

FM318 Claiming your voice; Moving images that speak

Seminar Leader: Dorine van Meel
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language, and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us.
(Audre Lorde)

This course will combine the production of moving images with writing practice and takes as its starting point one of the most important contributions of the radical feminist tradition: that the personal is political and the political is personal. Through various types of artistic exercises, collective readings and discussions, we will investigate the ways in which our personal lives are entangled with larger-scale structures and dynamics of power. In these seminars, our personal stories, lived experiences and the various kinds of knowledge we possess as individuals will be understood as working material for the investigation of broader social problems and the collective responses they demand. Via short assignments students will be invited to produce scripts and letters, poems and manifestos, which will be recorded and placed as voice-overs in the medium of the moving image, ranging from video art works to films essays and vlogs.

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 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 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

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

There will be 8 video assignments in total, 7 short ones and one longer one. You are expected to at least make 6 of the 7 shorter assignments, which will count for 40% of your mark, and the final assignment (#8) will also count for 30% of your mark. Your presence in class and contributions to the discussion will count for 30%.

We will use each class to collectively discuss the assignments you have been preparing at home. Please bring your video on a USB so we can easily collect them all on my computer at the beginning of the class. In each class we will look at a specific theme and read and discuss a relevant text that I've selected for that class (feel free to read the text already in your own time, though we will also read it out loud together in class). At the end of the class I will explain the next home assignment to you all.

Assignment 1. Write and record on video a manifesto that voices some of the things you strongly believe in. Duration 1 minute max. Due 11 February.

Assignment 2. Write and record on video a whispered confession. Duration 1 minute max. Due 18 February.

Assignment 3. Record on video a form of invisible labour (your own or others). Duration around 1 minute. Due on 25 February.

Assignment 4. Find an example outside of the canon of an artist dealing with etc. Introduce their practice through a short video essay. Due on 3 March.

Assignment 5. Research one historic or contemporary act of disobedience and introduce the example in a short video. Due on 17 March.

Assignment 6. Write and record on video a letter to a historical figure that is of personal importance for you. To what extent can this letter be a dialogue with the ideas of this person. Due on 24 March.

Assignment 7. Choose one recent image from the news and write and record on video a reflection on it. Due on 30 March.

Assignment 8. Start of your longer video project in which you will engage with the theme of the course “the personal is political and the political is personal”. I would like to invite you to investigate the ways in which your own or somebody else’s personal life is entangled with larger-scale structures and dynamics of power. Your own or someone else’s biography should take center stage in this new video. We will be working towards a short video of around 5-7 minutes that will be developed over the course of the last classes. Due on 5 May.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (includes attendance, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for production / rehearsal, communication with Professor and other students): 30%

Homework and in-class work: 40%

Project presentations for critiques (includes end of semester presentations / performances): 30%

Schedule

Spring 2020 classes start on Monday, January 27 and run until Friday, May 15 with spring break planned from Monday, April 6 – Monday, April 13. Completion week is from May 11 - 15. 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/>

Week 1. 28 January

Introduction to each other and to the topic of the classes. We will speak about our roles as cultural practitioners or theorists and address the question of what is at stake when we claim our voice and start to speak.

Reading and discussing Sara Ahmed “Living a Feminist Life” (part of the introduction and chapter 1). Short in class writing assignments.

Please note that we will read all the texts together in class, but feel free to read them already before class if that is helpful to you.

Week 2. 4 February

Reading and discussing Audre Lorde “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”. Home assignment 1: Write and record on video a manifesto that voices some of the things you strongly believe in. Duration 1 minute max.

AV-introduction with Janina in the last hour of our class.

Week 3. 11 February

In this class we will address the role of honesty on both a personal and intimate level as well as on a socio-political level. What would honesty look like in the face of a world based on lies?

Discussing assignment 1. Reading and discussing Adrienne Rich “Women and Honor; Some Notes on Lying”. Watching Roy Dib “Mondial” (2010). Assignment 2: Write and record on video a whispered confession. Duration 1 minute max.

Week 4. 18 February

In this class we will look at the topic of invisible labour and discuss ways in which artists have given visibility to certain forms of labour and the struggle around these forms of labour.

Discussing assignment 2. Watch excerpt from Candice Breitz “TLDR” (2017). Reading and discussing Silvia Federici “Wages Against Housework”. Assignment 3: Record on video a form of invisible labour (your own or others). Duration around 1 minute.

Week 5. 25 February

Which voices have been silenced by colonial power structures and how can these voices be reclaimed? How to communicate the violence that has not been recorded?

Discussing assignment 3. Watch Miguel Peres Dos Santos “No Images”. Reading and discussing Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o “Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature (p.10-20)”. Assignment 4: Find an example outside of the canon of an artist dealing with etc. Introduce their practice through a short video essay.

Week 6. 3 March

In this class we will discuss the need for a wild space, outside of the normative spaces that society pushes us in. How can we find this wild space in between the cracks and what will it allow?

Discussing assignment 4. Reading and discussing Jack Halberstam “Introduction to The Undercommons; fugitive planning and black study”. Watch ContraPoints. No assignment.

Week 7. 10 March

In this class we will look at historic and contemporary forms of disobedience and discuss the ways in which these events are or aren’t recorded and passed on to generations to come.

Reading and discussing Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. Assignment 5: Research one historic or contemporary act of disobedience and introduce the example in a short video.

Week 8. 17 March

In this class we will look at famous historical examples of letter exchanges.

Discussing assignment 5. Reading and discussing Rosa Luxemburg “Letters from Prison” (1918). Assignment 6: Write and record on video a letter to a historical figure that is of personal importance for you. To what extent can this letter be a dialogue with the ideas of this person.

Week 9. 24 March

In this class we will look at news images and discuss how we can engage in meaningful ways with the overabundance of violent news images in our lives.

Discussing assignment 6. Watching work by video artist belit sag “and the image gazes back”. Reading and discussing Susan Sonntag “Regarding the Pain of Others”. Assignment 7: Choose one recent image from the news and write and record on video a reflection on it.

Week 10. 30 March

Guest seminar with belit sag on the violence of images and images of violence. Discussing assignment 7.

Spring Break: no classes

Week 11. 14 April

In this class we will look at the relation between autobiography and fiction as an important imaginary space to push what is possible.

Reading and discussing fragment from James Baldwin “Notes of a Native Son” and from Toni Morrison “The sources of Self-regard”. Assignment 8: Start of your longer video project in which you will engage with the theme of the course “the personal is political and the political is personal”. I would like to invite you to investigate the ways in which your own or somebody else’s personal life is entangled with larger-scale structures and dynamics of power. Your own or someone else’s biography should take center stage in this new video. We will be working towards a short video of around 5-7 minutes that will be developed over the course of the last classes.

Week 12. 21 April

In this class we will decenter the human experience and perspective, and instead open up to a planetary perspective to ask the question of how as human species can we learn from other species?

Discussing first draft / ideas for assignment 8 Reading and discussing fragment from Thom van Dooren “Flight Ways, Life and Loss at the edge of extinction”. Continue working on assignment #8.

Week 13. 28 April

Discussing the drafts for assignment 8.

Week 14. 5 May

Final presentations of assignment 8 and collective reflection on our classes.

Open Studios on 8 May

Open Studios Presentations. Feel free to present multiple video’s you have made during our classes. We will make a showreel and present them one after the other in our class room.

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

MacLab and Photo Darkroom Facilities – Platanenstrasse 98 (downstairs)

** Guidelines to be offered during orientations.