

DRA 400, CRS 400 Community-based Performance Practices

Monday 3:45-5:45pm + **ten weekly mini-internship sessions@2 hrs, TBA**

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Because you have imagined love, you have not loved; merely because you have imagined brotherhood, you have not made brotherhood. —Muriel Rukeyser

As if in response to Rukeyser's quote, community-based performance seeks to concretely affect its participants. And in contrast to a view of the artist as a solitary genius, this field depends on collective creation *with, for, and of* a group of people with a shared identity on some fundamental level, though also includes unlikely collaborations. The class combines an overview of community-based performance methodology, history, and issues with hands-on experience. We will try out techniques, discuss readings, and screen video clips. Over the course of the semester, students, in small teams, will co-facilitate or assist approximately 10 sessions of a community-based performance workshop or help create a community performance. We will regularly check in about that ongoing experience.

Required Reading: All readings are included in Class Packet edited by Cohen-Cruz, available via Blackboard, unless otherwise noted. Other required readings at www.communityarts.net reading room.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class #1: 1/12 Introductions

Intro to the field, each other, and this course. Go over syllabus. Video clip: PACT, to concretize course themes. Discuss three curricular components for this field: 1. craft: As example, do cultural mapping. 2. intellectual frame: give groups of students short essays to read and tease out discussion points (Nancy Cantor, "Scholarship in Action;" Midgley, "Trying out One's New Sword;" "The Policy Climate" section of Arlene Goldbard, "The Field's Development Needs," pgs. 196-201; Gerda Lerner, "Black Women in White America;" "Choosing to Lead," Constance Buchanan); and 3. hands-on experience. Identify workshop opportunities and lay out that component of course. Discuss equal importance of each component, the creative energy circulating among them, and their connection via values and principles. Rank and turn in your first three choices for mini-internship.

January 19 MLK, Jr. Day NO CLASSES (University offices closed)

Class #2: 1/26 Facilitating Community-based Performance Workshops

Reflection paper #1 due, three pages: Identify large question you have entering this class and where you see community-engaged art in relationship to the large field of performance and your own aspirations. Read Herzberg and Myerhoff. What makes a good teacher in community situations where people are not aspiring to the professional stage but to various other goals? Discuss facilitation via Ingalls' Six Principles and balancing skills/ exercises with philosophy/ goals. Exercise Sources: your own; Viola Spolin, & Augusto Boal; particulars for population you are working with. Show books by Johnstone, Bowles, Rhodes, Johnson, Lerman, ESTA, Cohen-Cruz/ Novak. Video clip from Children and the Classics. Schedule student pairs to facilitate an exercise each in subsequent classes. **Visit your internship site.**

Class #3: 2/2 Partnerships

Read "Inroads: Intersection of Art and Civic Dialogue" (Korza, Bacon and Assaf) and "Mapping the Field: Arts-Based Community Development" (Bill Cleveland). Discuss the articles on arts-based civic dialogue, the field more generally as regards partnerships, and primacy of values and principles rather than set techniques in this field. Last 30 minutes of class: in pairs or three's, prepare for internship.

I. PATHWAYS OF US COMMUNITY-BASED PERFORMANCE

Class #4: 2/9 Between Ritual & Performance

Check in re: internships (& every class hence forth). Read Van Gennep excerpt. Translate Schechner's "Seven Phases of Performance" (training, workshop, rehearsal, warmup, performance, cool-down, aftermath) for CBA. Discuss community-based performance as situated between ritual and theatre and as an interdisciplinary field. Screen Lacy's "Whisper the Waves the Wind" pageant. Identify traditions that Lacy draws from in WWW & that you sense at your site. In internship groups, put together possible sequences of exercises/ research through lines.

Class #5: 2/16 Performance and Social Change

Read MLK, Jr, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and excerpts of Elam & Brady. Introduce Alinsky, Sen, and relationship of cba to community organizing. Define "radical" variously. Link "motion of the ocean" & cultural wings of political movements in the '30s & the '60s. Case study: John O'Neal, From the Free Southern Theater to Junebug Productions. Screen video. Discuss these performance practices and try out. **Short paper #2 due:** contrast values and principles underlying CCD with values and principles you hold from a source of meaning in your life. In groups, identify underlying ideologies at your sites.

Class #6: 2/23 Avant Garde

Read Kaprow. Explorations at the boundary of life/art such as Happenings; hybrids by Cornerstone and Liz Lerman that depend on community involvement shaped by strong artistic visionaries. Look also at their toolboxes, online, at their websites.

II. METHODOLOGIES

Class #7: 3/2 Research

Read one from www.communityarts.net or elsewhere about doing art with such a population; and another non-art essay for insight into the population. Bring two pages of typed notes summarizing your research in each of these areas (total 4 pgs) to class today. Discuss various modes of performance research, especially community-based. Screen excerpt of *Common Green, Common Ground*.

SPRING BREAK: 3/8- 3/15

Class #8: 3/16 Communal Storytelling

Each student identify term paper focus in relationship to a current question. Read excerpts from *Red Fox/ Second Hangin'* and *You Can't Judge a Book by Looking at the Cover*, and Junebug and Roadside websites re: storycircles. Discuss story circles

and primacy of storytelling in contemporary community-based performance. Do a story circle, contrasting with oral history and one-on-one interviews.

Class #9: 3/23 Indigenous Form, Contemporary Content

Read "The Matrix" and peruse the Performing Communities research project at www.communityarts.net. Discuss beginning with participants' strengths & interests; the role of popular forms; the relationship between individual and collective genius. Screen clip from *Red Fox/ Second Hangin'* and a Dell'Arte production. Identify, at your internship sites, underlying strengths, interests, and culturally-meaningful forms.

Class #10: 3/30 Text Adaptations

Read Rena Fraden, Introduction to *Imagining Medea: Rhodessa Jones & Theater for Incarcerated Women*. In class, compare scenes from *Steelbound & Prometheus Bound* & discuss losses/gains in each version. Screen excerpts. Explore improvising and inserting interview excerpts as adaptation techniques. Journal notes due.

Class #11: 4/6 Playing Boal

Read: excerpt from *Playing Boal*. Do forum theater. Ask internship liaison for written evaluation. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TURNING THIS IN BY CLASS ON 4/27.

III. STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

Class #12: 4/13 Preparing Artists for this Field

Read The Curriculum Project report. Compare artist- and university-based training.

Class #13: 4/20 Craft, Scholarship, Engagement, and Values Term Paper due. Mini-conference format.

Class #14: 4/27 Critical Approaches/ Standards

Read Croce and Kuftinec. Discuss categories and complications of assessment, underlying biases & assumptions. Reflect on internship experience. What binds a collection of exercises together, a series of sessions into a cohesive workshop? What is the relationship between philosophy/ideology/theory, practice, aesthetics and efficacy, workshops and productions in CBA? As experienced at your internship site? Turn in assessment from your internship liaison. Closure exercise!

Requirements:

1. Attendance/ punctuality/participation reflecting that you are keeping up with reading assignments.
2. Participate in ten sessions at your community engagement site.
3. Short papers: 3-5 pages (no more or less), due class #2 and #5.
4. Research notes (4pgs), CI #7; Notes re: internship plans, what actually happened and lessons learned (six pages, typed) due CI #10.
5. Term paper: analyze an issue in CBT using your internship as one source and readings beyond class assignments as other sources. Min 6, max 7 pages. Due class #13.

Community Engagement Sites

The Kuumba Project at the Community Folk Art Center (805 East Genesee Street) is a free, after-school, pre-professional arts education program developed by local professional artists that is aimed at enriching the lives and developing the artistic talent of youth ages 11-14 in Syracuse through exposure to and instruction in the arts. Students meet every weekday at the CFAC for instruction in dance, musical theatre, literary arts, and studio arts. Contact Margie at magantt@syr.edu.

Latino youth theatre troupe, La Joven Guardia del Teatro Latino, led by Jose Miguel Hernandez at La Liga, the Spanish Action League (700 Oswego Street). This Spanish-speaking youth theatre troupe has been in existence for over ten years, and has been winning awards at the Michael Harms Theater Festival since 2001. The troupe gives Latino youth a chance to learn Spanish literature and perform in their language.

Theater Club with refugee youth at the Center for New Americans (north side). Theater workshops for middle schoolers who have been recently resettled in Syracuse, meets on Thursday afternoons from 3:30 to 5 p.m., and will include storytelling, song, dance, and student-written material. Participants will work toward a performance in June to commemorate World Refugee Day. Contact Jamie at jmhaft@syr.edu.

Theatrical Docents at the women's suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage's historic home (210 East Genesee Street) in conjunction with The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation. Gage was a Central New York-based woman who inspired the passions and organized the political action of the 19th century woman suffrage movement in the United States. Visit www.Matilsa.JoslynGage.org and contact Sally at swagner711@aol.com. Times TBA.

Ghost Walks in downtown Syracuse in conjunction with The Onondaga Historical Association Museum and Research Center (321 Montgomery Street), whose purpose is to encourage a diverse audience from the neighborhoods of Syracuse and the communities of Onondaga County to explore, appreciate and utilize their past. Contribute to a theatrical walking tour featuring Syracuse's rich urban history. Contact director Gregg Tripoli at Gregg.tripoli@cnyhistory.org. Times TBA.

Power Unit for Motivating Youth (PUMY), with the Syracuse City School District, engages inner city youth in violence prevention education and training, leadership development, visual and performing arts, peer tutoring and mentoring – and a foundation to develop, strengthen and share their gifts, talents and abilities in a safe and nurturing environment. Wednesday afterschool workshops. Contact: Carol Charles, cdcharle@syr.edu.