

# TH209

## Curtain Up: Theater in Berlin

**Seminar Leader:** Nina Tecklenburg

**Email:** [n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:n.tecklenburg@berlin.bard.edu)

**Course Times:** Mon 15:45-19:00

*Please note:* some classes will be split into two sessions due to evening performance visits. Please check the schedule below and mark all excursion dates in your calendar!

**Locations:** performance space BCB factory, Eichenstraße 43 + various theater venues

**Office Hours:** Wed 9:00-13:00 (please make an appointment)

### Theater visits:

- Thu, Jan 30: [Glitch Witch by Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods & Dance on Ensemble](#), meeting point: in front of HAU2 at 7:30pm
- Sat, Feb 15: [1984 by George Orwell, adapted and directed by Luk Perceval](#), meeting point: foyer Berliner Ensemble at 7:00pm
- Mon, Feb 24: [Mothers – A Song For Wartime, concept and direction by Marta Górnicka](#), meeting point 6:30pm at Gorki Theater foyer
- Thu, Feb 27: [Backyard \[A Field to Search\] by Laura Uribe and Sabine Aldana \(L.A.S. LABORATORIO DE ARTISTAS SOSTENIBLES\)](#), meeting point Gorki Theater Garderobenfoyer at 8:00pm
- **Theater visit in week 7 (time and place tbc)**
- Fri, Mar 28: [Echnaton by Philip Glass, directed by Barrie Kosky](#), meeting point Komische Oper (Schillertheater foyer) at 6:30pm

### Course Description

Berlin's performing arts landscape is absolutely unique: With seven state ensemble theaters, large-scale institutions hosting international theater, dance and performance festivals, three prestigious opera houses, and a vibrant independent performing arts scene including renowned theater artists, groups and venues, Berlin is one of the most popular performing arts locations in the world. In this course we will attend various performances at theater institutions and independent venues (such as HAU, Volksbühne, Gorki Theater, Haus der Berliner Festspiele, Berliner Ensemble, Sophiensaele, Komische Oper, Schaubühne, Ballhaus Ost, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Deutsches Theater) to train our artistic and intellectual capacity to watching and analyze performances and their specific contexts. In addition to studying the history, artistic program, and institutional framework of different Berlin venues and their artists, this course offers an introduction to becoming a professional theatergoer and performance expert with a nuanced understanding of the aesthetics and politics of theatrical events. By learning to apply methods of performance analysis, artistic response, reflection formats, or performative writing, students develop skills essential for anyone interested in performance making, critiquing and curating. Classes will be held alternately in the theater and on campus.

### Assessment

#### Collaboration

This course encourages artistic and intellectual collaboration amongst students. Working

independently, communicating respectfully, and taking responsibility for each another are an essential part of this course. This also includes logistical issues such as organizing rehearsal times, labor division, and managing technical equipment.

### **Artistic practice and theory**

The course aims to productively integrate artistic and academic approaches to analyzing performance. Students will be assessed on their ability and willingness to fruitfully combine creative practices and critical thinking.

### **Participation and preparation**

Please complete the required homework (performance practice/rehearsals, readings, viewings, writing 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. Readings will be made available through Google Classroom.

### **Assignments and Deadlines**

- Regular writing assignments and artistic responses according to schedule (see below).
- Midterm assignment: written performance analysis (1000-2000 words), due on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2025, midnight.
- Final performance analysis project: you may choose between a written analysis or an artistic response (solo or group performance). The latter will be presented as part of THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY at the end of the semester (date tbc).

### **Purchases**

- Students will have to pay ca. 60 Euros for theater tickets (student tickets usually vary between 8-15 Euros per ticket).

### **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 their professors 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](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.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)) or Maria Anderson-Long ([m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu)).

## Attendance

- Attendance of **all classes (including theater excursions in this case)** 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. **Please note: two theater visits of an average length are regarded as one three-hour session.**
- Students are expected to attend all off- and on-campus classes and performance/theater visits from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, the instructor must be informed in advance.
- 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).
- 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 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, 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.

## Grade Breakdown

**Class participation** **40%**

Grading criteria:

The participation grade includes attendance; homework; contributions to discussions and exercises; active collaboration with partners; communication with instructors and other students.

**Midterm performance analysis** **25 %**

Grading criteria

Relevance/originality of the subject and its relation to questions and/or methods discussed in class; language, style, terminology; structure and argumentation; conclusion.

**Final performance analysis project** **35 %**

Grading criteria:

Artistic concept and complexity; relation to topics and/or artistic approaches experienced and discussed in class; devising process; presentation; ability to self-reflect on the project.

## Schedule

**\*\*\* This schedule is subject to change due to performance visits and unreleased theater programs for March – May 2025.**

**The schedule will be updated on a regular basis, so please check your emails regularly and mark all theater excursions in your calendar! \*\*\***

**Week 1: Introductions – Berlin's Theater Landscape**

Mon, Jan 27, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)

Thu, Jan 30, Performance Visit at HAU2 (Hebbel am Ufer)

[Glitch Witch by Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods & Dance on Ensemble](#)

Meeting point: in front of HAU2 at 7:30pm, Hallesches Ufer 34, 10963 Berlin

Bring pen and paper!

**Week 2: Basics of Performance Analysis**

Mon, Feb 3, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)

Homework due:

- Memo on performance *Glitch Witch*, due Mon, Feb 3, noon

- Reading: Erika Fischer-Lichte: *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*, chapters "The Concept of Performance" (excerpts) and "Performance Analysis"

In class

Warm-up; creative reflection formats on *Glitch Witch*: speed dating, the impersonation game; discussion memos and reading, introduction to Berliner Ensemble.

**Fri, Feb 7 midnight: writing assignment due**

Performance analysis "Glitch Witch", ca. 500-750 words

### Week 3: Workshop at Berliner Ensemble + The Concept of Performance

**Mon, Feb 10, 4:30-7:00pm**

**(!!! DIFFERENT TIME + LOCATION: meet at 4:15 in front of Berliner Ensemble, Bertolt-Brecht-Platz 1, 10117 Berlin)**

4:30-6:00pm theater pedagogy workshop on *1984* (George Orwell) at BE

6:00-7:00pm class in BE canteen

Homework due:

- Reading: Diana Tylor: *Performance*, chapter "Framing [Performance]".

In class

Workshop at BE; discussion reading.

**Sat, Feb 15, Performance Visit at Berliner Ensemble**

[1984 by George Orwell, adapted and directed by Luk Perceval](#)

Meeting point: foyer Berliner Ensemble at 7:00pm, Bertolt-Brecht-Platz 1, 10117 Berlin.

Bring pen and paper and make yourself familiar with the novel *1984* by George Orwell.

### Week 4: The German State Theater + Performative Writing

**Mon, Feb 17, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Memo on performance *1984*, due **Mon, Feb 17, noon**

- Reading: D. Soyini Madison: "Writing as Performance and Performance as Writing".

In class

**Special guest: Karolin Trachte, dramaturge at Berliner Ensemble.**

Creative reflection formats on *1984*: text messages, 5-minute paper; discussion memos and reading.

**Fri, Feb 21, midnight: writing assignment due**

Performative Writing on *1984*, ca. 500-750 words.

### Week 5: (Challenging) The State Theater System

**Mon, Feb 24, short class and performance visit**

Meeting point 6:30pm at Gorki Theater foyer, Am Festungsgraben 2, 10117 Berlin

[Mothers – A Song For Wartime, concept and direction by Marta Górnicka](#)

Bring pen and paper.

Homework due:

- reading: Thomas Schmidt: "The German Theatre System Has a Problem with Power and Discrimination":

<https://howlround.com/german-theatre-system-has-problem-power-and-discrimination>

**Thu, Feb 27, Performance Visit at Gorki Theater**

[Backyard \[A Field to Search\]](#)

[by Laura Uribe and Sabine Aldana \(L.A.S. LABORATORIO DE ARTISTAS SOSTENIBLES\)](#)

Meeting point Gorki Theater Garderobenfoyer at 8:00pm, Am Festungsgraben 2, 10117 Berlin.

Bring pen and paper.

**Week 6: Performance Analysis and Power**

**Mon, March 3, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Memo either on *Mothers – A Song of Wartime* **or** *Backyard [A Field to Search]*, **due Mon, March 3, noon.**

- Reading: Joy Kristin Kalu: “The Implicit Audience: For a Postcolonial, Racism-Critical Performance Analysis”, an interview with Azadeh Sharifi and Lis Skwirbli.

In class

Warm-up; creative reflection formats on Gorki performances: tête à tête; physical response; discussion reading.

**Week 7: Decline of the Theater Capital: Austerity and restrictions in Berlin’s current cultural policy**

**Mon, March 10, 3:45-5:15pm (short class! BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Reading: Brandon Woolf: *Institutional Theatrics*, excerpts.

- Reading: Adam Sellar: “Can Berlin Really Afford 3 ‘Magic Flutes’ in a Single Week?”, New York Times, 13<sup>th</sup> of Dec 2024.

In class

Warm-up; readings; introduction to new venue (tbc).

**Tue, March 11, midnight**

\*\*\* MIDTERM PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS due \*\*\*

**Performance Visit - Date tbc:**

Bring pen and paper.

**Week 8: Performance Response I**

**Mon, Mar 17, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Memo on performance visit week 7, due Monday, Mar 17, noon.

In class

Warm-up; memo + performance response in groups; VR-Intro.

**Week 9: Performance Response II**

**Mon, March 24, 3:45-5:15pm (short class!!!, BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Performance response in groups.

In class

Warm-up; showing + productive feedback; introduction Komische Oper.

**Fri, March 28, Performance Visit at Komische Oper @ Schillertheater**

[Echnaton by Philip Glass, directed by Barrie Kosky](#)

Meeting point Schillertheater foyer at 6:30pm (meeting Johanna Wall, chief dramaturge of Komische Oper tbc), Bismarckstraße 110, 10625 Berlin.

Bring pen and paper.

**Week 10: Final Performance Analysis Project I**

**Mon, March 31, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Memo on *Echnaton*, due Mon, Mar 31, noon.

- Bring idea for final performance analysis project (solo or group project).

In class

Warm-up; creative reflection formats on *Echnaton*; final performance analysis project pitch.

**Week 11: Final Performance Analysis Project II + Special Skills Workshop in Live Video**

**Mon, Apr 7, 3:45-7:30pm (BCB factory, class is 30 minutes longer due to live video workshop!)**

Homework due:

- Work on final project

In class:

**Special guest: Carmen Gil Vrolijk (multimedia and theater artist Carmen Gil Vrolijk (Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá; company [La Quinta del Lobo](#)).**

3:45-5:30 final project showing and feedback.

5:45-7:30 live video workshop with Carmen Gil Vrolijk.

**Tue, Apr 8, 12:30-2:30pm: Final project mentoring sessions (optional) with Carmen Gil Vrolijk and myself.**

***Special offer!!!***

**\*\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\*\***

**Week 12: Final Performance Analysis Project III**

***Federal Holiday - No class***

Homework due:

- Work on final project

**Week 13: Final Performance Analysis Project IV**

**Mon, April 28, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Work on final project

In class

Warm-up, wrap-up and evaluation, showing + feedback.

**Week 14: Final Performance Analysis Project V**

**Mon, May 5, 3:45-7:00pm (BCB factory)**

Homework due:

- Work on final project

In class

Warm-up and dress rehearsals.

**Wed or Thu evening: Technical Rehearsal (exact date and time tbc – please keep these dates free!)**

**Fri, May 9 (4-10pm)**

**\*\*\* Presentation of final projects at THE PERFORMANCE FACTORY / OPEN STUDIOS \*\*\***

**Week 15**

*(completion week)*

**Facility Guidelines:**

Policy on the use of facilities:

1. The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours.
2. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
3. Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all.
4. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building.
5. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building.
6. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building.
7. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster.
8. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline.
9. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed.
10. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: [j.park@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:j.park@berlin.bard.edu)

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110

Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone) : 116 117