

TH164

Critical Acts:

Introduction to Performance Studies

Seminar Leader: Nina Tecklenburg

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Course Times: Thu 9:00-12:15

Room: performance space, factory

Office Hours: Thu 13:15-15:15 or by appointment

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 theater studies, anthropology, linguistics and performance practice – 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 historically informed, fluid entities that are both resistant to and constitutive of power relations and symbolic orders.

In this course students will study performance and performativity as both object and (creative) method. Starting with the question, ‘What is a performance?’ we will engage with key texts (Austin, Goffman, Schechner, Taylor, Derrida, Butler, Johnson, Madison, Conquergood, etc.) through discussion and performative responses. We will explore different approaches to performance analysis such as performative writing or performance ethnography. We will uncover the politics of everyday life routines and undertake field trips to attend performances such as theater productions, public protests, religious services, or sporting events. 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.
- Initiate appointments with the 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 their professors 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. 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 off-campus excursions** is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, one absence (that is, absence from **one three-hour session**) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation.
- However, you may encounter circumstances that prevent you from attending classes for which you may be excused, meaning that the absence will not impact your grade. These circumstances include illness, religious observance, military obligation, attendance at a conference, a Bard Network event, a civic engagement initiative, a research trip or another compelling circumstance outside of your control (i.e. court appearance, visa appointment, death of a family member). Optional non-academic travel, hosting visiting family and friends, or work schedules **are not ground for excused absences**. You will **be allowed to self-report your absence one time**, meaning that a notification informing your instructor about the reason for your absence before or within 24 hours of the class is sufficient. If you miss class more than once you will need to provide your instructor with appropriate documentation in order to be excused (i.e. a doctor's note).
- If you have any general medical issues or other concerns that could impact your compliance with these regulations, **you need to inform your instructor during the first week of the semester**. For information on disability accommodation, you should consult with Maria Anderson Long, Head of Student Life: m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu
- Tardiness after fifteen minutes will be considered an absence.
- All unexcused absences will lower the final grade by one step (i.e. if your final grade is a B, you will be downgraded to a B-).
- 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.

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 at an experimental pedagogy through a close intertwining of theory and performance practice. Students will be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine critical thinking and artistic practice. In addition, this course encourages 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
- submit a midterm essay including a written reflection on midterm project in relation to class readings (1500-2000 words) by Monday, 20th of March 2023, midnight
- create a midterm project (assignment: *Performing Pankow*), presentation on Thursday, 23rd of March 2023 during class time
- create a final project, presentation at THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY (week 14)

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: (includes attendance, contributions to discussions and exercises, homework, collaboration with peers, communication with Professor and other students):	25%
Two performative presentations on readings:	15%
Midterm project	15%
Midterm essay	20%
Final project:	25 %

Schedule

*** 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, 2 Feb 2023, 9:00-12:15

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: *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, 4th edition, London (Routledge) 2020, pp. 1-25.
- Peggy Phelan: "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction", in: *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance*, London and New York (Routledge) 1993, pp. 146-49.

Class: Thu, 9 Feb 2023, 9:00-12:15

- 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: Thu, 16 Feb 2023, 9:00-12:15

- in-class 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.

Assignment: Doing Yourself

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

Class: Thu, 23 Feb 2023, 9:00-12:15

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

Week 5: Performativity: Speech Acts – Gender – Race

Homework for week 5:

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.

Class: Thu, 2 Mar 2023, 9:00-12:15

- Performative presentations on readings, discussion

Week 6: FIELD TRIP Historical walk through Pankow: Acts of Civic Engagement

With guest:

Annett Gröschner (writer, journalist, performer)

Homework for week 6:

Viewings:

<https://annettgroeschner.de/>

readings:

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

Class: Thu, 9 March 2023, 9:00-12:15

Bring notebook and camera/cell phone!

Week 7: Public Arts Interventions

Homework for week 7:

In Groups: start midterm project *Performing Pankow*

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

Readings

- Shana MacDonald: "The city (as) place. Performative remappings of urban space through artistic research' in: Annette Arlander and others (eds.): *Performance as Research. Knowledge, Methods, Impact*. New York and London (Routledge) 2018, p.275-96.

Class: Thu, 16 Mar 2023, 9:00-12:15

- Discussion on field trip and methodologies
- Presenting your *Performing Pankow* project ideas
- Lecture: Public Arts Interventions

Submission midterm essay (1500-2000 words):

*Written reflection on your *Performing Pankow* project in relation to one class reading
Mon, 20th of March 2023, midnight*

Week 8: Presentation *Performing Pankow*

Homework for week 8:

Finishing *Performing Pankow* midterm project

Class: Thu, 23 Mar 2023, 9:00-12:15

- presentations, feedback, discussion

Week 9: Interim Summary: Performance Studies

Homework for week 9:

Reading:

- D. Soyini Madison: chapter "Performance and Performed Ethnography", in: *Critical Ethnography. Method, Ethics, and Performance*, Los Angeles (Sage) 2020 (third edition), pp. 145-77.

Class: Thu, 30 Mar 2023, 9:00-12:15

- interim summary and discussion
- Midterm evaluation

***** Spring Break: Apr 3 – 7 *****

Week 10 - FIELD TRIP: The Theater as Ritual and Performance

Homework for week 10:

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 theater as performance:
- Erika Fischer-Lichte: excerpts from chapter "The concept of Performance", in: The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance, London and New York (Routledge) 2014, pp. 18-22.
Readings on performative writing:
- 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.

Class:

evening theater visit, exact date and show to be confirmed

Week 11: Performing Methodologies (Performative Writing and Autoethnography)

Homework for week 11:

Writing assignment:

Write a short reflection on theater visit using performative writing (500 words)

Final project:

Bring an idea to class for a final group or solo project

Class: Thu, 20 Apr 2023, 9:00-12:15

- Discussion theater visit and performative writing
- Presentations on final project ideas, forming groups

Week 12: Performance (Studies) as Activism + Final Project

Homework for week 12:

Final project:

- rehearsal, devising (3 hours in total)
- writing list of technical equipment

reading:

- Diana Taylor: Chapter "Artivists (Artist-Activists), or, What's to Be Done?", in: *Performance*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2016.

Class: Thu, 27 Apr 2023, 9:00-12:15

- Lecture: performance (studies) as activism, discussion
- Final project: in-class showing, feedback, defining next steps

Week 13: Future of Performance Studies + Final Project: internal presentation

Homework for week 13:

Final project:

Finish final project

Reading:

- Henry Bial: "Performance Studies 3.0", in: PSR, pp. 402-411.

Class: Thu, 4 May 2023, 9:00-12:15

- Internal presentation of final project, feedback
- Discussion: futures of Performance Studies

Week 14: Wrap-up and Public Presentation

Homework for week 14:

Preparing for public presentation

Class: Thu, 11 May 2023, 9:00-11:00

- Wrap-up

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

Thu, 11 May 2023, evening

- technical rehearsal with other performing arts courses

Fri, 12 May 2023, evening

*** THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY + OPEN STUDIOS ***

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.