

# TH319 Performance between Poetics and Politics

Seminar Leader: Lina Majdalanie  
Times: Thu 15:45-19:00  
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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

Focusing on the contemporary artistic scene in Lebanon and the Arab world more widely, as well as its links with other spaces, this theater / performance course confronts several interconnected dilemmas: how can art be political without becoming subsumed by militancy and activism, or by gestures of denunciation? How can it be understand itself as "engaged" but still in a state of perpetual questioning? We align the poetic with the political, the political and the philosophical. One of our key questions will be the issue of how art can be "local" but not self-identical; local but not restricted by governing laws and regulations, or by prior conception and invention. In other words, how do we go beyond the risks of universalist abstraction and of a narrowness in thrall to the enduring stereotypes of cultural relativism? Our task will be to explore the relation between the personal, the private or intimate spheres, and communal life. We ask how to make biography out of history, and History out of biography. This question presupposes a reconsideration of both of those categories, as well as of the borderlines that divide and classify the world into hermetic dichotomies. We might cite here the examples East/West, Fiction / Real. Using appropriation, intermixture and other forms of *détournement* (a Situationist term signaling a kind of forcible redirection or rerouting) in our histories, we bring together what is different and render the familiar strange or even foreign.

## Requirements

### Academic Integrity

Students are expected to:

- arrive 5 minutes before each class starts, to have time to change clothes if needed and settle down.
- wear comfortable training clothes as we will work physically.
- turn off smartphones during classes.

### Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. In case of missing a class, it is appreciated for the student to get in touch via email with the teacher to give a

short update. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Assessment

There will be 2 assignments given throughout the course:

A mid-term assignment in the form of 10 min critic intervention of the student on an art work of his/her choice, related to the topics discussed during the semester.

A final assignment, in the form of an individual or group performance presentation, or installation, or video projection. Each project, individual or collective, should not exceed 10 minutes.

### Grade Breakdown

The student's grade will be assigned according to 3 aspects: the level of participation during all classes (intended as an active, focused, cooperative engagement with the activities proposed) (25%), the first assignments (25%) and finally the last presentation of the different projects (50%).

## Schedule Spring 2019

WEEK 1, January 31

Introduction of the Lebanese artistic scene, and the big questions and challenges that have changed the work of the after war generation in the nineties; critic of the notions of trauma, and of (war) memory.

WEEK 2, February 7

Presentation and discussion of Walid Raad work «Atlas Group» and Khalil Joreige and Joanna Hadjithomas work « The pyromaniac photograph »: on non-activist political art.

WEEK 3, February 14

On interference strategy through the presentation and discussion of Rabih Mroué's work « Looking for a missing employee ».

WEEK 4, February 21

Self-critic art: presentation and discussion of Rabih Mroué's work « 3 Posters ».

WEEK 5, February 28

On appropriation strategy through the presentation and discussion of Rabih Mroué's work « Who's Afraid of representation ».

WEEK 6, March 7

Rethinking the concepts of biography and history, and the relation between the personal and the common through exercises, games and the presentation and discussion of Rabih Mroué and Lina Majdalanie's work « Biokhraphia ».

WEEK 7, March 14

The figure of the Messenger in the Greek theater + presentation and discussion of Avi Moghrabi film « Wait, it's the soldiers, I have to hang up now ».

WEEK 8, March 21

Critique of Edward Said « Orientalism »: on postcolonialism drifts.

WEEK 9, March 28

Presentation and discussion of Godard film « Here and Elsewhere » and of Akram Zaatari's film « All is Well on the Border »

WEEK 10, April 4

Each student present and discuss a work of an artist of his/her choice. The work chosen, should be related to a discourse or a representation of "other" culture, or minority, ...

WEEK 11, April 11

practical work and exercises which prepare students, individually or in small groups, to the "final" presentation of a performance, installation or video project.

WEEK 12, April 18

practical work and exercises which prepare students, individually or in small groups, to the “final” presentation.

WEEK 13, April 25

practical work and exercises which prepare students, individually or in small groups, to the “final” presentation.

WEEK 14, May 2

practical work and exercises which prepare students, individually or in small groups, to the “final” presentation.

WEEK 14, May 9

Presentations of the students projects.

**This syllabus may be subject to changes in regard to content as well as dates!**