

TH162

Political Performance Practice

Seminar leaders: Nina Tecklenburg
Email: n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu
Course times Berlin: Wed 9:00-12:15
Room: factory performance space
Office Hours: Wed 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

Course Description

How can performance art address social and political issues? How can theater operate as a practice of resistance rather than just reflecting on its current socio-political climate? Throughout the 20th century artists have explored the political potential of theater and performance. To summarize the past efforts of the avant-garde, the political element of theater is to be found less in content than in form. Situated on the threshold between life and art, between 'real life' and 'staged life', performance and theater are designed to address questions of representation, (performing) identity and the fabrication of reality and truth. Moreover, as an art form that is based on social encounter, liveness and embodiment theater and performance art maintain a medial proximity to engaged art interventions, political activism and creative forms of civic engagement. This proximity can be observed especially since the turn of the millennium, when – in the course of a political turn in the arts – activism and performance art have created new crossovers. Starting with the most relevant political theater and performance makers of the last century (Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal, The Living Theatre, Carolee Schneemann, Valie EXPORT, Adrian Piper, Viennese Actionists, Jeremy Deller, Rick Lowe, Christoph Schlingensief, etc.), we move on to current practices of performance and theatre-related activism (especially in Berlin) at the beginning of the 21. century. We look at new participatory theater, (post)migrant theater, community theater, contemporary queer performance, decolonial theater, radical humanism art, socially engaged practice, "art as public space" (Malzacher). Students will be asked to respond to the class readings and art works discussed in theoretical and practical formats, and to develop their own performance activism projects. This course is open to all students who want to take action and use performative strategies to do so.

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time.
- Initiate appointments with Professor or Arts Staff outside of class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from Professor in a timely manner.
- Inform Professor at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the

semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity

- Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

- Attendance of all classes and field trips is expected. To account for minor circumstances, one absence (that is, absence from **one three-hour session**) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation.
- Students are expected to attend all off-campus excursions punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, Professor must be informed in advance.
- Tardiness after ten minutes will be considered an absence.
- Please note that Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.
- SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2021: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

- Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where a Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.
- Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Assessment

Critical thinking, creative work, collaboration: This course aims for an experimental pedagogy and a productive interweaving of performance practice and theory. Students will thus be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine critical thinking, artistic practice and engaged action. Furthermore, this course fosters creative and intellectual collaboration amongst students. Working together independently and taking over responsibility for each other is a crucial part of this course. This also includes logistical issues such as organizing technical equipment and rehearsal times.

Participation and preparation: Please complete the required homework (readings, presentations, viewings, assignments) and contribute creatively and meaningfully to the exercises and discussions in class. You will receive a participation grade which is based on your in-class engagement and completion of homework. Please reserve 4 hours on average for weekly class preparation and asynchronous class work. Readings will be made available through Google Classroom. For further readings and research in preparation for the midterm essay please consult the books on our reserve shelf in the library.

Assignments and Deadlines

Students are asked to:

- give two performative presentations (10-15 min each) on a chosen class reading
- create artistic responses to theater/performance visits
- Submit a midterm essay (1500-2000 words) by Wednesday, 13th of October 2021, midnight
- Create a final performance project. Each project will be presented as part of THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY at the end of the semester (date tbc).

Theatre tickets

- Please be prepared to pay for two theater student tickets around 5-12 Euros each.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: (includes attendance, contributions to discussions, exercises and assignments, homework, collaboration with peers, communication with Professor and other students):	30%
Performative presentations:	10%
Midterm essay:	30 %
Final project (including short concept paper):	30 %

Schedule

Week 1: Introductions

Class: Wed, 1 Sep 2021, 9:00-12:15

Week 2: 20's Century Political Theater Makers

Class: Wed, 8 Sep 2021, 9:00-12:15

EXCURSION*: weekend theater visit, time tbc

Homework for week 2

Readings:

- Bertolt Brecht: "Short Organum for The Theatre" (1948), excerpts

- Augusto Boal: *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974), excerpts
- Richard Schechner: *Environmental Theatre* (1973), excerpts

In-class examples:

- The Performance Group
- The Living Theatre <https://www.livingtheatre.org/>
- Christoph Schlingensiefel https://www.schlingensiefel.com/index_eng.html

Week 3: Political Theater in Berlin / Artistic Response

Class: Wed, 15 Sep 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 3

Reading:

- Jacques Rancière: *The Emancipated Spectator* (2010)

Assignment:

- Notes on theater visit

Week 4: Workshop 1: Artistic Response

Class: Wed., 22 Sep 2021, 9:00-12:15

Special guest artist (tbc): Sahar Rahimi (director, Monster Truck: <http://www.monstertrucker.de/>)

Homework for week 4

- start working on artistic response on theater visit (in groups)

Week 5: Performing Identity I: Performance, Performativity, Embodied Politics

Class: Wed., 29. Sep 2021, 9:00-12:15

*****EXCURSION***:** weekend theater visit, time tbc

Homework for week 5

Readings:

- Judith Butler: "Critically Queer" from *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993)
- Sofia P. Cladeira, Sofie Van Bauwel, Sander de Ridder: "A Different Point of View: Women's Self-representation in Instagram's Participatory Artistic Movements @girlgaze and @arthoecollective" (2018)
- Peggy Phelan: "The Returns of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80" (2007)

Viewing:

- Anta Helena Recke and Julia Wissert: "Refusal of the Spectacular. On Colonial Gazes and Colonial Structures in German Theatre":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_rdsP2bwZw

In-class examples:

- Yoko Ono

- Valie EXPORT
- Anta Helena Recke

Week 6: Performing Identity II: Theatre of Real People / Artistic Response

Class: Wed., 6 Oct 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 6

Reading:

- Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford: *Theatre of Real People* (2016), pp. 23-67.

Assignment:

- Notes on theater visit

Week 7: Workshop 2: Artistic Response

Class: Wed, 13 Oct 2021, 9:00-12:15

Special guest (tbc): Joy Kristin Kalu (curator, scholar of performance and theater)

Homework for week 7

- artistic response (in groups) on theater visit or in-class performance example
- **Submission midterm essay (1500-2000 words): Wed, 13th of Oct 2021 midnight**

***** Fall Break: Oct 18 – 22 *****

Week 8: Performance and Activism I: Intervention, Public Space, Protest

Class: Wed, 27 Oct 2021, 9:00-12:15

EXCURSION: weekend theater visit, time tbc

Homework for week 8

Readings:

- Diana Taylor: chapters "Framing (Performance)" and "Artivists (Artist-Activists), or, What's to Be Done?", in: *Performance* (2016).

Websites:

- The Yes Lab: <https://theyesmen.org/lab>
- Critical Tactics Lab (Hemispheric Institute):
<http://archive.hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/ctl/creative-activism-thursdays>
<http://hemi.nyu.edu/hemi/en/ctl/creative-activism-projects>
- <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/>

In-class examples:

- Regina José Galindo <https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/home-en/>
- William Pope.L <https://www.moma.org/artists/37145>
- Centre for Political Beauty <https://politicalbeauty.com/>
- dgtl fmnm <http://www.digitalfeminism.net/2020x/index3.php>

Week 9: Workshop 3: Artistic response on theater visit or on in-class performance example

Class: Wed, 3 Nov 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 9

- Notes on theater visit

Week 10: Performance and Activism II: Participation and Social Practice

Class: Wed, 10 Nov 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 10

Readings:

- Florian Malzacher, "No organum to follow: possibilities of political theatre today," from: *Not just a mirror* (2015)
- Shannon Jackson: *Social Works. Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), pp. 11-15 and pp. 59-74
- Claire Bishop, "The social turn: collaboration and its discontents," from *Artificial Hells* (2012), pp. 26-40

In-class examples:

- Hannah Hurtzig: *Market for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*
<https://mobileacademy-berlin.com/en/english-version-is-still-under-construction-4/>
- Rick Lowe <https://www.ricklowe.com/index.html>
- Suzanne Lacy <https://www.suzannelacy.com/>
- Milo Rau/International Institute of Political Murder (IIPM)
<http://international-institute.de/en/projects/>

Week 11: Workshop 4: Final

Class: Wed, 17 Nov 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 11

- bring an idea to class (solo or group project) and be ready to present it to the group. Bring a small collection of materials that relate to your idea (images, texts, objects, music, etc.)
- Submission final project concept paper (individually): 1 - 2 pages, **due to Friday 19 Nov 2021, midnight**

Week 12: Final Project: internal showing + feedback / logistics *The Performance Factory*

Class: Wed, 24 Nov 2021, 9:00-12:15

Homework for week 12

- Two rehearsals of 2-3 hours each
- Rehearsal journal entries, list of technical equipment

Week 13: Dress Rehearsal and Final Presentation

Class: Wed, 1 Dec 2021, 9:00-12:15 (showing, feedback)

The Performance Factory Fall 2021: dress rehearsal, final presentation (dates tbc)

Homework for week 13

- Final rehearsals
- Stage management

Week 14: Wrap-up

Class: Wed, 8 Dec 2021, 9:00-12:15

Week 15

(completion week)

Facility Guidelines:

“The Factory” – Eichenstrasse 43

The Factory Policy Agreement

- 1) “The Factory” at BCB (Eichenstrasse 43) has space and facilities available to BCB students with an academic purpose for using the building. Mandatory in-class orientations are required to retain chip access to the Factory. Chip access to The Factory is from 7am to 10pm everyday during the semester. At 10pm students will be asked to leave the building by BCB security personnel.
- 2) Students agree to only use the common spaces that are available for their needs, and must respect private spaces that are off-limits. For requesting to reserve the dance / theater space and / or Seminar Room 6, please fill out the online [Factory Reservation Form](#). The Factory Staff will get back to you within two weekdays. (Monday - Friday).
- 3) No smoking is allowed anywhere inside the building. There are to be no projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) inside any part of the building.
- 4) Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
- 5) Spray painting and handling of any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not allowed inside the building. Contact the Studio Arts Manager concerning working with these materials. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be properly protected with a drop cloth or a packing paper provided by the workshop.
- 6) No sandals, flip-flops, or bare feet will be allowed inside the workshop and studio 6.
- 7) Students must make sure all lights are turned off and doors are closed when leaving the building. No windows or doors are to be left opened or cracked. All electrical items must be unplugged when not in use.
- 8) If BCB workshop tools must be borrowed for a purpose outside of the building, please contact The Studio Arts Manager (by appointment).
- 9) There are to be no architectural changes to studios or any areas inside or outside of the building without first speaking with the Studio Arts Manager.
- 10) During completion week, any space used by a student must be returned empty with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be bagged (or boxed) and properly disposed of. Final grades may be penalized and / or fines imposed if items are left (or renovations unfinished) by the inspection deadline.
- 11) Contact Studio Arts Manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

AV Facilities – Eichenstrasse 43 (upstairs)

- 1) BCB’s AV (Audio / Visual) facilities provide a limited quantity of AV equipment to support Admin, Faculty as well as those students enrolled in arts classes that require specific items. AV facilities do not include any black and white or color printing services for students.
- 2) The opening times may change every semester to adapt to specific course times. Once these times are established they will stay consistent throughout the semester, with possible exceptions. AV facilities are ONLY available during days when classes are held (closed during official BCB holidays).
- 3) All items checked out are due back during AV hours the following day, unless other arrangements have been made in advance directly with AV Staff.
- 4) Items to be reserved on a specific date should be requested at least one week in advance. Without reservation, availability is limited to a first-come, first-serve basis.
- 5) The AV Staff may exclude students from borrowing items at any time, if the student:

- failed to return items in time
 - failed to return items in person (pick up and/ or return by friends is not allowed)
 - returned items with missing pieces
 - returned items damaged or in poor shape
- 6) AV equipment will be given out only to those students responsible in organizing, picking up as well as returning their items IN PERSON. No exceptions.
 - 7) All items returned late, regardless of patron's position at BCB, will be subject to a 1 Euro fine, per day.
 - 8) Any item returned without accessories (such as cables, SD card, batteries, tripod head, lens cap, etc) will be subject to a 1 Euro fine, per day (the same as late returns).
 - 9) Any items missing will be subject to patron reimbursement for its value (or under special circumstances, replacement, at the discretion of AV Staff). Any items damaged or malfunctioning are expected to be reported to Staff upon check-in.
 - 10) Please use the AV email to inquire about equipment or policy, as well as to reserve (av@berlin.bard.edu). Do not contact AV Staff through their personal emails.
 - 11) We strongly suggest personally visiting the facilities to inquire and reserve before borrowing equipment!
 - 12) AV equipment is limited at BCB. Whenever possible students are encouraged to use their own devices (computers, cameras) for production purposes.
 - 13) Contact AV Staff directly with any questions: av@berlin.bard.edu

Photo Darkroom Facilities – Platanenstrasse 98 (downstairs)
Computer Pool and Media Lab – Kuckhoffstrasse 24 (first floor)

** Guidelines to be offered during orientations.