

# TH 137 Adapting Novels for the Stage: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

Seminar Leader: Julia Hart  
Email: [j.hart@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:j.hart@berlin.bard.edu)  
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm by appointment

## Course Description

Virginia Woolf's masterpiece *Orlando* is a fairytale-like portrait of a young aristocrat who barely ages over the course of four hundred years and seven historical periods, changing gender and witnessing the state of flux of people, systems, nature and what is right or wrong. *Orlando* is funny, malicious, and provocative and an exploration of gender fluidity. How can theatre artists attempt to dramatise a famous and complex novel such as *Orlando* and transform it into material for the theatre? How do you even begin to create your own theatrical language or tackle practical issues like conjuring the sense of time passing on stage?

This seminar will explore different contemporary methods of adapting literary works for the theatre. Our work will not be solely about reproducing, but will focus more on reinvention. First, students will learn ways to develop a conceptual approach to creating a piece of theatre inspired by the themes, language, and story of Woolf's *Orlando*. In a workshop setting, students will work together as directors and dramaturges to adapt sections of *Orlando* into a script for the stage. In the second half of the semester, students will form teams to further develop their scripts and experiment with stage ideas in the rehearsal room as actors and directors. Throughout the semester, we will also study and examine director Katie Mitchell's 2019 production of *Orlando* at the Schaubühne Berlin and other recent /German theater productions of *Orlando* at the Schauspiel Hannover, Deutsches Theater and the Thalia Theater in Hamburg.

## 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 the Professor in a timely manner.
- Inform Professor at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, performance work, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all costumes, props, set pieces, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove materials and technical equipment or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested 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 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 at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Please email the Professor in case of absence and submit a doctor's note if necessary.

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. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 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. If in-person attendance is not possible, students will have the option to participate remotely and must inform the Professor by 12pm on the day of class.

### **Scene Study:**

#### **Scene Study Requirements:**

- Develop a performance inspired or based on *Orlando* that you would like to explore and conceptualise, devise, and rehearse as an actor or director.
- One additional three hour rehearsal per week to be completed outside of class each week during the rehearsal process. The Scene Study will be discussed and critiqued on 5.5.2022
- Additional assignments to prepare the Scene Study will be posted on Google Classroom

#### **Scene Study Assessment**

- Students will be graded on their preparation, completion of rehearsal reports (sent via email, 1-2 paragraphs in length), and the ability to discuss their ideas about the situation on stage, the concept approach to the performance, the characters or performer's roles in the scene, and what ideas about staging or interpretation of character are being tested in rehearsal. Actors will be assessed on their physicality, use of movement/gesture, delivery of lines, and a clear approach to their performance. Directors will be assessed on their use of space, movement/gesture, and clear intention of what is being explored in the scene.

The participation grade will be based on students' participation in class discussions. The following exercises will also be part of the participation grade for this course:

**Character Portrait Assignment**

- Students will choose a character from *Orlando* to present in a simple non-verbal one minute performance in class on 24.02.2022. Specific instructions for this assignment will be posted on the Google Classroom website.

**Performance Exercise:**

- Students will develop a short experimental scene in class using one chapter of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. This performance exercise will be worked on in class, yet also prepared outside of class.

**Set Design and Costume Design Exercise:**

- Students will develop ideas for possible set and costume design for a potential theater production of *Orlando* in class. This set and costume exercise will first be worked on in class with set designer Iris Holstein and developed further by students outside of class. Students will then present their set and costume ideas for *Orlando* in class.

**Written requirements:**

Scene Study Essay (2000 words due 20.5.2022 )

Scene Study Essay should contain the following:

- Rehearsal process: how the scene was chosen, a brief analysis of the scene (the situation, the language, the characters, the central conflict, including what theatrical devices or aspects of characterization were explored. What changes, additions, cuts, and did you and your team try out with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*? Include descriptions from rehearsal, including what rehearsal (as actors or directors) methods and exercises were implemented, how they were implemented, and any relevant challenges and observations from rehearsals.
- Evaluation of the scene presentation

**Grade Breakdown:** Scene Study 40%  
Written Assignments 30%  
Class Participation 30%.

**Policy on Late Submission**

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral 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.

\*Course readings can mostly be found in the electronic course reader. Otherwise texts will be posted on Google Classroom or on reserve in the BCB library.

Recommended Books to Purchase: It is recommended that students purchase their own copy of *Orlando* (the Oxford World's Classics edition would be best). There will be three copies of *Orlando* in the BCB library, but it would be convenient to have a personal copy.

## Schedule

- 3.2 Introduction to Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, and aspects of contemporary German theatre . Introduction to the post dramatic theatre and concepts for the semester  
key
- 10.2 What is theatre? What is performance? Introduction/Review of key concepts of theatre and performance .  
A deeper look into the Postdramatic Theatre
- Reading:  
*Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies* Erika Fischer-Lichte. Chapter One and Chapter Three  
*Postdramatic Theatre* 16-33, 68-71, 77-132  
*The Postdramatic Turn in German Theater* 1-19
- 17.2 Contemporary German Directing, Contemporary Stage Adaptations of Novels and a look at their artistic teams and approaches
- Reading:  
*Introduction. The dissensus of Regie: rethinking director's theater* Peter Boehnisch. 1-11  
"Frank Castorf and the Volksbühne" Theatre is More Beautiful than War: German Stage Directing in the Late 20th Century by Marvin Carlson  
Chapter Five: The tremor of speculative negation: on Regie, truth and ex-position in Directing scenes and senses by Peter Boehnisch  
Chapter Eight: Theatre in the age of semiocapitalism in Directing scenes and senses by Peter Boehnisch
- Article and video clips about Katie Mitchell's *Orlando* posted on Google Classroom
- 24.2 *ORLANDO* - Discussion of impressions, associations,

characters, themes, satirical aspects

Reading:

*Orlando* Introduction vii-xlvi

*Orlando* Chapter One- Chapter Three (page 11-91)

First Reading Journal Assignment: Initial Impressions and Questions

\*Character Portrait Exercise Assigned in class

3.3

*ORLANDO* - Discussion and literary analysis

Character Portrait Exercise presented

Reading:

*Orlando* Chapter Four- Chapter Six (pages 91-191)

10.3

Workshop One - Narration on Stage, Playing with “Spielweisen”,  
*Orlando* Scene Exercise Group formed and first rehearsal

Assignment: one three hour rehearsal for *Orlando* Scene Exercise

17.3

*Orlando* Scene Exercise Presentations

Workshop Two: adapting novels through work with movement,  
choreography and gesture - staging specific moments and  
*Orlando*

images in

24.3

Script Development - looking at the work of the dramaturg and the  
director/dramaturg collaboration

Script development based on improvisation, movement,

Reading:

“What does a dramaturge really do?” Interview with John von Düffel

Chapter Four in *The Director's Craft* by Katie Mitchell

31.3

Introduction Set Design and Costume Design. Lecture and Workshop  
with set and costume designer Iris Holstein.

Assignment: Upload Script Sample to Google Classroom

7.4

Conceptual Development / Production Abstract

Groups Formed for Scene Study

14.4

SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS

21.4

Scene Study Rehearsals

Assignments: See Google Classroom

One three hour rehearsal outside of class

28.4                    Scene Study Rehearsals  
                            Assignments: See Google Classroom  
                            One three hour rehearsal outside of class

5.5                     Scene Study Rehearsals  
                            Assignments: See Google Classroom  
                            One three hour rehearsal outside of class

12.5                    Scene Study Dress Rehearsals

Performance Factory - Scene Study Performances (date of Performance Factory is subject to change and will be determined later in the semester)

20.5                    Scene Study Essays Due

## 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](mailto:j.park@berlin.bard.edu)

## AV Facilities – Platanenstrasse 98 (downstairs)

- 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 and social distancing conditions. Borrowing equipment is currently implemented by scheduling an advance appointment through this link: <https://janinaschabig.youcanbook.me/>  
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.
- 1) 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.
- 2) We strongly suggest personally visiting the facilities to inquire and reserve before borrowing equipment!
- 3) AV equipment is limited at BCB. Whenever possible students are encouraged to use their own devices (computers, cameras) for production purposes.
- 4) Contact AV Staff directly with any questions: av@berlin.bard.edu