

TH312

Postdramatic and Contemporary Theater in Berlin

Seminar Leader: Nina Tecklenburg
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Course Times: Wed 14:00-17:15
Room: performance space, factory
Office Hours: Wed 10:00-12:00 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, Gintersdorfer/Klaßen, 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; posthuman, (post)digital and (post)Corona theater. Besides readings from performance studies, culture studies and social science we will create (postpostdramatic) theater, hold lecture-performance and write manifestos. 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 FALL 2020: 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, 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.

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 rehearsal times, collective writing & thinking times on google docs or keeping a rehearsal schedule amongst working groups.

Participation and preparation: Please complete the required homework (readings, viewings, group rehearsals) 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. Most readings will be made available through a printed reader and on Google Classroom for those students who join remotely. For further readings and research in preparation for the midterm essay please consult the books on our reserve shelf in the library.

Purchases

- Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006.
- Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford: *Theatre of Real People*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016.
- Most tickets for theater visits will be purchased through the college, though some tickets may need to be purchased directly by each student at their own expense. Costs should not exceed 25 Euros per student.

Deadlines

- Midterm essay (1500-2000 words): by Thursday, 15th of October 2020, midnight.
- Final performance project (collaboratively devised in small groups): Each project will be presented as part of THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY at the end of the semester (date tbc).

Notes on remote and/or blended teaching

In order to accommodate temporary remote participation for those needing to miss classes for COVID-19 related reasons all classes will be held as *synchronous blended sessions*. This means that our weekly classes will take place in-person and will simultaneously be transmitted digitally via teleconference.

Class exercises will be designed accordingly. Discussions of readings will take place synchronically during class time and asynchronously via google doc. Students abroad will be able to join theater visits online or – if theaters do not provide this option – students will be given an alternative (video documentations of performances). Artistic assignments will take into account the possibility for online formats. A small budget will be provided in case students need special software for online/blended performance projects. This is a course on contemporary theatre that fosters experiments. Any challenge should be regarded as a chance to reinvent theater.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: (includes attendance, contributions to discussions and exercises, homework, collaboration with peers, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for rehearsal, communication with Professor and other students):	40%
Midterm essay:	30 %
Final project (including devising process) to be presented as part of THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY:	30 %

Schedule

Fall classes start on Monday, August 31 and run until Friday, December 11 with fall break planned from October 19 – October 25. Completion week is from December 14 - 18. 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: schedule may vary according to upcoming theater programs *****

Week 1

Introductions and prehistories of postdramatic theatre

Class: Wed., 2 Sep. 2020, 14-17:15

Week 2

Classics of postdramatic theatre: The 80s and 90s

Homework for week 2:

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>

<http://www.robertwilson.com/>

reading:

Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 1-28, p. 46-67.

in groups:

written discussion on Hans-Thies Lehmann (google doc. *Finish discussion on Monday before class*)

Class: Wed., 9 Sep. 2020, 14-17:15

- in-class facility and AV orientations
- discussion on Hans-Thies Lehmann
- examples: Tadeusz Kantor, Robert Wilson, Einar Schleeff, Merce Cunningham, Heiner Müller, Heiner Goebbels, The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment

***** SPECIAL EVENING DATE *****

Thu., 10 Sep. 2020, 8pm

performance visit

Henrike Iglesias: *Under Pressure*

Sophiensaele (Sophienstraße 18, Mitte)

please note: this performance can also be watched remotely

please check out beforehand:

<https://sophiensaele.com/en/stueck/henrike-iglesias-under-pressure>

<https://henrikeiglesias.com/>

***** SPECIAL EVENING DATE *****

Fri., 11 Sep. 2020, 8:30pm

René Pollesch: *Melissa gets everything (Melissa kriegt alles)*

Deutsches Theater (Schumannstraße 13a, Mitte)

please check out beforehand:

<https://www.deutschestheater.de/programm/spielplan/melissa-kriegt-alles/4782/>

For students who join remotely please watch Robert Wilson: *Einstein on the Beach*, 1976:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlov3SltgVM&t=13513s>

Week 3

(Post-)Postdramatic theatre of the 2000s Part I:

Politics of Form (Frank Castorf's Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz)

Homework for week 3:

reading:

Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 68-107 and 134-144.

in groups:

all groups: written discussion on Hans-Thies Lehmann (google doc)

group 1: performance journal on Henrike Iglesias (google doc)

group 2: performance journal on René Pollesch (google doc)

Class: Wed., 16 Sep. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- discussion on Hans-Thies Lehmann and performance visits
- examples: Frank Castorf, René Pollesch, Christoph Schlingensiefel

Week 4

(Post-)Postdramatic theatre of the 2000s Part II:

Theatre of Real People (Matthias Lilienthal's Hebbel am Ufer)

Homework for week 4:

Viewings:

Rimini Protokoll: <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/>

reading:

Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford: *Theatre of Real People*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013, p. 1-21 and p. 35-50.

in groups:

all groups: written discussion on Garde/Mumford (google doc)

group 1: *artistic response* on Henrike Iglesias

group 2: *artistic response* on René Pollesch

Class: Wed., 23 Sep. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- showing and feedback: artistic responses on Henrike Iglesias and René Pollesch
- examples: Rimini Protokoll, X-Wohnungen
- discussion on Garde/Mumford

*** SPECIAL EVENING DATE ***

Thu., 24 Sep. 2020, 8pm

performance visit

She She Pop: *Hexploitation*

Hebbel am Ufer I (Stresemannstraße 29, 10963 Berlin)

<https://www.hebbel-am-ufer.de/en/programme/pdetail/hexploitation/>

For students who join remotely please watch Gob Squad: *Gob Squad's Kitchen* (link will be sent to you)

Week 5

(Post-)Postdramatic theatre of the 2000s Part III:

The Self as an Example: Performance Theater

Homework for week 5:

viewings:

She She Pop: <https://sheshipop.de/en/>

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

readings:

continue Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford: *Theatre of Real People*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013, p. 51-87 and p. 199-210.

Bernd Stegemann: "After Postdramatic Theatre", *Theater*, vol 39, issue 3, November 2009, p. 11-23.

in groups:

1. written discussion on Garde/Mumford and Stegemann (google doc)
2. performance journal on She She Pop's *Hexploitation* (students abroad: *Gob Squad's Kitchen*)

Class: Wed., 30 Sep. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- discussion on Garde/Mumford versus Stegemann
- examples: She She Pop, Gob Squad
- performance exercise

Week 6

Contemporary Theater Part I:

Theater and Human Rights

Homework for week 6:

viewings:

Milo Rau Milo Rau / IIPM (International Institute of Political Murder):

<http://international-institute.de/en/news/>

Zentrum für politische Schönheit: <https://politicalbeauty.com/>

Monster Truck: <http://www.monstertrucker.de/en/>

readings:

Jacques Rancière: *The Emancipated Spectator*, London and New York: Verso, 2011, p. 1-23.

Florian Malzacher: "No Organum to Follow: Possibilities of Political Theatre Today", in: Florian Malzacher (ed.): *Not Just a Mirror. Looking for the Political Theatre of Today*, Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2015, p. 11-30.

in groups:

written discussion on Malzacher and Rancière (google doc)

Class: Wed., 7 Oct. 2020, 14:00-17:15

evaluation of class thus far

- discussion on Rancière and Malzacher
- examples: Milo Rau / IIPM (International Institute of Political Murder), Zentrum für politische Schönheit, Monster Truck
- group work: brain storm “manifesto for contemporary theater”

Week 7

**Contemporary Theater Part II:
New Participatory Theater**

Homework for week 7:

viewings:

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

Turbo Pascal: <https://www.turbopascal.info/kat/news/?lang=en>

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

readings:

Claire Bishop: *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London and New York: Verso, 2012, p. 219-239 (chapter: “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity”).

Adam Alston: *Beyond Immersion. Aesthetics, Politics and Productive Participation*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 1-23.

in groups:

1. written discussion on Bishop and Alston (google doc)
2. writing and devising: manifesto for contemporary theater

Class: Wed., 14 Oct. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- examples: Interrobang, Turbo Pascal, machina eX
- discussion on Bishop and Alston
- group presentations and feedback: “manifesto for contemporary theater”

Submission Midterm Essay (1500-2000 words):

Thu., 15 Oct. 2020, midnight

***** Fall Break: Oct. 19 – Oct. 25 *****

Week 8

**Contemporary Theater Part III:
Postmigrant and Decolonial Theater**

Homework for week 8:

viewings:

Colonial Repercussions -

Julia Wissert and Anta Helena Recke in dialogue:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_rdsP2bwZw

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

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

reading:

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.

in groups:

written discussion on Cornish (google doc)

Class: Wed., 28 Oct. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- discussion on Cornish and Postmigrant Theater in Berlin
- examples: Anta Helena Recke, Simone Dede Ayivi
- final project: introduction into theatre devising, in groups: brainstorm for collage

Week 9

Contemporary Theater Part IV:

Contemporary Queer and Feminist Performance

Homework for week 9:

viewings:

Vaginal Davis: <http://www.vaginaldavis.com/new.shtml>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wzXHZhVJK0>

Olympia Bukkakis: <https://olympiabukkakis.com/>

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

Joana Tischkau: *Being Pink Ain't Easy*, Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/379315894>

readings:

Stephen Greer: *Queer Excerptions: Solo Performance in Neoliberal Times*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018, excerpts.

Sarah Gorman: *Women in Performance. Repurposing Failure*, London: Routledge, 2020, excerpts.

in groups:

creating collage for final project

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Class: Wed., 4 Nov. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- discussion on Greer
- examples: Vaginal Davis, Olympia Bukkakis, Liz Rosenfeld, Joana Tischkau
- final project: group presentations of collage, feedback

Week 10

***** No class! *****

Homework for week 10:

in groups:

final project: creating rehearsal set-ups and basic concept

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Week 11

Contemporary Theater Part V:
Postdigital and Post-Corona Theater

Homework for week 11:

Viewings:

Forced Entertainment: *End Meeting For All #2*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2imfDiUHJ20&t=361s>

Virtuelles Theater: <https://virtuellestheater.net/about>

double lucky productions: <http://doubleluckyproductions.org/about/>

Reading:

Matthew Causey: "Postdigital Performance", Theater Journal, Vol 68, No. 3, September 2016, p. 427-441.

in groups:

final project: creating rehearsal set-ups and basic concept

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Class: Wed., 18 Nov. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- discussion on Causey
- examples: Forced Entertainment, Virtuelles Theater, double lucky productions
- final project: presentation rehearsal set-ups and basic concept, feedback, defining next steps

Week 12

*** No class! ***

Homework for week 12:

in groups:

final project: devising, rehearsal

submission technical rider: *Thursday, November 26, midnight.*

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Week 13

Final Project

Homework for week 13:

in groups:

final project: devising, rehearsal

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Class: Wed., 2 Dec. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- final project: presentations, feedback, defining next steps

Week 14

Final Project

Homework for week 14:

in groups:

final project: devising, rehearsal

individually:

rehearsal journal (small paragraph)

Class: Wed., 9 Dec. 2020, 14:00-17:15

- final project: presentations of finished pieces, feedback
- preparing for THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY
- wrap-up

please note: the following dates may vary

Week 15 (completion week)

Sun., 13 Dec. 2020, evening

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

Mon., 14 Dec. 2020, evening

*** THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY ***

clean-up space

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.