

SC301 Performing Science and Medicine

Seminar Leaders: Sasha Bergstrom-Katz and Michele Luchetti
Emails: s.bergstromkatz@berlin.bard.edu & m.luchetti@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Suitable for multi-disciplinary artists and humanities students alike, this course addresses the relationship between science, medicine, and society through a discussion of critical texts and creative activities inspired by art, performance, and theater. It uses works of theater and contemporary art alongside critical texts from the history, philosophy, and sociology of science and medicine to develop a conversation about the ways in which performances of science in the laboratory, the clinic and in the public sphere communicate key concepts and practices. These include ideas of objectivity, rationality, trust, power, as well as modes of faith and healing. The increasing complexity of science and its interactions with the social realm call for an expansion of traditional humanistic methodologies to encompass approaches that foster personal engagement, curiosity, creativity, and active criticism. For this reason, the course integrates seminar-style discussions of core historical, philosophical, and sociological topics on science and society with practical sessions that rely on arts-based activities to stimulate a creative first-person engagement with these topics. Further, it contributes to a timely study of the relationship between art and science. The overarching goal of the course is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at providing participants with key skills to critically engage and discuss issues related to science and society; on the other hand, it exposes them to a vast array of arts-based activities through writing, performance and art-making workshops during which they can act on their critical engagement and exercise a number of skills that are widely transferable within and outside of academia and art. Divided into three sections: **Performing Experiments**, **Performing Medicine**, and **Public Performances**, the course aims at a new understanding of the relation between the arts and the humanities in science and medicine.

Requirements

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.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

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.

Bard College Berlin may 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.

Assessment

Each student must complete the mid-term and final assignments.

Assignments

The mid-term essay is due on March 14, midnight. The final essay is due on May 6, midnight. Details will be discussed in class

Essays must include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of publications. The structure and draft of the essays can be discussed during in-class class workshops.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. 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 essay 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.

Grade Breakdown

Midterm essay (2000 words): 30%

Final project (4000 word essay OR practical project + 2000 word essay): 40%

Participation: 30% (15% for weeks 1-7 and 15% for weeks 8-14)

Schedule

Week 1: Performance, Science, Medicine

Readings:

Salter, C. (2020). Epistemes of Performativity. *Performance Research*, 25(3), 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2020.1807744>

AND

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2007). Performance Studies. In H. Bial (Ed.), *The Performance Studies Reader* (2nd edition, pp. 43–55). Taylor & Francis.

Section 1 - Performing Experiments

Week 2: Reproducing Experiments

Readings:

Sibum, O. H. (1995). Working experiments: A history of gestural knowledge. *The Cambridge Review* (1995), 116(232), 25–37.

AND

The Performance Text. (1993). In M. D. Marinis, *The Semiotics of Performance* (pp. 47–82). Indiana University Press. (Read only sections 2.1 & 2.2)

Week 3: Performance Tests

Reading:

Fretwell, E. (2020). *Sensory Experiments: Psychophysics, Race, and the Aesthetics of Feeling*. Duke University Press. (Read introduction: 1-34)

Week 4: Human and non-human performers

Readings:

Spiess, K., Strecker, L., Baltov, B., Ropp, J., Soulimenko, O., Zakravsky, K. T., & Rinnerthaler, M. (2020). Microbial Keywording: Towards material speech acts. *Performance Research*, 25(3), 56–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2020.1807755>

AND

Metaphors into Hardware: Harry Harlow and the Technology of Love. (2006). In D. Haraway, *Primate visions: Gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science* (pp. 231–243). Routledge.

Section 2 - Performing Medicine

Week 5: Medicine and the performing arts

Readings:

Bouchard, G., & Mermikides, A. (Eds.). (2024). *The Routledge Companion to Performance and Medicine*. London: Routledge. (Read introduction, pp. 1-20).

AND

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books. (Read only Chapter I, pp. 17-21).

Week 6: Performing doctors and patients

Readings:

Hooker, C., & Dalton, J. (2019). The performing arts in medicine and medical education. In: Bleakley, A. (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of the medical humanities*. London: Routledge, pp. 205-219.

AND

Mol, A. (1998). Missing links, making links: the performance of some atheroscleroses. In: Berg, M., and Mol, A. (eds.), *Differences in medicine: Unravelling practices, techniques and bodies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 144-65.

Week 7: Medical knowledge and the performance of the human

Reading:

Hacking, I. (2007). Kinds of people: Moving targets. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 151: 285–318. <https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197264249.003.0010>

Week 8: Introduction of final project

Readings:

Nold, C., & Sobecka, K. (2021). Aesthetic strategies for engaging with environmental governance. In H. S. Rogers, M. K. Halpern, K. D. Ridder-Vignone, & D. Hannah (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Art, Science, and Technology Studies* (1st ed., pp. 91–101). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429437069>

AND

Carklin, M. (2020). Theatre and Science as Social Intervention. In: Shepherd-Barr, K. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre and Science*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 237-260.

Section 3 - Public Performances

Week 9: Trust in Science and Medicine

Readings:

Goldenberg, M. J. (2021). *Vaccine hesitancy: Public trust, expertise, and the war on science*. University of Pittsburgh Press. (Introduction, pp. 3-18).

AND

Garner Jr, S. B. (2024). At the needle point. In: Bouchard, G., & Mermikides, A. (Eds.). (2024). *The Routledge Companion to Performance and Medicine*. Routledge, pp. 316-327.

Week 10: Performing Expertise

Readings:

Martello, Marybeth Long. 'Arctic Indigenous Peoples as Representations and Representatives of Climate Change'. *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 3 (June 2008): 351–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312707083665>.

AND

Leggett, Don. 'Introduction: Performing Expertise'. In *Scientists' Expertise as Performance: Between State and Society, 1860-1960*, 74:84–86, 2017. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00033790.2016.1257737>.

AND

Schuppli, S. (2014). Can the sun lie? In F. Architecture (Ed.), *Forensis: The Architecture of*

Public Truth (pp. 56–64). Sternberg Press.

Week 11: Field trip to Berlin Museum of Medical History of the Charité

<https://bmm-charite.de/en/museum>

**** Meet at 10AM at the front of the museum****

Reading:

Parker-Starbuck, J. (2016). A Cabinet of (Medical) Performance Curiosities. In A. Mermikides & G. Bouchard (Eds.), *Performance and the Medical Body* (1st edition, pp. 23–36). Methuen Drama.

Optional reading:

Trustram, Myna. (2013). The Little Madnesses of Museums. In A. Kuhn (Ed.), *Little madnesses: Winnicott, transitional phenomena and cultural experience* (pp. 187–201). I.B. Tauris.

Week 12: Project presentations

Week 13: Guest lecture - Prof. Dr. Viktoria Tkaczyk

Reading: TBC

Week 14: Project presentations