

TH164

Critical Acts:

Introduction to Performance Studies

Seminar Leader: Nina Tecklenburg

Email: n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu

Course Times: Wed 14:00-17:15

Room: performance space, factory

Office Hours: Thu 10:00-12:00 or by appointment

"I think of Performance Studies ... as a hide-out, an after school program for bad boys and girls, a safe house for those who can't go by the rules. Performance Studies is not one-size fits all, but all sizes try to fit in. That is, if you can handle conflict, cope with ambiguity, navigate the incomprehensible, relish the rivalry. For both artists and academics it can be a place to see yourself reflected, challenged, codified, cracked up, over baked and served up ... Isn't that the point? To question. Is it fun? Is it fashion? Or is it food? Or just further education?"

Lois Weaver (artist, activist, professor of contemporary performance)

Course Description

This course offers a view of the world through the lens of performance studies. Since its emergence in the late 1970s, this interdisciplinary field – that has borrowed from linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies and theater studies – has fundamentally challenged supposedly fixed concepts in the humanities and social sciences in the West. It has endowed scholars and artists alike with an understanding of culture as something that is done through embodied behavior. Concepts of performance and performativity allow us to think of subjects, gender, race and class as culturally constructed and therefore potentially variable. They enable us to analyze individual and collective habits, enactments, gestures or movements as fluid entities that are both resistant to and constitutive of power relations and symbolic orders.

In this course we will study performance and performativity as both object and method. Starting with the question, 'What is a performance?' we will engage with key texts (Austin, Turner, Goffman, Schechner, Fischer-Lichte, Conquergood, Derrida, Butler, Madison, Taylor etc.) through discussion and performative responses. We will explore different approaches to performance analysis/research such as critical spectatorship, embodied documentation, performative writing and autoethnography. We will undertake field trips to e.g. sporting events, demonstrations, online assemblies, Facebook, market

places or church services and uncover the politics of going for a walk. We will attend theater productions and question the relationship between artistic and cultural performances. Students will be asked to develop their own critical acts in response to performances studied. The aim of this course is to examine performance practically and theoretically as means of cultural production and as an artistic, political and critical mode of expression. It is open to students from all disciplines who are interested in deepening their understanding of (un)doing culture.

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.
- 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 SPRING 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 alternative practice of knowledge acquisition by closely interweaving theory and performance practice. Students will thus be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine critical thinking, artistic practice and engaged action. Furthermore, this course fosters artistic 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. Most readings will be made available through a printed reader and on 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 on chosen class readings (individual deadlines)
- submit a midterm essay including a written reflection on midterm project (1500-2000 words) by Thursday, 18th of March 2021, midnight
- create a midterm project (assignment: *Performing Pankow*), presentation: 24th of March 2021
- create a final project, presentation probably at THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY (week 14)

Purchases

- Henry Bial and Sara Brady (Ed.): *The Performance Studies Reader*, 3rd edition, London (Routledge) 2016.

- Richard Schechner: *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, 4th edition, London (Routledge) 2020.

Grade Breakdown

| | |
|---|------|
| Class participation: (includes attendance, contributions to discussions and exercises, homework, collaboration with peers, communication with Professor and other students): | 30% |
| Two performative presentations on readings: | 20% |
| Midterm project (performance and essay): | 20 % |
| Final project: | 30 % |

Schedule

Week 1: Introductions

Class: Wed, 3 Feb 2021, 14:00-17:15

Week 2: What is Performance?

Homework for week 2:

readings:

- Diana Taylor: Chapter "Framing (Performance)", in: *Performance*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2016.

- Richard Schechner: "What is Performance", in: PS, pp. 1-25.

- Jon McKenzie: "The Liminal-Norm", in: PS, pp. 10-14.

Voluntary:

- Erika Fischer-Lichte: "The Concept of Performance", in: *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*, London (Routledge) 2014, pp. 18-45.

Class: Wed., 10 Feb 2021, 14:00-17:15

- Performative presentations, discussion, exercise

Week 3: What is Performance Studies?

Homework for week 3:

Assignment on Padlet:

1. Please watch the interview with Diana Taylor and a couple of interviews of your choice from the online-publication “What is Performance Studies?”:

<https://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips/interviews-eng>

<https://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips/diana-taylor-what-is-performance-studies-2002->

2. On Padlet: Write down 2-4 aspects that seem important to you and/or comment on other student’s entries.

Readings:

- Shana Komitee: *A Student’s Guide to Performance Studies*, University of Harvard iSites, 2011.

- Dwight Conquergood: “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research”, in: Henry Bial and Sara Brady (Ed.): *The Performance Studies Reader*, 3rd edition, London (Routledge) 2016, pp. 37-47.

- Richard Schechner: “What is Performance Studies”, in: *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, 4th edition, London (Routledge) 2020, pp. 26-37.

Class: Wed, 17 Feb 2020, 14:00-17:15

- in-class facility and AV orientations
- Performative presentation, discussion, exercise

Week 4: Performing Everyday Life

Homework for week 4:

Readings

- Richard Schechner: “Performing everyday life”, in: PS, pp. 104-120.

- Ervin Goffman: “Performance: belief in the part one is playing”, in: PSR, pp. 61-65.

- Michel De Certeau: “Walking in the City”, in: *Practices of Everyday Life*, Berkeley (University of California Press) 1984, pp. 92-97.

Assignment: Doing Yourself

A self-observation of daily actions, routines, rituals (detailed prompt to follow)

Class: Wed., 24 Feb 2021, 14:00-17:15

- Performative presentation, discussion
- Group exercise: make a short performance based on self-observations

Week 5: Performance Ethnography – Performance Analysis – Performance (as) Research

FIELD TRIP: *Performing Pankow*

with guest:

Annett Gröschner (writer, journalist, performer)

Homework for week 5:

Viewings:

<https://annettgroeschner.de/>

readings:

Annett Gröschner: *City Spaces. Filling in Berlin's Gaps*, translated from the German by Katy Derbyshire, Berlin (readux books) 2015, excerpts.

Readings on methodologies

- Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo (Joni L. Jones): "Performance and Ethnography, Performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography", in: D. Doyini Madison and Judith Hamera (Eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*, Thousand Oaks (Sage Publications) 2006, pp. 339-345.

Voluntary:

- Erika Fischer-Lichte: "Performance Analysis", in: RITPS, pp. 49-58.

- Baz Kershaw: "Performance as Research. Live Events and Documents", in: PSR, excerpts: pp. 23-28.

Class: Wed., 3 Mar 2021, 14:00-17:15

- FIELD TRIP around Pankow/Niederschönhausen
- Bring notebook and camera (cell phone)

Week 6: Performance Art and Everyday Life

Homework for week 6:

Start with midterm project: *Performing Pankow*

- Field studies of local performance/site/communities
- Document your observations/interactions/findings/thoughts/ideas on Padlet
- Discuss possible project formats/concepts and bring your project idea(s) to class

Readings

See week 5

Class: Wed., 10 Mar 2021, 14:00-17:15

- Discussion on field trip and methodologies (see readings for Week 6)
- Presenting your *Performing Pankow* project ideas
- Lecture: Everyday Life in/and Performance Art

Week 7: Performativity: Speech Acts – Gender – Race – Habitus

Homework for week 7:

Midterm project: *Performing Pankow*

in groups: continue working on your project, bring your results to class

Readings:

- J.L. Austin: "How to do things with words: lecture II", in: PSR, pp. 205-210.
- Jacques Derrida: "Signature Event Context" (excerpts), in: PSR, pp. 211-213.
- Judith Butler: "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution. An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", in: PSR, pp. 214-225.
- E. Patrick Johnson: "Black Performance Studies. Genealogies, Politics, Futures", in: *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*, pp. 446-463.

Voluntary:

- Pierre Bourdieu: "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles", in: *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Cambridge (Harvard University Press) 1984, pp. 169-175.

Class: Wed, 17 Mar 2021, 14:00-17:15

- Performative presentations on readings, discussion on performativity
- Continue: *Performing Pankow*

Submission midterm essay (1500-2000 words):

*Written reflection on your *Performing Pankow* project in relation to one class reading
Thu, 18 Mar. 2021, midnight*

Week 8: Presenting *Performing Pankow*

Homework for week 8:

Finishing *Performing Pankow* projects

Class: Wed, 24 Mar 2021, 14:00-17:15

- Internal presentations, feedback, discussion
- Evaluation of class thus far

***** SPECIAL DATE *****

*Online Workshop on Collaborative Theater Devising (voluntary)
with BCB Alumna Talia Kracauer
(The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London)
Open to BCB community
Date tbc*

***** Spring Break: Mar 29 – Apr 5 *****

Week 9: The Theater as Ritual and Performance

FIELD TRIP

Homework for week 9:

Viewings:

- Augusto Corrieri about his research 'In Place of a Show':

<http://www.augustocorrieri.com/eng/inplaceofashowbook.html>

- Richard Schechner: "An Introduction – Ritual": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhk-WQ37fTY>

Reading on ritual:

- Victor Turner: "Liminality and communitas", in: PSR, pp. 97-104.

Readings on performative writing and autoethnography (methodology):

- Ronald J. Pelias: "Performative Writing as Scholarship. An argument, an anecdote", in: *Writing Performance, Identity, and Everyday Life. The Selected Works of Ronald J. Pelias*, London (Routledge) 2018, pp. 53-60.

- Leon Anderson and Bonnie Glass-Coffin: "I Learn by Going. Autoethnographic Modes of Inquiry", in: Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (Eds.): *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Walnut Creek (Left Coast Press) 2013, pp. 57-83 (excerpts).

Class: FIELD TRIP to theatre

*** special date tbc ***

Week 10: Performing Methodologies (Performative Writing and Autoethnography)

Homework for week 10:

Assignment, in two groups:

Create a performative response on theater visit using performative writing and/or autoethnography (see readings week 9)

Class: Wed, 14 Apr 2021, 14:00-17:00

- Group presentations: performative responses
- Collecting first ideas for final projects

Week 11: Performance (Studies) as Activism

Homework for week 11:

Final project:

Bring an idea to class (solo or group project)

readings:

- Jan Cohen-Cruz: "The Problem Democracy is Supposed to Solve. The Politics of Community-Based

Performance”, in: *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*, pp. 427-445.
- Diana Taylor: Chapter “Artivists (Artist-Activists), or, What’s to Be Done?”, in: *Performance*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2016.

Class: Wed, 21 Apr 2021, 14:00-17:00

- Lecture: performance (studies) as activism
- Presentation and discussion of final project ideas

Week 12: Future of Performance Studies

Homework for week 12:

Final project:

- Field trip, research, rehearsal etc.
- Project journal on Padlet
- Prepare presentation for class

Reading:

- Henry Bial: “Performance Studies 3.0”, in: *PSR*, pp. 402-411.

Class: Wed, 28 Apr 2021, 14:00-17:00

- presentation of final project research/drafts, feedback, creative work
- wrap-up: Performance Studies

Week 13: Internal presentation/rehearsal of final projects

Homework for week 13:

performance practice:

Finishing final piece

Class: Wed, 5 May 2021, 14:00-17:00

- internal presentation of final project, feedback, discussion

Week 14: PUBLIC FINAL PRESENTATION as part of *THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY spring 2021*

*** please note: the following dates may vary ***

Mon, 10 May 2021, evening

- tech-run and dress rehearsal with other performing arts courses

Tue, 11 May 2021, evening

*** THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY ***

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.