiving a B.A. in Architecture from UC Berkeley, she launched a multi-year collaborative project integrating art installations, architectural proposals, performance, and agricultural research on a 250-acre site in West Texas. She holds degrees from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received an MA in Visual and Critical Studies and an MFA in Film, Video, and New Media. Recent projects include a mobile exhibition at the Center of the US (in conjunction with the Center for Land Use Interpretation), a performative property survey at Mildred’s Lane Historical Society, and a traveling exhibition of analogue models to psyches and natural systems. She is currently developing a collaborative, site-specific performance piece based on bird communication.

Joseph Cook is Professor of Biology and Director and Curator of Mammals and Genomic Resources at the Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico (UNM). He held faculty and curatorial positions at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for a decade and then was Chair of Biology at Idaho State University prior to joining UNM in 2003. His research focuses on conservation, molecular evolution and systematics of mammals and associated parasites. He co-founded museum-based field projects aimed at understanding the biogeography of the Alexander Archipelago (ISLES) and Beringia (Beringian Coevolution Project). He has instructed and researched in Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Belize, Panama, and Mongolia and is Director of the Undergraduate Opportunities (UNO) Program at UNM, pairing underrepresented students with graduate students and faculty members in research projects. He also chairs the AIM-UP! Research Coordinating Network, which is exploring new ways to incorporate museum collections and their databases into education initiatives.