

# TH312

## Postdramatic and Contemporary Theater in Berlin

Seminar Leader: Nina Tecklenburg  
Email: [n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu)  
Course Times: Thu 9:00-12:15  
Room: performance space, factory  
Office Hours: Thu 13:30-15:00 or by appointment

### Course Description

The term “postdramatic theatre” was coined by the theorist and critic Hans-Thies Lehmann in the late 90s to describe a radical new mode of theater that repudiated “traditional” practices and assumptions. Driven by technological and social transformation, this kind of theater came to be associated with a range of features such as aesthetic innovation, emancipation from text-based theater, self-reflexiveness, equivalence of artistic means, turn to performance and – in its recent manifestations – political intervention or low-hierarchical working conditions. Though the concept is over two decades old, it has proved durable, and is often invoked to characterize Berlin’s theater world in particular.

Through an intensive theoretical and practical exploration of contemporary performing art in the city, we will look at the way in which postdramatic theater has changed and diversified. We will study works by current Berlin-based postdramatic theater makers such as Gob Squad, She She Pop, René Pollesch, Rimini Protokoll, as well as works by an emerging generation and ask the question: what new aesthetic, technological and socio-political parameters are reflected in contemporary performing arts? What comes after the postdramatic theater? We will look at (post)migrant and decolonial theater; immersive and participatory theater; feminist and queer performance; digital and pandemic theater. Besides readings from performance, theater and culture studies we will create (postpostdramatic) theater, realize performative presentations and artistic responses to art works studied. No previous experience in theater and performance is necessary. Open to all students with a curiosity for experimenting with thought and theater.

### 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. 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. 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 theater visit 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. **Please note: two theater visits are regarded as one three-hour session.**
- 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 2022: 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. 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, etc.) 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 to creatively combine performance theory, analysis and practice. Due to the experimental nature of this course you will be assessed on your ambition and ability to combine critical thinking and creative art work. 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, viewings, group and solo assignments) and contribute creatively and meaningfully to the exercises and discussions. 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. Class 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.

### Purchases

- The class budget can only cover a certain amount of theater tickets. Please be prepared to pay for a maximum of two tickets yourself (ca. 10-25 Euros max per student).

### Assignments and Deadlines

Students are asked to:

- give a performative presentation (10-15 min) on a chosen class reading
- create artistic responses to theater/performance visits (in groups)
- submit a midterm essay (1500-2000 words) by Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, midnight
- create a final performance project (solo or in small groups). Each project will be presented as part of *THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY* at the end of the semester, exact date tbc.

## Grade Breakdown

<b>Class participation:</b> (includes attendance, contributions to discussions and exercises, homework, collaboration with peers, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for rehearsal, communication with other students and professor):	<b>30 %</b>
<b>Performative presentation:</b>	<b>5 %</b>
<b>Midterm essay:</b>	<b>30 %</b>
<b>Final project (process, presentation):</b>	<b>35 %</b>

## Schedule

Spring classes start on Monday, January 31 and run until Friday, May 20, with spring break planned from April 11 – April 18. Completion week is from May 16 through May 20. 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/>

\*\*\* Please note: this schedule is subject to change due to upcoming theater programs and changing dates for end of semester presentations \*\*\*

## Week 1: Introductions

Class: Thu, 3 Feb 2022, 9:00-12:15

## Week 2: Classics of Postdramatic Theatre: 1970s-1990s

### Homework for week 2:

#### Reading

- Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-24 and pp. 77-104.

#### Viewings

- Robert Wilson: *Einstein on the Beach*, Avignon: 1976 + 2012:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOOnJgTZIYo&list=RDnatT4xHY39k&index=7>

- Klaus Michael Grüber: *Winterreise*, Olympia Stadium West-Berlin: 1979,  
watch min 24:00-29:00:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moD9Jk\\_Fv8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moD9Jk_Fv8s)

- Einar Schlee: *Sportstück* (by Elfriede Jelinek), Burgtheater Vienna: 1998:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbcON50JRJA>

Class: Thu, 10 Feb 2022, 9:00-12:15

- Performative presentation on Hans-Thies Lehmann
- Examples: Robert Wilson, Einar Schlee, Elfriede Jelinek, Merce Cunningham, Heiner Goebbels, Heiner Müller, Klaus Michael Grüber, Pina Bausch
- Prep for workshop with Gob Squad

## Week 3: Open Workshop with performance collective *Gob Squad*

### Homework for week 3:

Viewing:

<https://www.gobsquad.com/>

Class: Thu, 17 Feb 2022, 9:00-12:15

The workshop with Sean Patten and Simon Will is open to the BCB community (*limited space*)

\*\*\* SPECIAL EVENING DATE: THEATER VISIT \*\*\*

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, Sophiensaele, 8:30pm

Nima Sène: *auf den weg zu dir / auf den weg zu mir. Remembering May, Ibu, Beldina and all those whose names we know and do not know*

<https://sophiensaele.com/en/stueck/nima-sene-auf-den-weg-zu-mir-auf-den-weg-zu-dir>

Meeting point: court yard of Sophiensaele, Sophienstraße 18, 10178 Berlin at 8:30pm!

## Week 4: Postdramatic Theatre and Performance Art

### Homework for week 4:

#### Reading:

- Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 133-144.

#### Viewings:

- Marina Abramovic: four performances 1975-76:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihDy3dD-iUg>

- Robert Wilson: *The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic*, 2011:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3ee7goGFEA&list=RDnatT4xHY39k&index=2>

### Class: Thu, 24 Feb 2022, 9:00-12:15

- Facility and AV orientations
- Discussion theatre visit (Nima Séne) and workshop with Gob Squad
- In-class examples: Marina Abramovic, Chris Burden, Yoko Ono

## Week 5: Postdramatic Theatre of the 2000s Part I

### *Politics of Form: Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz*

### Homework for week 5:

#### Group assignment:

- artistic response on theater visit

#### Reading:

- Erika Fischer-Lichte: "The concept of performance," from *Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*, 2014.

### Class: Thu, 3 March 2022, 9:00-12:15

- Artistic response: showing and feedback
- Performative presentation on Fischer-Lichte
- In-class examples: Frank Castorf, René Pollesch, Christoph Schlingensiefel

\*\*\* SPECIAL EVENING DATE: THEATER VISIT \*\*\*

Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2022, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, 7pm

Florentina Holzinger: *A Divine Comedy*

<https://www.volksbuehne.berlin/#/en/repertoire/a-divine-comedy>

Meeting point: foyer of Volksbühne (U-Bahn: Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) at 7:00pm!

## Week 6: Postdramatic Theatre of the 2000s Part II

### *"Theatre of Real People": Hebbel am Ufer*

### Homework for week 6:

#### Reading:

- Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford: *Theatre of Real People*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama,

2013, pp. 1-14 and pp. 51-80.

Viewings:

- Rimini Protokoll: *100% City*, 2008-ongoing

<https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/projects/100-stadt-7-1>

**Class: Thu, 10 Mar 2022, 9:00-12:15**

- Discussion theater visit (Florentina Holzinger)
- Performative presentation on Garde/Mumford
- In-class examples: Rimini Protokoll, X-Wohnungen

## Week 7: Contemporary Theater I Postmigrant and Decolonial Theater in Berlin/Germany

**Homework for week 7:**

Group assignment:

- artistic response on theater visit

Readings:

- Mat Cornish: "Migration: Common and Uncommon Grounds at Berlin's Gorki Theater", in: Michael Shane Boyle, Matt Cornish, Brandon Woolf (eds.): *Postdramatic Theatre and Form*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019, p. 179-195.

- Azadeh Sharifi: "Shermin Langhoff: A Rebellious Spirit in a Mainstream Theatre", in: *European Journal of Theatre and Performance*, No. 2, May 2020, pp. 488-511.

Voluntary reading (in German):

- Julia Wissert and Sonja Laase: *Antirassismusklausel* (2019):

<https://www.antirassismusklausel.de/>

Viewings:

- Anta Helena Recke and Julia Wissert: "Colonial Repercussions":

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_rdsP2bwZw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_rdsP2bwZw)

- Joana Tischkau: *Colonastics* (3 parts):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsvYXEfsq-M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3E1rCfnsMo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atdhwBQLtzc>

- Simone Dede Ayivi: <http://www.simonededeayivi.com/>

- Gorki Theater: <https://www.gorki.de/en/the-theatre/about-us>

- Diversity Arts Culture Berlin: <https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/en>

**Class: Thu, 17 Mar 2022, 9:00-12:15**

- Artistic response: showing and feedback
- Performative presentation on Cornish (reading) or on viewing 'Colonial Repercussions'
- In-class examples: Shermin Langhoff, Anta Helena Recke, Simone Dede Ayivi, Julia Wissert, Joana Tischkau

**Fr, 18 Mar 2022, midnight:**

*Submission Midterm Essay (1500-2000 words)*

## Week 8: Open workshop with performance collective *Henrike Iglesias* (tbc)

Homework for week 8:

Viewing:

<https://henrikeiglesias.com/>

Class: Thu, 24 Mar 2022, 9:00-12:15

The workshop is open to the BCB community (*limited space*)

\*\*\* SPECIAL EVENING DATE: THEATER VISIT \*\*\*

Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, Gorki Theater, 7:30pm

[Nurkan Erpulat and Jens Hillje: \*Verrücktes Blut\*](#)

<https://www.gorki.de/en/verrucktes-blut>

Meeting point: outside of Gorki container (Am Festungsgraben 2, 10117 Berlin) at 7:30pm!

## Week 9: Contemporary Theater II: New Queer and Feminist Performance

Homework for week 9:

Viewings:

- Digital Feminism: <http://www.digitalfeminism.net/>

- Malu Peeters and Anna Fries: *The Host*

<http://malupeeters.org/filter/performance/THE-HOST-2020-digital-essay-and-web-game-with-ANNA-FRIES-in-an-online>

- Swooshlieu – feminist performance collective: <https://swooshlieu.com/en/>

- Liz Rosenfeld: <http://www.lizrosenfeld.co/about/>

Readings:

- Legacy Russell: *On #GLITCHFEMINISM and The Glitch Feminism Manifesto:*

<http://beingres.org/2017/10/17/legacy-russell/>

- Laboria Cuboniks: *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation:*

<https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation/>

Class: Thu, 31 Mar 2022, 9:00-12:15

- Discussion workshop and theater visit
- Performative presentation on Russell or Laboria Cuboniks
- Interim class evaluation and wrap-up on key concepts

## Week 10: Contemporary Theater III: Participation and Post/Pandemic Theater + Final Project

Homework for week 10:

Viewings:

- Interrobang: <https://www.interrobang-performance.com/>

- machina eX: <https://www.machinaex.com/>

Final project:

- Bring an idea for a final project (solo or group project) and be ready to present it to the group. Bring a small collection of materials that relate to your idea (images, texts, objects, music, videos, interviews, etc.)

**Class: Thu, 7 Apr 2022, 9:00-12:15**

- Examples: machina eX, Interrobang
- Presentation of final project ideas and teaming up: final project collaboration groups

**\*\*\* Spring Break: Apr 11 – Apr 18 2022 \*\*\***

## Week 11: Final Project

**Homework for week 11:**

Final project:

- devising, rehearsal (in groups)

Writing assignment:

- final project 2-3 pages concept paper (in groups), including list of technical requirements

**Submission: Wed, 20 Apr 2022, noon**

**Class: Thu, 21 Apr 2022, 9:00-12:15**

- final project: draft presentation, feedback, defining next steps

## Week 12: Final Project

**Homework for week 12:**

Final project:

- devising, rehearsal (in groups)

**\* No usual class time \***

**\*\*\* SPECIAL DATE: Viral Theatres - Symposium \*\*\***

**Exact date tbc**

Tieranatomisches Theater (Humboldt Universität, Campus Charité)

<https://viraltheatres.org/>

## Week 13: Final Project Presentation: *The Performance Factory* (dates tbc!!)

**Homework for week 13:**

- final project: final adjustments, presentation prep, mentoring



Class: Thu, 5 May 2022, 9:00-12:15

- internal presentation of final project, feedback, final steps for presentation

Thu, 5 May 2022, evening tech rehearsal

Fri, 6 May 2022, evening

\*\*\* THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY \*\*\*

clean-up space

**Week 14: Wrap-up**

Class: Thu, 12 May 2022, 10:45-12:15!

**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](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.
- 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.