

SC301 Performing Science and Medicine

Seminar Leaders: Sasha Bergstrom-Katz and Michele Luchetti

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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. 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.

Missed classes beyond this allowance require a medical certificate or official documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes (**4 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 project outline and final assignments.

Assignments

The mid-term project outline is due on March 18, midnight. The final essay is due on May 15th, midnight (May 8th for graduating students). 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

In class presentation (10 minutes): 20%

Mid-term project outline (1500 words): 20%

Final project (Practical project + 2500 word essay): 40%

Participation: 20%

Further information:

In class presentation: On the first day of class, you will be asked to select 1 week where you will be responsible for giving a 10-minute presentation related to one or more of the readings. You should address one or two specific aspects of the reading of choice and connect it with one cultural object (e.g. film, novel, prop, artwork, everyday object) in a creative way.

Project: Your final project will consist of a performance-based “practical” project and a written essay on the topic of Performing Science and Medicine. We will discuss the project throughout the class, but the practical component could be an artwork, live or documented performance or documented performative experiment (through photography, video or research log).

Mid-term project outline: (Due 18 March) The outline should include a discussion of the topic and the kind of critical point that you want to make as well as the performative methodology or framework that you plan to adopt. It must reference at least one text discussed in class and one extra reference. The final project may change after this point but would need to be discussed with us in advance. **You are encouraged to consult us in advance with your ideas.**

Final project and essay: (Due May 15 [May 8 for graduating students]). The final project will be shared in class in week 12. The essay will be due later. The essay will need to describe the project and situate it with readings assigned in class as well as supplementary literature. Note: This essay can build on the project outline.

Participation: There will be hands-on activities in class. We ask that you participate in these in addition to being prepared to discuss the assigned readings.

Note: All readings will be provided by instructors via google classroom

Schedule

Week 1 (Friday, 30 January): Performance, Science, Medicine (Sasha and Michele)

Readings:

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

Carlson, M. (2004). What is performance?. In: Bial, H. (Ed.) *The Performance Studies Reader* (2nd edition). London & New York: Routledge, pp. 70-75.

Week 2 (Friday, 6 February): Materiality and Performativity (Sasha)

Reading:

Barad, K. M. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 59-66 and 132-137. Duke University Press.

Homework:

Bring materials for experiment next week (more information to follow)

Week 3 (Friday, 13 February): Reenactment and Reproducing Experiments (Sasha)

Readings

Sibum, O. H. (2021). Science and the Knowing Body: Making Sense of Embodied Knowledge in Scientific Experiment. In S. Dupré, A. Harris, J. Kursell, P. S. Lulof, & M. Stols-Witlox (Eds.), *Reconstruction, replication and re-enactment in the humanities and social sciences* (pp. 275–294). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048543854>

Kirksey, E., Hannah, D., Lotterman, C., & Moore, L. J. (2016). The *Xenopus* Pregnancy Test. *Environmental Humanities*, 8(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3527713>

Suggested reading:

Brauer, J., & Lücke, M. (2019). Emotion. In *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies*. Routledge.

Week 4 (Friday, 20 February): Performing Psy-science (Sasha and Michele)

Scott-Bottoms, S. J. (2024). *Incarceration Games: A History of Role-Play in Psychology, Prisons, and Performance*. University of Michigan Press. (Chapter 1, pp. 3-21).

Bergstrom-Katz, S. (under review) *Improvisation of Good Rapport*. Configurations.

Week 5 (Friday, 27 February): Performing Medicine (Michele)

Readings:

Marshall, J. W. (2016). *Performing Neurology: The Dramaturgy of Dr Jean-Martin Charcot*.

New York: Palgrave Macmillan (Introduction, pp. 1-17 + Chapter 3: from p. 58, second to last paragraph “Although Charcot...”, until the end of the chapter).

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 6 Friday (6 March): Performing Bodies (Sasha)

Readings:

Reilly, K. (2026). Samuel Pepys’ Traumatic Autopsia. In P. Johnson, S. Parry, & A. Senior (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Performance and Science*. Routledge.

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.

Week 7 Friday (13 March): Visit to the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité (Sasha)

No reading

Week 8 (Friday, 20 March): Performing Science in Public (Sasha)

Murphy, C. (2013). Shocks and Sparks: Participatory Electrical Performances in the Enlightenment Period. In K. Reilly (Ed.), *Theatre, Performance and Analogue Technology: Historical Interfaces and Intermedialities* (pp. 161–182). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137319678_9

Davies, S. R. (2021). Performing Science in Public: Science Communication and Scientific Identity. In K. Kastenhofer & S. Molyneux-Hodgson (Eds.), *Community and Identity in Contemporary Technosciences* (pp. 207–223). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61728-8_10

Week 9 (Friday, 27 March): Final Project Workshop (Sasha)

Gluzman, Y. (2017) “Analyzing the Analyst: An Experimental Data Video for Thinking Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience Together,” *Performance Matters*, 3(2), pp. 107–118.

Week 10 (Friday, 10 April): Performing Trust in Science and Medicine (Michele)

Readings:

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

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 11 (Friday, 17 April): Feedback Session (Michele)

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.

Week 12 (Friday, 24 April): Project Presentations (Sasha and Michele)

May Day (Friday, 1 May): No Class (Holiday)

Week 14 (Friday, 8 May): Guest lecture - Artist and researcher Karolina Sobecka
Reading: TBC