TH261
(Post)Pandemic Theater
in Berlin and New York

Seminar leaders: Nina Tecklenburg, Ramona Mosse
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Course times Berlin: Tue 3:45-7:00pm
Room: factory performance space + factory seminar room
Office Hours: Wed 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

Course Description

The year 2020-2021 witnessed profound and historic changes in the relationships among theater making, media, and society: from productions abruptly cancelled and theatre venues closing, to new digital and hybrid theatre forms on social media, to a powerful racial justice movement, particularly in the US-theater community. The global health crises has forced performance makers to redefine theatre and its central social and cultural functions. This course investigates theater of the past year and a half, asking how contemporary theater's relationship to its own social and political moment has changed, perhaps for good, at a time when audiences cannot gather in person. We will explore questions of institutional shift, examine significant digital performances made during the COVID-19 pandemic and trace movements for racial justice in the theater world. Our semester-long project will be the creation of a living archive – digital and physical – of Berlin and New York-based pandemic theater. The living archive will be composed of short documentary videos, visual collages, audio encounters, and hybrid performances. Our two collaborating courses at Bard College Berlin and Bard Annandale will hold regular in-person and virtual meetings, and conduct parallel investigations into pandemic theater. We will invite artists and curators from the performing arts sector, discuss the stakes and cultural implications of archival practice, and compare notes about how to document, describe, and understand the history we have all been living through together.

Learning objectives

The course is aimed at students from various disciplines with an interest in theater and performance, cultural production and policy, engaged arts practice and experimental approaches that combine theory and praxis.

(Post)Pandemic Theaters aims:
1. to study how the performing arts in the two exemplary locations of Berlin and Annandale/New York City have fundamentally altered their reach, audience, institutions, quality of social encounter, and political moment in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. to enable students to engage in a lively exchange across campuses and compare the different political and cultural contexts of Berlin and New York.

3. to give students the tools to artistically document the current cultural moment and enhanced role of digital media.

4. to allow students to critically engage with the role of digital media in shaping our individual and social sense of reality.

5. to investigate the new work processes and creative and institutional infrastructures of contemporary performing arts production during the pandemic.

6. to practically experiment with (post)pandemic performance approaches whilst interweaving discursive, embodied and digital tools for the creation of a living archive.

Requirements

Students are expected to:
- Turn off phones during class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- 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. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity
- Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. 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.
- 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 might 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 close interweaving of theory and creative methods. Students will be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine critical thinking and artistic practice. Furthermore, this course fosters artistic and intellectual collaboration amongst students across two campuses and cultural contexts. 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 Brightspace.

Assignments and Deadlines

Students are asked to:
● **Contribute to the building of the Living Archive** by bringing examples for the archive from the resources provided (blogs, video archives, etc.) **twice** during the semester, explaining why you selected the artistic piece, text, article, etc., that you have selected and why you believe it deserves renewed attention.
● **Student Interviews:** Create short 5-7 interviews on a memorable moment of digital liveness that each of you has experienced. Post on Padlet.
● **Midterm Essay:** Using one text, reading, or artwork to analyze another is an essential element of scholarly, curatorial, and artistic work. Applying theory or context to an artistic work can change our understanding of its politics, artistic choices, intended audience, and more. For your midterm assignment, you will write an essay that discusses a (post)pandemic performance example of your choice, in relation to a class reading of your choice, using the dialogue between these two texts and/or videos to shed light on one or both. Please choose an artistic work and theoretical text that you enjoyed and would like to spend more time with, and identify a question or set of questions that can connect your two chosen objects of examination. (1500-2000 words, submission: Friday, 15th of Oct 2021 midnight)
● **Collaborative Project:** create a short participatory performance intervention for the paired classroom.
● **Final Project**: Students from BCB and Bard will be paired to present a digital performance contribution at Symposium "Viral Theatres" in December (Week 14). The final project could take the following formats: hybrid participatory performance; audio piece; short video documentary.

Hybrid Seminar Format

This course will partially run as a hybrid seminar between the Bard Annandale and the BCB classes. That means **we will meet in person on campus** and reserve one hour of class time for synchronous meetings

with students from the other campus. We will be using the following online platforms and tools to create different meeting spaces for virtual interaction.

- **Brightspace** as a common resource platform for the seminar, which will gather all information regarding the schedule, any updates to the seminar schedule as well as links to the guest talks and film screenings. Most of the readings and links will be stored here in pdf format (unless a link is provided in the syllabus) and there is the option to post additional materials that emerge from our classroom interaction.
- **Padlet** as a posting platform that allows us to engage in asynchronous discussions, upload of smaller presentations and virtual collaborations. If you have not used Padlet yet, imagine it as an online notice board to which you can post text, visual, and audio files as well as comment and interact with your peers at BCB and across the network.
- **Flipgrid** is an optional video platform, which allows you to create video files as an alternative assignment format.

Theatre visits
We aim to jointly attend at least two digital or hybrid theatre evenings (one Berlin-based, one New York-based) during the semester. Student tickets will be covered by the Experimental Humanities Collaborative Network. Further updates on scheduling performances will occur at the beginning of the semester.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: (includes attendance, contributions to discussions and exercises, regular padlet postings, archive contributions, short assignments, collaboration with peers, communication with Professors and other students)	30%
Midterm essay:	30%
Collaborative project:	pass/fail
Final project:	40%

Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep up with the latest assignments and deadlines.

Week 1: August 31
Introductions: Theatre cultures during the pandemic

Week 2: September 7
Digital Liveness 1: concepts of liveness, physical co-presence & community

Readings

- Erika Fischer-Lichte, "The concept of performance," from *Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies* (2014)
- Flashpaper essay: Juan Michael Porter II, "How Will We Cope When We Come Together Again" (2021)
- Arundhati Roy, "The Pandemic is a Portal" (2020)

Examples
- Gob Squad: *Show Me A Good Time* (Berlin 2020) https://www.gobsquad.com/projects/show-me-a-good-time/

Assignment due: Watch Flipped classroom lecture (Miriam Felton-Dansky): *Digital Liveness*

Week 3: September 14
Digital Liveness 2: the making of liveness, live streaming, politics of accessibility

Readings
- Philip Auslander, "Digital Liveness" (2012)
- Erin Sullivan, "Live to your Living room: Streamed theatre, audience experience and the Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (2020), pp. 97-108
- José Esteban Muñoz, "The Burden of Liveness," from *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999)

Sound material
- Listen to one selected episode of Carmelita Tropicana's 2021 podcast "That's Not What Happened": https://soundcloud.com/carmelitatropicana

In-class examples:
- Pre-pandemic: National Theatre Live in HD (https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-the-national-theatre/national-theatre-live)
- Case Study: Junges DT/ Youth Theatre Deutsches Theater Berlin
- *Circle Jerk* (New York 2020)

Assignment due: 5-7min interview with another student from the other campus on a memorable example of digital liveness you have experienced during the pandemic.

Week 4: September 21
Digital Liveness 3: digital infrastructures, utopia and dystopia of digitality

Readings
- Shoshanna Zuboff, "Proof of Life" (on surveillance and social media) from *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2019), pp. 453-70
- Yvonne Zimmermann, "Videoconferencing and the Uncanny Encounter with Oneself: Self-Reflexivity as Self-Monitoring 2.0" (from *Poetics of Pandemic Media*, pp.99-105, 2020)
- Jan Distelmeyer, "What holds everything together. Experiences with programmatic relationships" (2020):

https://www.hebbel-am-ufer.de/en/hau3000/festivalmagazin-spy-on-me-3/programmatic-relationships-jan-distelmeyer/
- Jillian Walker, *The Orange Essays*: https://jillian-walker.ghost.io/

In class examples:
- Case Study: Soho Rep - Project Number One:
  https://sohorep.org/soho-rep-project-number-one

Week 5: September 28
Participation 1: new participatory theatre, digitality and participation

Readings:
- Florian Malzacher, "Introduction" and "No organum to follow: possibilities of political theatre today," from: *Not just a mirror* (2015)
- Ulf Otto, "Theatres of control: the performance of algorithms and the question of governance" (2019)

In class examples:
- Interrobang: *To Like or Not To Like*
  https://www.interrobang-performance.com/en/to-like-or-not-to-like-2/
- Turbo Pascal: *Algorithms*, and new production
- https://www.turbopascal.info/produktionen/algorithmen-2/

Guest Artists:
- Turbo Pascal (participatory workshop)

Assignment due: Flipped classroom lecture (Nina Tecklenburg): *Participation in (Post)Pandemic Performance*

Week 6: October 5
Participation 2: staging the online audience; game + immersive theatre, VR performance

Readings:
- Josephine Machon: *Immersive Theatres*, excerpts
- Matthew Reason, "Participatory audiencing and the committed return" (2019)

In class examples:
- machina eX: https://www.machinaex.com/en/about
- Cyberräuber (AI, VR): http://wp11159761.server-he.de/vtheater/en/home-2/
- Case studies: "Spielräume" by Berliner Ensemble and Komische Oper Berlin

Guest artist:
- Anna Fries (HAU 4: machina eX, VR feminist performances, Henrike Iglesias)

Assignment due: Submitting midterm essay (1500-2500 words): Fri, 15th of October 2021, midnight

Week 7 (Berlin): October 12
Collaborative project

*** Annandale students on fall break ***
Berlin students work on group performance for Annandale students

Week 7 (Annandale): October 19
Collaborative project

*** Berlin students on fall break ***
Annandale students work on group performance for Berlin students

Week 8: October 26
Participation 3: participation and politics; politics of the pandemic
Continuing Collaborative Project

Readings:
- Claire Bishop, "The social turn: collaboration and its discontents," from *Artificial Hells* (2012), excerpts
- Chelsea Whitaker, "Exploring an Anti-Policing Theatre":
- https://howlround.com/exploring-anti-policing-theatre
- Optional viewing: "To the Arts and beyond: What Does It Mean to Support Black Lives Matter?" https://howlround.com/happenings/arts-and-beyond-what-does-it-mean-support-black-lives-matter-asl-interpreted
- https://www.hebbel-am-ufer.de/en/programme/hau4/

In class-examples:
- Case study: Daaimah Mubashshir
- Case study: HAU4
  pixelrave: https://pixelrave.life/
  spy on me series: https://www.hebbel-am-ufer.de/en/hau3000/festivalmagazin-spy-on-me-3

Week 9: November 2
Collaborative project internal showing + feedback (different class time)

Week 10: November 9
Archive 1: Playing with the Archive

Readings:
- Rebecca Schneider: "What Happened; or, Finishing Live" (2016)
- Claire Read: "'Live or Almost Live': The politics of performance and documentation" (2014)
- David Cameron et.al.: "The Playable Archive," from *Drama and Digital Arts Cultures* (2017), pp. 161-73

In class-exercise: Mindmapping Post/pandemic theatre

<u>Assignment due:</u> Watch Flipped classroom lecture (Ramona Mosse): *Creative Archiving as Performance Practice*

<u>Week 11: November 16</u>
Archive 2: Documenting Pandemics

<u>Readings/viewings:</u>
- Daniel Defoe, excerpt from *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722)
- Teresa Castro "Of Drones and the Environmental Crisis in the Year of 2020" (from *Poetics of Pandemic Media*, pp.81-91)
- Rustom Bharucha, from video lecture "Theatre and the Corona Virus" (https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/v/interweaving-performance-cultures/online-projects/index.html)

<u>In class-exercise:</u> creative response to archiving

<u>Assignment due November 21, 2021, 6pm</u>: Final Project Concept paper.

<u>Week 12: November 23</u>
Moving into practice

- Shaping artistic concepts of final projects
- One-on-one meeting with student groups

<u>Week 13: November 30</u>
Rehearsal

<u>Week 14</u>
PUBLIC FINAL PRESENTATION as part of symposium "VIRAL THEATRES"
Thu, 9 Dec - Sat, 11 Dec 2021 (dates tbc)

<u>Week 15</u>
(*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 ay 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.