

# TH321 What is Togetherness?

Seminar Leader: plan b (Daniel Belasco Rogers and Sophia New)  
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## Course Description

Scenius is the intelligence of a whole operation or group of people. Let's forget the idea of "genius" for a little while, let's think about the whole ecology of ideas that give rise to good new thoughts and good new work.

Brian Eno, opening the Luminous Sydney festival in 2009

What does it really mean to make art together? How can we find ways to be and make things together within art practices? What kinds of gathering and interaction is taking place when we say we made it together? How does such a working methodology survive in a market that privileges the lone genius? How does one communicate collective authorship in a culture that only tends to understand individuality?

In this course we will draw together, walk together, write together, move together and dream together. Taught by the performance duo plan b (Sophia New and Daniel Belasco Rogers), we will also look at the work of other artists who have had long term collaborations. We will examine groups from the independent theatre scene like Gob Squad, She She Pop, Forced Entertainment, as well as fine art collectives such as Jan Family, Guerrilla Girls, and the Critical Art Ensemble.

While practising collective work, wider political issues will arise and be examined, such as what structures can be developed that respect everyone's wishes and needs? What is consensus? What are the strategies for making sure that confident people do not dominate less confident people? What place is there for dissent in collaborative practice? How familiar are we in dealing with each other? Is there a crisis of togetherness and what kind of togetherness are we partaking in on our connected devices?

## Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Be sure that you can commit to 9am on Monday mornings.
- Be on time.
- Engage in critiques and discussions.
- Approach seminar leaders either personally after class or by email in good time if difficulties arise and you need assistance.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.

- Be sure to cc [info@planbperformance.net](mailto:info@planbperformance.net) as well as using internal Google Bard mail account.
- Inform Professor at beginning of the semester if photos of student, 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 end of semester inspection of spaces (including any storage offered). Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Please note: 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](mailto: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. Syllabi should note that, instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

### Attendance

- Attendance of all classes is expected.
- More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.
- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, Professor must be informed in advance.
- Tardiness after five minutes will be considered an absence.

### Assessment

This course is about developing an understanding for contemporary performance and visual art practice, particularly in relationship collective creative arts practice, through the classes leading up to devising a final piece. The exact nature of this final piece will be negotiated and agreed with the course leaders and could range from performance, live installation, urban intervention to film, new media or exhibit. Students will be assessed on how they participate in class, how they support their fellow students with feedback and assistance, the quality of their independent / group work and the final piece. Ability to plan time and resources especially in the development of the final piece will also be assessed.

At the mid point there will be a work in progress project presentation after which students are expected to continue to develop final pieces or a final joint collaborative piece which will form part of the assessment.

### Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

The course leaders consider it important that the students are exposed to some of the constraints effecting the professional production of artistic work and therefore will not accept late presentation of

the work in progress or final piece. Lateness of final piece is unacceptable and lack of preparation for intermediate and final presentations should expect a reduced grade.

## Grade Breakdown

The percentage grade allotted to each project / presentation, and to classroom participation and assignments.

- Participation and attendance in class: 50%
- Work in progress mid term presentation: 10%
- Final performance / installation: 40%

## General Notes

In all sessions, we will aim for a mixture of practical work, physical work based around Taijiquan (T'ai chi ch'uan), which Dan has practised regularly over the last seven years and theoretical / discussion based examinations of artists, themes and contexts. After the first sessions of input from plan b during which issues of collaborative work will be illuminated through the work of contemporary experimental theatre companies, the lessons will become more responsive to the ideas for work that the students will begin to develop. As well as a mid-term assessment, a final project or projects involving everyone in the group will complete the course. The format for this final project or projects is open and could include performance, installation, lectures, photography, video or drawing. Daniel from plan b will lead most sessions with Sophia joining when she can, especially for assessments.

## Schedule

Spring 2019 classes start on Monday, January 28 and run until Friday, May 17 with spring break planned from Monday, April 15 – Sunday, April 21. Completion week is from May 13-17. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>

### 1. Monday 28 January 2019 09:00–12:15

#### *Introductions*

Dan will introduce the work of plan b, focusing on their current research on togetherness. The course will be laid out and discussed. Practical exercises will explore introductions and expectations of the students.

### 2. Monday 04 February 09:00–12:15

#### *Togetherness and Contemporary Theatre I*

Each class from now on before the spring break will start with a half hour Taijiquan session led by Dan. When possible, we will use the factory theatre space.

Alongside practical physical exercises, we will start to look at the work of contemporary theatre companies that have chosen to work as collectives. The first of these will be Gob Squad a collective based in Berlin that has been working together since the nineties. We will refer to *The Gob Squad Reader* (2010) as well as Sophia and Dan's personal associations with the company over the years.

From 11am: Factory A/V orientation with Janina for all students.

Text about Forced Entertainment distributed to look at next week.

### **3. Monday 11 February 09:00–12:15**

Together and Contemporary Theatre II

Taijiquan session then continuing to examine collaborative contemporary theatre companies with the work and history of Forced Entertainment. A text by Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment) from *Certain Fragments* (1999) on collaboration will be looked at in class.

Preparation for and discussion of next week's exercise of eating together with examples of artists working with food, meals and/or care work.

### **4. Monday 18 February 09:00–12:15**

Collective eating, care work with Guest

Potluck breakfast. A collective eating event will be experimentally undertaken. Collective responsibility will be taken for providing all the necessary elements for eating together including setting, utensils, presentation, documentation, serving, eating, clearing up and dealing with leftovers.

For the second part of this morning, a guest artist from Gob Squad or Forced Entertainment will join us to eat and talk about working in a collective over a number of years.

### **5. Monday 25 February 09:00–12:15**

Student collective work Mid term buildup I

After Taijiquan, we will start talking about students' ideas for developing work over the next weeks including the mid-term assessment. plan b will chose artists, exercises and themes to examine based on discussions during previous weeks that support or provoke the ideas that are emerging within the group. Exercises could include collective production of drawings, movement, performance or media, developing methodologies for this.

### **6. Monday 04 March 09:00–12:15**

Student collective work Mid term buildup II

If appropriate, individual group tutorials could also be scheduled during this session where ideas can be discussed in smaller groups. Practically, we will continue collective production exercises, evaluating and developing chosen methods. If the entire group is working on a single project, we may find ways to break tasks down into working groups and develop appropriate structures of communication. We will talk about feedback methodologies that we will employ over the next two weeks and set some framework for these.

### **7. Monday 11 March 09:00–12:15 Mid way assessment**

Mid-term presentations I

This is an opportunity for the group(s) to have a work in progress presentation, inviting other students if appropriate. The methodologies of examining and feeding back defined in the previous week will be carried out.

### **8. Monday 18 March 09:00–12:15**

(Mid Term Grades Due at end of week)

Mid-term presentations II / Feedback Methodologies II

If appropriate, presentations can also happen this week if multiple groups are formed and need the time for presentation. If everyone has participated last week, we will assess our application of the feedback methodologies with a view to continuing to employ them internally for the remainder of the term.

### **9. Monday 25 March 09:00–12:15**

Berlin wide excursion

Excursion to observe collective behaviour in different urban contexts. Foraging could feature. Locations to be developed during term by plan b with students.

### **10. Monday 08 April 09:00–12:15**

Excursion assessment / processing

Presentation of and discussion of preceding weeks excursion. Development of work based on it as potential elements in final project.

### **Monday 15 April Spring Break**

### **Monday 22 April Easter Monday**

### **11. Monday 29 April 09:00–12:15**

Preparation for final project(s) I

Group or individual tutorials as appropriate. By this stage, we expect students to have a clear idea of what to show a public for the final assessment. If performances or media such as film or photography is concerned, early versions can be screened / shown here for feedback.

### **12. Monday 06 May 09:00–12:15**

Preparation for final project(s) II

This session is dedicated to finishing the final project, dependent on student needs and preparing for next week's final assessments during the Open Studios.

### **13. Week starting 13 May**

Final Assessment week

plan b will be on hand for an agreed three hour session during this week as well as attending the Open Studios / final presentation. If appropriate, the group will participate in the Open Studios with the project or projects that have been developed during the term. Clearing up after this will also form part of the course and effect final grades.

## 14. Thursday 16th May time to be confirmed

Feedback session all students and plan b. We will evaluate the course together.

### Facility Guidelines:

#### “The Factory” – Eichenstrasse 43

- 1) The BCB “Factory” (main arts building) has space and facilities available to BCB students with an academic purpose for using the building. Students agree to only use the common spaces in the building that are available for their needs, and must respect private spaces that are off-limits.
- 2) Chip access to The Factory building and other arts facilities is limited to those students currently registered for classes needing those facilities. Orientations are required before access is granted. In addition, students and faculty involved in clubs as well as event hosting may receive chip access and permission to use The Factory after orientations have been arranged through the Studio Arts Manager.
- 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) No spray-painting inside of the building. This also includes any strong, odorous materials (with or without spray). All production involving odorous material is to be done outside of the building.
- 6) All work surfaces (table and floor) must be properly protected with thick plastic or cardboard. If production is to happen outside, ground / concrete is also to be protected.
- 7) No oil painting is allowed on the property unless student is enrolled in a BCB painting course, or approved in advance by the Studio Arts Manager
- 8) Food must be always cleaned up and removed immediately.. All food must be disposed of in lidded trash cans.
- 9) All students are to always be respectful of other student artworks and personal property.
- 10) No art projects may function as weapons, or potentially cause bodily harm.
- 11) No sandals, flip-flops, or bare feet will be allowed inside or around the workshop areas, which includes walking through the workshop. This includes dance and theater students as well.
- 12) Students should always wear adequate protection (goggles, gloves, dust masks, etc.) when needed. Protective gear can be found in the Factory workshop.
- 13) If you are uncertain how to use a tool or piece of equipment or require assistance, please ask Studio Arts Manager for assistance (by appointment).
- 14) 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.
- 15) Any unidentified property left in any common space is subject to either be taken or thrown out, without restitution.
- 16) All Workshop items checked out are due back during the Workshop hours the following day, unless other arrangements have been made in advance directly with Studio Arts Manager. Workshop hours are: Mon-Friday, 1-3 pm. Details will be offered during orientation.
- 17) Any items leaving the building without permission will be considered stolen, and access to the factory may be suspended for the rest of the semester. If an item must be borrowed for a

purpose outside of the building, contact The Arts Staff, and be prepared to leave your Student ID as a deposit. Fines may be charged for late return.

- 18) All students must respect signage posted in the factory that may involve rules that are not mentioned in this document. This includes signage indicating reserved spaces where communal use is restricted.
- 19) 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. When repainting any walls that need restoration, please consult with Studio Arts Manager beforehand.
- 20) 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. All students must accept the penalty of grades being affected and / or fines imposed if items are left (or renovations unfinished) by the inspection deadline.
- 21) Contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park directly with any questions: [j.park@berlin.bard.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:av@berlin.bard.edu)

MacLab and Photo Darkroom Facilities – Platanenstrasse 98 (downstairs)

\*\* Guidelines to be offered during orientations.